WINTER 2026

THE INSIDE SCOOP

SECOND HARVEST FOODBANK OF SOUTHERN WISCONSIN



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THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE FOOD

When Mike Edmonds walks into a grocery store carrying his clipboard, employees don't always know what to expect. Sometimes, they think he might be an inspector. But when they realize Mike is from Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin, their reaction often changes. He isn't there to inspect. He's there to say thank you.

And then, he gets to tell them just how much their efforts matter.

Mike is a volunteer who visits hundreds of retail food donors throughout southwestern Wisconsin. Every few months, he checks in with store teams, makes sure food pickups are running smoothly, asks how the process could be improved and looks for ways stores can donate even more food. Perhaps most importantly, he helps donors see the impact behind the pounds of food they set aside each day. Mike translates those pounds into meals, giving store employees a tangible way to understand what their extra effort means for people in their community.

"They're doing a little extra work to donate this food," Mike said. **"But now they realize, well, wow, what I've been doing is really having an impact."**

CONT. ON INSIDE FRONT COVER.





PARTNER FOOD BANK OF FEEDING AMERICA

Platinum Transparency 2026 Candid.

Charity Navigator FOUR-STAR

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK
WE CAN'T ASK OUR NEIGHBORS TO CHOOSE



A strong community is one where we look out for one another, especially when times are difficult. **Right now, we have an opportunity to do just that.**

Beginning January 1, 2027, changes to Medicaid eligibility requirements may cause approximately 63,000 Wisconsinites to lose their coverage. **For families already managing tight budgets, losing health insurance often means difficult choices between necessary medical care and other essentials, including groceries.** When families have less money for food, they often turn to local food pantries and meal programs for support.

Our network of pantries and programs will continue to be there for our neighbors, as always. But we also know how hard they are already working to keep up with the growing need. **Food insecurity in southwestern Wisconsin has risen by 16%, and among children under 18, it has increased by 28%.** Behind these statistics are parents providing for their children, older adults living on fixed incomes, and families working hard to make ends meet. Food insecurity is never just about food. Our ability to afford food is connected to our health, housing, transportation, childcare and so many other parts of our lives. **We can't end food insecurity with food alone.**

At Second Harvest, we are committed to making sure our network has the food they need to serve their communities. But as we look toward the future, we know the need will continue to grow—and we will need our entire community beside us. **Your financial support, your time, and your voice in raising awareness of food insecurity are critical.**

Together, we can help ensure that no neighbor has to choose between essential health care and putting food on the table. **That is the essence of community, and it is a cause worthy of our collective effort.**

Michelle Orge
President & CEO

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE FOOD, CONT.

One of the store leaders Mike has gotten to know is Georgia Siler, a Kwik Trip training store leader who has made food donation an important part of her team's work. **For Georgia, giving back isn't just a corporate philosophy. It's personal.** During the COVID-19 pandemic, she saw families and children in her community suddenly lose access to the meals they depended on. "It's part of being a good neighbor," Georgia said. That belief shapes how Georgia leads her team. She makes sure employees understand what can be donated, how to safely set it aside and, most importantly, why it matters.

At her store, that commitment helped increase food donations by more than 80% in the most recent fiscal year. **For Mike, relationships like the one he has built with Georgia are one of the most rewarding parts of volunteering.** His own connection to hunger relief began during the pandemic, when he and his wife started collecting excess produce and distributing food from their driveway to neighbors who had lost income. **He saw how quickly a family could find itself struggling—and how immediate the impact of a simple act of helping could be. "People need food," Mike said. "It's just a basic human need."**

Five years into his Second Harvest volunteer experience, Mike continues to find meaning in helping make sure good food reaches people who need it. His visits strengthen relationships with retail partners, encourage greater food donations, and remind store teams that the food they are rescuing is more than a number—it can become a meal for a neighbor. **Volunteers like Mike and leaders like Georgia are some of the people behind our Wisconsin Food Rescue Initiative that keeps good food on the move to thousands of families across southwestern Wisconsin.**



SIX MONTHS.
THOUSANDS OF LIVES TOUCHED.

In the first six months of 2026, one of the biggest impacts on our work was the implementation of new federal regulations. As thousands of our neighbors lost access to critical SNAP benefits, our network stepped up to ensure everyone had enough nutritious food. **Here are just a few examples of what we've accomplished together:**

- Our Mobile Pantry Program brought **1 million pounds of food** directly to dozens of communities, helping ensure nutritious food is available where it's needed most.
- Through our network of local food pantries, meal programs, school markets and other partners, we helped provide food to **313,000 households**.
- More than **18,000 backpacks** were filled with food for children to take home on weekends, helping kids have nutritious meals when they're away from school.
- Our network recovered **9.8 million pounds** of fresh, safe food from local retailers and delivered it quickly to neighbors who need it.

JANUARY - JUNE

1M POUNDS DELIVERED	**313K** HOUSEHOLDS SERVED
18K+ BACKPACKS FILLED	**9.8M** POUNDS RESCUED

BUILDING CAPACITY TO RESCUE MORE FRESH FOOD

Every day, local retailers have nutritious food that is still fresh and safe to eat. But getting that food to families who need it takes more than a willing donor. It takes the people, equipment, storage, and transportation needed to make sure good food doesn't go to waste. **That's why Second Harvest is investing $600,000 in our network of partner food pantries and programs through our Retail Capacity Grant, part of our Wisconsin Food Rescue Initiative.**

Recently, 12 partner organizations received funding to expand their ability to accept, store, and distribute more food from local retailers, including grocers and convenience stores. The grants will support projects that strengthen the infrastructure and operations needed to rescue more fresh and frozen food before it reaches the end of its shelf life. For some partners, that means adding cold storage to safely accept more perishable food. Others will purchase delivery vehicles to pick up more retail donations. Some will add staffing, such as a part-time Food Pantry Coordinator, to help manage increased food volume and ensure it reaches guests efficiently.

These investments address one of the biggest challenges in food rescue: often, the barrier isn't a lack of food available to donate — it's whether a local pantry has the capacity to accept it.

"Second Harvest is committed to ensuring every person in our community has dependable access to healthy food," said Michelle Orge, President and CEO of Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin. "By making these grant funds available, we are investing directly in the local organizations that know their communities best and are addressing hunger every day. **This funding will help our partners respond to rising demand while building capacity for the future."**

CONT. ON BACK COVER.

BUILDING CAPACITY TO RESCUE MORE FRESH FOOD, CONT.

One of the organizations receiving funding is OutReach LGBTQ+ Community Center in Madison. Becca Bedell, who leads the organization's Community Pantry, said the investment will help expand access to food in a welcoming environment.

"This investment will support major upgrades to our Community Pantry's cold storage, just in time for OutReach's upcoming move closer to downtown Madison. We expect a surge in guests, and we're thrilled to increase distribution of free, low-barrier food and hygiene essentials four days a week. **Ongoing partnership with Second Harvest means the surplus food we rescue gets to our community quickly and safely, in a uniquely inclusive and welcoming space."**

Our nearly 300 pantry and program partners are the heart of our local hunger-relief network. By strengthening their ability to rescue more food, we're putting more nutritious food to good use and helping ensure it reaches our neighbors when and where they need it.

This is what it means to build a stronger food bank network: **investing today so we can rescue more food, reach more people, and meet the needs of our communities for years to come.**



TOGETHER, WE SHARE THE HOLIDAYS

For 31 years, the WMTV Share Your Holidays campaign has brought our community together around a simple but powerful idea: **when we each do our part, we can make a meaningful difference for our neighbors facing hunger.** This year, you can give food or funds in several ways:



Give at Your Grocer

Donate food or give at the register at participating **Metcalfe's, Hy-Vee, Woodman's, Pick 'n Save, and Metro Market locations.**

Give on GivingTuesday

On December 1, visit secondharvestsw.org/GivingTuesday. **The first $25,000 donated can be matched, doubling your impact.**

Give at a Food Drive

Community food drives are happening through December 8 at locations throughout southwestern Wisconsin. **Scan the QR code to find one near you.**

Give During the Phone-A-Thon

Tune into WMTV15 News on Wednesday, December 9, and make a gift during our Share Your Holidays Phone-A-Thon, happening from 6 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. **Every donation made can be matched up to $400,000.**

PRESENTING
UW Health

PLATINUM
DeanHealthPlan by Medica
Affiliated Engineers
Dental Health Associates dhamadison.com
Ho-Chunk Gaming Madison

SILVER
Temple Beth El

BRONZE
Emmi Roth
American Family Insurance
MB Insurance
John Deere Financial
The Little Potato Co.
SVA
State Truck Center
zendesk

IN-KIND
Alliant Energy Center
Two Men and a Truck "Movers Who Care."

SHARE YOUR STORY
CBRE