

FALL 2026

THE INSIDE SCOOP

SECOND HARVEST

FOODBANK
OF SOUTHERN WISCONSIN

IN THIS EDITION

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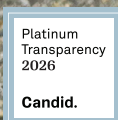
Hunger Action Month

IT'S ABOUT COMMUNITY

For more than 30 years, the Care Closet Food Pantry has supported families in the small commuter community of Evansville located just northwest of Janesville. What began in the basement of a local church has grown into one of the community's most trusted resources, **helping ensure that neighbors facing difficult times have access to food, clothing, household essentials, and, perhaps most importantly, a caring community ready to help.**

Today, thanks to more than 70 volunteers and a network of community partners, the Care Closet supports approximately 75 households each month. At the center of it all is Manager Jeanette Jones, who has spent the last ten years helping neighbors find the resources they need to get through difficult times.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK: **THIS IS NOT NORMAL**

Since the end of the pandemic, food banks and pantries have often measured current demand against the “height” of the pandemic. With the service industry devastated, numerous other businesses closed, and millions of people at least temporarily out of work, it was logical to assume that the number of people seeking food assistance would be at its highest level since the Great Depression. For a while, that assumption was true.

The reality is that three years after the pandemic ended, Second Harvest is distributing 20% more food, and 70% of our food pantry partners are seeing more people walk through their doors looking for assistance—many for the first time—than during the pandemic’s peak. Why is this happening?

Recently, food bank leaders across the country have referred to a “new normal” for food bank and food pantry operations. This refers not only to the rising number of people seeking food assistance but also to volatility in our operational expenses, a shifting political landscape that impacts our work, and delicate supply chain challenges.



We face those same issues, but I hesitate to call them “normal.” Mostly because **I don’t ever want to think of families needing food assistance as “normal.”** To me, referring to anything related to food insecurity as “normal” means that it’s okay that families, seniors, and children don’t have enough food to eat.

Thanks to your support, we’re investing more in the innovative and sustainable efforts of our network than ever before and expanding our efforts to bring the voices, stories, and experiences of those we support into our work. Together, we’re redefining how the emergency food system is moving from “normal” to “what’s possible.”

THE POWER OF **FOOD RESCUE**

Every day, billions of pounds of perfectly good food are discarded while millions of people struggle to put meals on the table. In fact, the United States wastes an estimated 92 billion pounds of food each year, even as 34 million people—including 9 million children—face hunger. **The challenge isn’t a lack of food—it’s getting that food to the people who need it most.**

That’s where Wisconsin Food Rescue comes in.

As an initiative of Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin, Wisconsin Food Rescue partners with more than 300 food manufacturers, grocery

stores, and convenience stores to recover surplus, safe, and fresh food before it goes to waste. Through coordinated pickup routes, staff and volunteers collect food that is often near its sell-by date or simply overstocked and deliver it to food pantries, school markets, and meal programs—often within hours.

The impact is remarkable. Nearly 60% of all the food distributed by Second Harvest—almost 15 million pounds each year—comes from Wisconsin Food Rescue and other donor partnerships. Retailers like Kwik Trip, Costco, Walmart, Pick ‘n Save, and Metro Market play a vital role in ensuring fresh produce, dairy, meat, and other nutritious foods reach families instead of landfills.

None of this would be possible without you. Your generosity makes Wisconsin Food Rescue possible by fueling the trucks and supporting the staff and volunteers, ensuring that fresh, nutritious food reaches families across southwestern Wisconsin. **Together, we are transforming surplus into meals and creating healthier communities, one rescued pound at a time.**



(It's About Community, continued from cover)

"Our mission is pretty simple," Jeanette said. "Neighbors caring for neighbors with dignity and grace."

That mission comes to life every week as volunteers prepare food orders, answer phones, stock shelves, and welcome families who may be struggling to make ends meet. Many of the guests Jeanette works with are balancing rising costs, limited incomes, and the everyday challenges of caring for a family.

One of those guests is Carrissa.

"It helps us a lot," Carrissa shared. "When we're on such a limited budget, we don't know what we can afford from one day to the next. We appreciate everything Second Harvest does for us."



Stories like Carrissa's are why the Care Closet exists. For Jeanette, helping families put food on the table is about breaking down barriers that prevent them from living a full life.

"They've got enough things to worry about," she said. "Food shouldn't be that thing they have to worry about. Food shouldn't be the thing they're wondering about—whether they're going to have milk or cereal or diapers. We want to take that weight off their shoulders."

Making that possible requires more than volunteers and local support. It also requires a strong

partnership with Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin.

The Care Closet receives food deliveries from Second Harvest twice each month, along with access to food rescue programs, training, resources, and support. Jeanette estimates that roughly half of the food distributed by the pantry comes through Second Harvest and its programs.

"We wouldn't be able to have all the things that we have in the pantry and share with our neighbors without Second Harvest," Jeanette said. "It gives us the opportunity to do more and makes our money go further."

More than the food itself, Jeanette values knowing that the Care Closet has a true partner standing beside them as they help meet the needs of Evansville residents.

"It's like having Second Harvest in your back pocket," she said. "I have another partner helping me take care of everything here."

For a small-town pantry operating out of a former grocery store and relying almost entirely on volunteers, that support is critical. Without it, meeting the needs of Evansville families would be far more difficult.

Yet for Jeanette, the Care Closet is about more than food. **It is about community.**

"It's the heart and soul of this community," she said. "Whenever there's a need, people rise to the occasion."

With your support, Second Harvest and partners like the Care Closet can continue making sure that families throughout Evansville have access to the food they need and the support they deserve. Together, they are proving that when neighbors care for neighbors, entire communities grow stronger.



SURPLUS TO **SUSTENANCE**

Every day, we receive food donations for a variety of reasons. Recently, our partners at Metro Market and Pick 'n Save found themselves with a surplus of greens—including lettuce, arugula, spinach, and various salad mixes—due to a change in vendors.

Because of our long-standing relationship and their commitment to supporting the community, they offered us these fresh, healthy greens. **They knew that, thanks to our size, efficiency, and strong network, we could quickly distribute over 3,600 pounds of this nourishing food to families in need.**

"We are grateful for partners like Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin. Together, we can redirect fresh and highly perishable surplus food into meaningful community donations," said Emilie Williamson, Head of Communications and Public Affairs at Metro Market and Pick 'n Save.

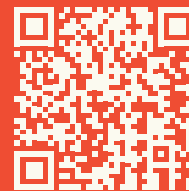


SEPTEMBER IS **HUNGER ACTION MONTH!**

Every September, the Feeding America network of food banks across the country unites for Hunger Action Month, a powerful campaign aimed at motivating people to take action and increase awareness about hunger in the United States. Here are two impactful ways you can participate:

- Join us on Thursday, September 24th, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. for the **Request-A-Thon** on 105.5 Triple M. Have fun dancing and jamming with Jonathan during this annual radio fundraiser where you become the DJ! Call 608-204-8000 or visit secondharvestsw.org/Request to request your favorite song. **All donations up to \$15,000 will be matched by our campaign sponsors.**
- **Wear orange on Hunger Action Day**, Tuesday, September 29th, to help shine a spotlight on hunger. Rally your team to Go Orange! It's easy: put on something orange, take a photo, and send it to WMTV 15 News. **Thanks to our generous matching sponsor, the Alliant Energy Foundation, the first 500 photos submitted will help provide up to 10 bags of groceries each.**

READY TO TAKE ACTION?



Visit secondharvestsw.org/GoOrange for even more ways to get involved!

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