



Neighbors News

Winter 2016

2015-2016

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Children and Hunger

Kids know when their classmates and neighbor kids are hungry. They may not know why.

In days gone by, if a child's family needed to ask for help from the food shelf, that could shame a child. Other kids might tease or bully the classmate whose only fault was, their family needed assistance. Today we know that when families ask for help and kids are well nourished, it helps everyone.

Even young children need to understand that it's best for everyone if no one is hungry. Some simple facts can help youngsters understand:

Children who are malnourished are sick more often. They are more likely to have to be hospitalized, the costs of which affect everyone's health care costs. Hungry children suffer growth and developmental problems that limit their physical, intellectual and emotional health.

Kids who are hungry or malnourished may not be as good at sports, may not do as well on tests and may get lower grades, not because they're slow but because they are hungry. Hungry kids may not be as friendly or energetic, just because they are hungry.

Food is precious and essential for everyone. It is wrong to waste food or to make fun of those who do not have enough. Food is something to think about.

It is really important to learn about good nutrition, which means good nutrition for everyone, not just for those who can afford the best.

Kids can help with food drives and other projects to support food shelves including Neighbors. They need to understand, though, that it's not just about the money or the canned goods but about understanding others' situations.

Once they understand their classmates' situation, kids need to think about what they themselves can do to help. Helping to tell people about Neighbors or to contribute to Neighbors is one way to get involved, especially if a parent, grandparent, caregiver, teacher, member of the clergy or other adult makes the contribution meaningful to the giver as well as to the receiver.



*With the help of its
volunteers,
Neighbors, Inc. will
strive to reduce
poverty, promote
self sufficiency and
build community.*



A Ringing Success – Holiday Program 2015

There is a deal we make with children: if you're good all year, Santa will bring you wonderful gifts on Christmas.

“How do I tell my daughter, who's been good all year, that Santa isn't coming?” one mother asked.

Because of the generosity of donors and volunteers, hundreds of parents this year didn't have to tell their children that Santa wasn't coming.

We organized the distribution of 716 gift packages to households containing a total of 2,711 children, seniors and parents. We saw an increase in adopters this year from 198 to 233. We also saw a decrease in applicants this year from 925 gift packages distributed last year. We hope this is due to improving economic conditions in our county. The unemployment rate for Dakota County in November 2015 was 2.6 percent, according to the Dakota County Workforce Center.

We also received incredible donations of unwrapped gifts for our Christmas for Kids program, through which Neighbors serves the families that weren't adopted. Of the total number of households served, 454 were adopted and 262 were served by Neighbors, Inc.

The thank yous we're receiving on donors' behalf have been wonderful. The thank you notes started going out to donors the week of Jan. 4, but here are some heart-warming snippets from the thank you cards we've received for adopters:

“I can't begin to tell you how much your gifts meant to me. You not only gave me what I asked for, but a lot more. Your family was so wonderful to me, a complete stranger. I had no idea that there were people like you left in the world.”

– a senior adoptee

“I am a single mom. We moved to Minnesota two years ago from Mexico. We had to leave our country because it was not safe to live there. We came here with only two pairs of pants for each of us, and a bag full of dreams. Minnesota has been so good to us and we thank God every day for people like you who make our life so much better.”

– an adopted family

“Thank you very much for your generous gift. You have made us feel not so lonely and brought a lot of warmth into our life. We are deeply touched.”

– an adopted senior couple

“My kids were so excited opening their gifts. Watching them brought tears to my eyes. The kids love all their gifts, and my son doesn't even want to sleep. He wants to play day and night with all his gifts. We can't thank you enough. These past years have been very difficult for our family ... God also blessed us during this hard time with people like you! We thank you with all our hearts.”

– an adopted family

One family even included a small donation in their thank you note for Neighbors, which touched the staff deeply as well.

Thank you to all our generous donors and volunteers. Santa would be proud!

Annie Nelson

Holiday Program Coordinator and Intake Specialist



Without volunteers like these from the 3M, Neighbors' Christmas program would not have been successful. Thank you to all our volunteers.

Remember the Good Old Days When Neighbors Helped Each Other Out? We Still Do!

Neighbors relies on volunteers to deliver services daily to people in need of assistance. Are you looking for a positive way to spend your time, meet other goodhearted people, and help a neighbor in need? Have you considered volunteering at Neighbors? There are many opportunities that can use your unique interests and talents.

Drive our neighbors in need to medical appointments

Volunteer drivers are needed to take neighbors to their local medical or dental appointments. Rides are scheduled in advance on weekdays based on the volunteer's availability. As a volunteer driver you will make a difference in the life of a neighbor who does not have access to reliable transportation. Mileage reimbursement is available. Neighbors also carries volunteer liability insurance.

Pick up donations for our food shelf

Neighbors relies on the generosity of the community to deliver services to people in need. We are grateful to the many local businesses that donate thousands of pounds of food daily to the food shelf. This allows us to keep up with the more than 500 families that need food support each month. Neighbors needs volunteers to help us pick up those donations so we can get it to the food shelf and pass it out to families. As a volunteer, you can help stretch the dollar of a family in need. This opportunity is perfect for a church, workplace, or other group looking to make a difference in the community by adopting a regular pick up location for the week. Individual volunteers are also welcome to sign up and help. Current pick up locations include:

- Thursday around 1 p.m. at Dakota Woodlands in Eagan
- Flexible day every other week at Inver Grove Heights City Hall
- Monday, Wednesday and/or Friday around 10 a.m. at Oxendales on Bernard St. in West St Paul
- Other short notice or on-call pick-ups are also available during the week for those looking for more flexible opportunities.

- Many donation pick-up opportunities are morning shifts. The morning shift is a great opportunity for volunteers looking to get up, get out, and help others-and all before lunchtime!

Help families get gently used clothing in our thrift store

Do you like clothes? The Clothes Closet thrift store is open to anyone looking for a bargain on gently used clothing. Eligible families also receive clothing vouchers for free clothing. The Clothes Closet is 100% volunteer operated. As a volunteer, you make it possible for families-in-need to receive clothing essentials. If you enjoy thrift stores, this is the opportunity for you! Volunteers are needed Tuesdays from 1-4 p.m., Wednesdays from 1-4 p.m., Fridays from 1-4 p.m., Saturdays from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., and Saturdays from 1-4 p.m.

Like to talk on the phone?

Some of our neighbors are unable to leave their homes because of health concerns and they often do not receive many visitors. With one phone call, a volunteer can brighten someone's day with a cheerful conversation and listening ear. If you enjoy talking on the phone and lifting people's spirits, this is the opportunity for you. A volunteer is needed on Tuesdays from 8-11 a.m. There are also substitute and on-call positions available.

Help feed our neighbors in need

1 in 10 people living in the Twin Cities metro area do not know when their next meal is coming. Neighbors' food shelf serves about 30 families per day. Volunteers are needed to guide clients through the store and help them select the food they need for their families. Your support will prevent more families from going hungry and you will feel gratified knowing that our neighbors are being fed. Volunteers are needed Mondays from 1:00-4:00 pm, and Tuesdays from 1-4 p.m.

To learn more or to sign up, contact David Miller, Director of Volunteer Programs, at 651-306-2145 or volunteer@neighborsmn.org.

Minnesota FoodShare is Upon Us Once Again!

For many years the month of March in Minnesota has been designated as Minnesota FoodShare month. It is a time when nearly every food shelf in the state makes an all-out effort to raise as much food and money as possible in what turns out to be a rather heated competition among food shelves.

We at Neighbors make a big deal out of FoodShare month. We make a huge effort to get the entire community behind our month-long food drive. We ask our faith partners, the business community, civic leaders, service clubs and scouting organizations; everyone we can reach to please help out by raising as much food and as much money as they can on our behalf during March.

We do this for a couple of reasons. First, our shelves are getting bare. The number of families being served in the first months of the year, and the amount of food going out the door, considerably outstrips the amount of food coming in during the same period. So making a really big effort to bring in as much food as possible in March helps us get positioned to be able to serve the families who turn to us for assistance during the next six months, when food donations, once again, are at a much lower ebb.

Second, the financial support we as an organization will receive from the funds that will be distributed by the FoodShare organization and by Hunger Solutions later in the year will be determined in large part by the amount of food and funds we raise in March. The more we are able to bring in, the larger the size of the check we will receive later.

The people of our community have been wonderfully supportive for many, many years. Last year

Neighbors had the fourth most successful Minnesota FoodShare program in the state, the third year in a row that we have finished in the top five. Many people at Neighbors, staff and volunteer alike, work very hard throughout March to make this happen. But the real reason we are successful is because so many people throughout northern Dakota County want us to be successful and they make a special effort to assure that this happens.

So, once again in 2016, we ask for your help. If you attend a place of worship that partners with Neighbors, help make your faith community's food drive a big success. If you work for a local business, ask your employer to conduct a food drive. If a local boy-scout or girl-scout troop holds a food drive in your neighborhood, set a bag of food out to be picked up. If you have a child who attends a local school, and their class or their school is conducting a food drive, chip in. Write a check to Neighbors, or go on line to our website, click on the "donate" button and make a donation to boost our March drive. And remember to check with your employer to see if your donation can be matched.

If you want to conduct a food drive in your place of work or place of worship give us a call and we can help you plan the drive and we can provide you with barrels, posters, flyers; anything you need to help make your drive a success.

Help us, once again, crack that top five in FoodShare programs in Minnesota. And in the doing, help your neighbors in need by making sure Neighbors has the resources it needs to provide that assistance.

John Kemp
Executive Director

Bakeless Bake Sale a Success

Thanks to everyone who participated in our 2015 Give to the Max Day "Bakeless Bake Sale" non-event in November. No messes were made in anyone's kitchen, nobody spent hours baking and no calories were actually consumed. However, over \$5,000 was raised for programs at Neighbors. Overall, it was a successful non-bake sale. Thank you!

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A Bit of Food Shelf Doggerel

It's FoodShare month at Neighbors Inc.
For those in need we are the link.
The problem is when shelves get low
We need some help to make it go
We know our future still depends
On those who've always been our friends.
We hope that you'll remind yourself
That NEIGHBORS is your local food shelf.

Meet Beth Skwira

Neighbors is pleased to introduce its latest staff member, Director of Development Beth Skwira. Beth replaces Rick Birmingham who left Neighbors in December. Beth comes to Neighbors after five years as a Development Officer at CommonBond Communities. Prior to joining CommonBond she served three years as a Development Associate at the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota. A Concordia College, Moorhead graduate with a degree in Psychology and Communications, Beth's early career was spent as a case manager, then Department Director, in the Traumatic Brain Injury program for Opportunity Partners, Inc. in the Twin Cities.



*Beth Skwira,
Director of Development*

Beth lives in South St. Paul with her husband Peter and three daughters. She has been actively involved

in volunteering in the community including various ISD 6 committees, Augustana Lutheran Church Council and South St. Paul Girls' Youth Basketball Association.

"I am thrilled that Beth has chosen to accept our offer to fill this most important role in our organization," John Kemp, Executive Director of Neighbors, commented. "She brings a wealth of talent and experience to the position, but she also brings a warm, positive, collegial attitude that will fit exceptionally well with our staff and volunteers. She is highly familiar with the Neighbors organization and committed to our mission of providing service to the people of northern Dakota County."

Please don't hesitate to greet Beth whenever you are at Neighbors. And don't hesitate to call her or email her should you ever have questions or comments regarding our development programs.

Top 5 Reasons to Donate During March – Minnesota FoodShare Month

5. Children need to learn the value of giving. Lead by example and demonstrate how they can make a difference in their own circles.
4. During the winter months, Neighbors' shelves are depleted. We distribute food to about 550 families each month, and the average family of three leaves with between 110 and 130 pounds of food. We need help to restock.
3. Though Minnesota FoodShare is a statewide effort, when you support Neighbors your support stays in your community.
2. All donations during Minnesota FoodShare month count for some match. The more funds and food that Neighbors receives during this month, the more incentive food fund money (paid for by corporate and individual donors) we will receive.
1. Seniors and kids need help more than ever. Our goal to be sure that kids are well-nourished and that all babies have a healthy start in life. At the same time, more well-nourished seniors mean healthier, independent, contributing members of the community at large.

And if you need another reason to donate!

5. OK, some day you might eat that can of tomatoes [in your cupboard], but will it be before the expiration date?
4. You want a bit more room on the shelf for the cookies from Grandma.
3. Because this is the year that you and your friends and coworkers are going to crush those other food drive teams.
2. You're single and want to meet people. Why not show them you have a heart?
1. Neighbors has a state-of-the-art cost effective system for connecting services with those in need.



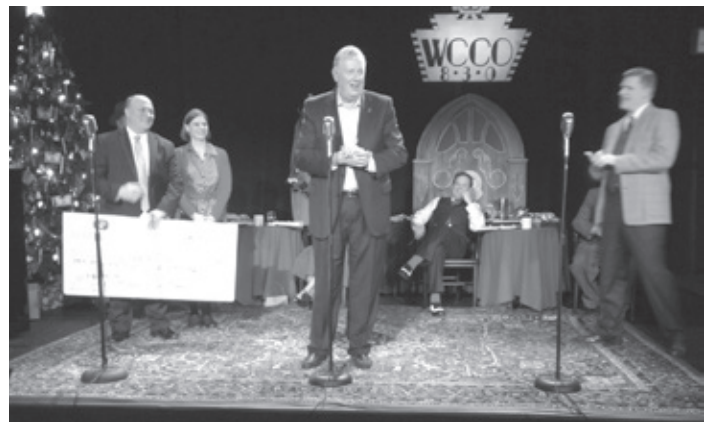
Another Food Fight!

Do you love burgers? Our local restaurants have delicious burgers! You can help decide who has the best burger around as Neighbors brings you round two of the Great Neighbors Food Fight. Purchase one of our Great Neighbors' Food Fight cards for \$25 and you'll get to try burgers at B-52 Burgers & Brew, Cherokee Tavern, 5-8 Grill & Tap, Jersey's Bar & Grill and Mississippi Pub. Each card is valid for one burger at each participating restaurant between February 1st and March 20th, 2016. One vote per card. Thanks to the generosity of the participating restaurants, all proceeds benefit Neighbors, Inc. For more information or to purchase a card, visit: neighborsmn.org/event/great-neighbors-food-fight.

Oh, and by-the-way. It's also a real bargain. For \$25 you get great burgers in five different local restaurants. Last year the estimated price of a burger at each of the five participating restaurants averaged about \$10, so each person who purchased a ticket pretty much doubled their money!

Record Breaking Night at It's A Wonderful Life: Live Radio Play

If you have ever watched the heart-warming holiday classic "It's A Wonderful Life" starring Jimmy Stewart, you know the themes of the movie include helping those in need and living generously. During the December 9th special performance of "It's A Wonderful Life: Live Radio Play" at The Saint Paul Hotel, the spirit of the movie shown through and the generosity was abundant. Not only did the ticket sales go directly toward the food shelf & emergency programs at Neighbors (the cast and hotel donate this event completely), but guests opened their hearts and their pocket books to make it a record breaking night with over \$11,000 raised to go towards operating Neighbors programs! We cannot thank you enough. It was truly an amazing night.



John Kemp, Neighbors' Executive Director, thanked the cast and crew, and the audience, at the December 9 benefit performance of "It's A Wonderful Life: A Radio Recreation" for making the evening exceptionally successful, and enjoyable.

UPCOMING HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Neighbors' offices will be closed on Monday, February 15 in observance of Presidents' Day. The Clothes Closet will be open for its normal schedule, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Neighbors' offices will also be closed on Friday, March 25 in observance of Good Friday. The Clothes Closet will close at 4 p.m. on Thursday, March 24 but will be upon as usual from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday the 25th and Saturday the 26th.

Walk to End Hunger Raises Awareness & Funds

Thanksgiving morning was rockin' at the Mall of America for the 8th annual Walk to End Hunger event. Neighbors, along with other hunger relief organizations in the Twin Cities, organized this family-friendly event to raise money and awareness about hunger issues in our community. There was live music, games, people dressed in food costumes and it even snowed inside the rotunda! It was a great way to start off the day giving back before giving thanks. A special thanks to all of the churches, businesses and organizations who formed teams to support Neighbors, Inc. We hope to see you back next year!



Delbert the Duck entertained a young caterpillar friend at the Walk to End Hunger on Thanksgiving morning at the Mall of America. Despite rumors to the contrary, the caterpillar was not Delbert's breakfast. He went more for the doughnuts!

Leave a Legacy

Please consider including Neighbors, Inc. in your estate plans. A gift in your will, or a beneficiary designation in your retirement plan or life insurance policy will make a difference in the lives of people in our community. Please contact your legal or financial advisor if you have questions and inform us of your gift intentions.



Delbert the Duck joined with some mascot friends during the Walk to End Hunger at the Mall of America on Thanksgiving morning. Wearing the soup cans were Dawn (left) and Gil Kinnunen, long-time volunteers, donors and Walk participants who have not missed a Walk in the eight years the event has been held.

Welcome New Volunteers

Neighbors would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest volunteers. These volunteers have joined us on a long-term basis. Be sure to give a friendly "Hi!" and introduce yourself if you see them around.

Clothes Closet

Jessie Damm

Come As You Are

Katie Lynch

Josh Patterson

Dial-A-Ride

LynAnn Vossberg

Food Shelf

Robert Barber

Barb Gillett

Dianna Houska

Krissy Nappin

Greg Schouweiler

Azucena Serrano

Khamon Vongvilaxay

Lao Chong Yang



Neighbors, Inc.
 222 Grand Avenue West
 South St. Paul, MN 55075
(Address Service Requested)

Phone: 651-455-1508
Fax: 651-455-1319
Email: info@neighborsmn.org
Web Site: www.neighborsmn.org



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A gaggle of princesses and a couple of darling princes gathered for a group photo at the 2015 Princess Tea Party. The second annual event will be held on Saturday, April 30th beginning at 10 a.m. at the Veterans' Memorial Community Center in Inver Grove Heights.



This enchanted event will feature brunch, tea, themed children's crafts and games as well as a princess meet and greet. Guests are encouraged to wear their royal best! Intergenerational event for princes and princesses of all ages. Advance reservations required. Tickets are \$25 (adults) and \$15 (children). The event will be held at the Veterans' Memorial Community Center in Inver Grove Heights.

More information about any of our events can be found on line at: neighborsmn.org/events

Save the Date:
Princess Tea Party –
Saturday, April 30th at 10 a.m.