



Neighbors News

Spring 2017

2016-2017

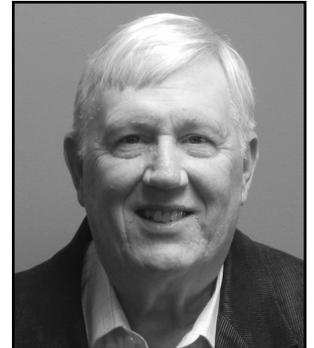
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President and CEO

Saying Farewell

As I get closer and closer to my last day I reflect, more and more, on what the last 14 years have brought. I think about the changes that have occurred at Neighbors, our amazing growth, the huge increase in the number of persons who volunteer their time to serve others in their community through Neighbors. I think about everything that was involved in finding the building we are in now and somehow figuring out how to economically make it work while we raised the money it would take to pay everything off.



John Kemp

No matter where my mind goes, one thought always stands out over everything else. I continue to be awestruck at the support Neighbors receives from the people of northern Dakota County. The food donations that allow us to now give out a million pounds of food to people in need of assistance. The monetary donations that have kept pace with our growth. The donations of clothing and household goods that have allowed the Clothes Closet Thrift Store to become a major financial contributor to the organization, helping support all the other programs we provide, while at the same time allowing us to provide top-quality clothing at exceptionally low prices to all who care to shop there.

But most important for me are the thousands of people who volunteer at Neighbors. In 2003, when I came to Neighbors there were perhaps 300 people who volunteered over the course of a year. In 2016 there were 1,500 people who volunteered. Some were only able to provide a limited number of hours while others make their volunteer service a major part of their week, every week and are here for several hundred hours a year.

This just stuns me every time I think about it. Thousands of people who care enough about their community, enough about serving others in their community who are perhaps not quite as fortunate, enough about Neighbors and the role that it plays in our community that they give what is perhaps the most valuable commodity they possess, their time, to volunteer at this organization.

I have loved everything about this job I have been fortunate to hold for the last 14 years. I've come to love the staff as if they were my own family. Perhaps they are. I've loved the work the organization does. I've loved the opportunity it has provided me to be deeply involved in the community in so many ways.

But most importantly, I have come to deeply value, appreciate and love the folks who volunteer here. From the food shelf to the Clothes Closet, the Christmas

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



Meet Charlie

While John's retirement is certainly bittersweet, we're excited to have Charlie Thompson on-board as our new president and CEO! For those who haven't had a chance to meet him yet – and for those who have and just want to know a little more about him – read on...

What were you doing before joining Neighbors?

Most recently, I spent about 10 years working for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul – first in South Bend, Ind., and then in Tacoma, Wash. I started there as a volunteer after we moved to South Bend and soon joined the staff. About a year later, I became the executive director and then a few years later moved out to Tacoma to take on the executive director role there.



Charlie Thompson

What interests you about Neighbors?

It really speaks to my heart. I'm the oldest of seven kids and growing up we utilized a lot of the services that organizations like Neighbors provide, so in many ways this role is a way for me to give back. I'm from Lake City, Minn., so this was also an opportunity for me to come home.

I also appreciate how respected Neighbors is within the communities it serves, and how it continually looks to the future. I want to be part of something that is constantly striving to be better, and I see that in Neighbors.

What has impressed you most about Neighbors so far?

The dedication and compassion exhibited by the staff and volunteers is amazing. It's instantly recognizable, and I think that speaks to the quality of the organization. The teamwork, positivity and willingness to help whenever and wherever it is needed is so genuine. Everyone really cares about those we're serving and about each other.

What are you most excited about?

There is such a strong foundation at Neighbors – I'm excited to build off that and continue serving the community. Starting on solid footing puts us in a great position to see where there may be additional opportunities to live into our mission.

What inspires you?

Two things, really:

First, engaging with those we serve. As I get started, being able to learn about the impact that Neighbors has for so many in the community has been really powerful, and I look forward to many more of those conversations.

Also, I know I've already mentioned it, but being able to work with the team of staff and volunteers that are here. It's impossible not to be motivated by their dedication and work ethic.

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program to the transportation program, the friendly reassurance call program to Come As You Are; every program we have is run on a daily basis by volunteers. They are the ones on the front line, serving people who come here for both help and hope.

And the opportunity to get up in the morning, come to work and be surrounded all day by these incredible, wonderful people who are here because they want to be, not because they have to be, and want nothing in return other than the warm feeling they go home with because of what they have done that day, has made this the most rewarding, fun and enriching thing I have ever been allowed to do.

I like to think that over the last 14 years I have become part of the largest family imaginable. I want to take this final opportunity to publicly thank everyone who has allowed me to be part of this family. The staff I have worked with, the volunteers who have so kindly and lovingly supported me and who make this place work, those who have donated food, clothing, gifts, household items, money; everything it takes to make Neighbors work.

It has been a wonderful 14 years and every day I realize more and more just how much I am going to miss every tiny little part of it and how much I am going to miss you.

Thank you all for everything.

John Kemp

Upcoming Holiday Schedule

Neighbors will be closed on the following dates:

- Memorial Day – Monday, May 29
- Independence Day – Tuesday, July 4

Congratulations to our Neighbor Indeed Award Winners

Neighbors recognizes outstanding volunteers who exemplify the organization's core values of respect, empowerment, compassion and fairness. Anyone who has given their time to Neighbors as a volunteer is eligible, and this year we are thrilled to honor eight individuals and groups with the following Neighbor Indeed Awards for their work in 2016:

- Respect – Mark Oppitz
- Empowerment – Solveig Bentson
- Compassion – Jackie Rhody
- Fairness – JoAnne Walther
- Core Value Champion – Virginia Milbert
- Longest Serving Volunteer – Virginia Milbert
- Outstanding Youth Service – Christian Richardson
- Program of the Year – Come As You Are
- Community Partner Award – Blue Cross Blue Shield

Congratulations and thank you to all our volunteers. Without you, Neighbors would not be able to do the work that it does within the community.



Stay Connected

Get the latest news from Neighbors and the Clothes Closet by following us on Facebook and Twitter!



Thank You for Helping Feed our Neighbors in Need

Thank you, thank you, thank you! Once again, you have showed us how much you care for your neighbors. This year, with your amazing help and support, we collected a combined total of 324,859 pounds and dollars during the Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign. We are humbled by the generosity we have been shown and promise to put each and every donation to good use. Whether you donated food or money, gave of your time or helped spread the word, we could not have done it without you.



Welcome New Volunteers

We are excited to have the following individuals and groups working with us:

Clothes Closet

Emily Beck
Jenna Dohrer
Thomas Tongen
Kathy Hanson
Christie Lawrence
Bennett Dold
Jon Dold

Food Shelf

Marlys Cardelli
Kathy Hanson
Vern Harmon
Eric Henry
Melissa Machado
Thomas Tongen

Volunteer Programs

Aaron Jennings

Front Desk

Catherine Saunders

Groups

Therapy Ops
Lifeworks Services, Inc.
Metro State COMM
351 Class
Minnesota Home
Ownership Council

Volunteer with Us

Volunteers are such an important part of Neighbors, and we're always looking for people who want to share of their time and talents to help others. Current opportunities can always be found on our website at www.neighborsmn.org/volunteer, or you can contact our volunteer department at 651.306.2145 or volunteer@neighborsmn.org. Here's a quick peek at where we're looking for help right now:

- Dial-a-Ride: drivers (flexible schedules)
- Events: parade support for West St. Paul Days (May 20), Kaposia Days (June 23), Mendota Day (July 8) and Inver Grove Heights Days (September 9)

Serving in the Summer

It's hard to believe, but summer is just a few months away! As you plan your cabin trips and vacations, we hope you'll also consider adding some summer meals volunteer shifts to your calendar, too.

In our area, 45 to 67 percent of students receive free or reduced lunch during the school year, making summer a difficult time for parents who are struggling to make ends meet. While the food shelf remains a resource, the summer meals program is also available to help ensure that kids in the community are getting the nutrition they need to grow and thrive.

A partnership between the USDA, ISD #197, Special District #6 and Neighbors, the program provides free breakfast and lunch to those 18-years-old and younger. Food is provided by the USDA, the schools provide an expert cafeteria staff person for each site and we provide the volunteers to help prep and serve the meals!

If you love working with kids, are passionate about hunger relief or are just looking for something to do this summer, volunteering with this program is a great opportunity to make a difference in the community. It's also a great opportunity for groups to get involved – some even take a whole week at a school and fill the shifts with friends, family, colleagues, etc.

For more information or to sign up, visit www.neighborsmn.org/summer-meals-program or contact Scott at scott@neighborsmn.org.

“I LOVE volunteering for the summer meals program! It lets me do two of my favorite things at the same time – visiting and laughing with friends while helping feed the hungry. Get a few of your friends together and sign up to volunteer. It's easy, fun and rewarding!” — Sue



2017 Summer Meal Schedule

Breakfast and lunch will be served Mondays through Thursdays (except where noted) at the following schools (service times vary by location):

Kaposia Elementary (South St. Paul)

June 19 to August 3

South St. Paul Secondary (South St. Paul)

June 12 to July 28

Moreland Elementary (West St. Paul)

June 14 to August 17

Garlough Elementary (West St. Paul)

July 10 to August 3

Henry Sibley High (West St. Paul)

June 14 to July 7 (Monday to Friday)

July 10 to August 3 (Monday to Thursday)

Neighbors Helping Neighbors: Jackie Rhody

For more than five years, Jackie Rhody has been committed to helping her neighbors by helping at Neighbors. From event support at the Duck Races to holiday intake and the front desk, Dial-a-Ride to the food shelf and summer meals, she has spent time in nearly every volunteer program that Neighbors offers.

“The Duck Races are my favorite,” she notes with a smile, as she reflects on her experiences. As for why she volunteers, the answer is simple. “I’ve been very fortunate in my life, and I have the time and energy to do it. Someday I won’t, so I’m getting it in now.”

Her time with Neighbors has also forged some great friendships. She met a fellow volunteer while helping with the holiday program one year and when Neighbors needed help with the summer meals program, they did it together, along with another of Jackie’s friends. It was there that they met two other volunteers and soon enough the five of them could be found working the same volunteer shifts and checking out all the Food Fight restaurants together. “We get along so well and have such a great time – it just works out!”

Jackie’s involvement goes beyond volunteering, however. She is also a donor, providing Neighbors with shares of stock rather than cash. “For me, it’s easier to give stock, and Neighbors can get more for it,” she says. “I’ve been able to take care of myself and have some left to give. By doing it now, I get to see how it’s used, which I appreciate.”



The Neighbors Helping Neighbors column features members of the community who give of their resources in a variety of ways. If you’d like to learn more about different giving options, please contact Beth Skwira, director of development, at 651.306.2148.

Support Neighbors by Sponsoring an Event

An event sponsorship is an opportunity to support the needs of our neighbors – hunger, transportation, and clothing – and strengthen the community we live in. Neighbors relies on the incredible generosity of local businesses and organizations to help fund its programs. If you or your company are interested in sponsoring an event, please contact Heidi at 651.306.2154 or heidi@neighborsmn.org.

Food Fight Thanks

A big thank you to everyone who participated in the 2017 Great Neighbors’ Food Fight – especially the six local restaurants who competed for best chicken wings: B-52 Burgers & Brew, BLVD Bar + Grille, Cherokee Tavern, Jersey’s Bar & Grill, Mississippi Pub and The Coop!

The votes have been counted and this year’s winner is Cherokee Tavern. Congratulations!



Helping our Neighbors in Need

Even if he had a job interview, the 30-year-old homeless veteran said, he'd be too self-conscious to go because he'd been without a toothbrush for the past week. He'd lost his Social Security disability income and food support because his post-traumatic stress disorder and bipolar disorder made paperwork hard to comprehend and overwhelming to fill out. The government always wanted more forms from his doctor. "My doctor asked me, 'What, do they think this will go away, magically, someday? You'll have to live with this for the rest of your life,'" the veteran said.

While he was in the office, we called Dakota County's Adult Services intake line together to see if he could be assigned a social worker to give him some additional support with accessing the benefits he should be receiving. They got his contact information and promised to call him back. We gave him food, and a toothbrush. We also gave him a referral to area churches that have free dinners, and a support agency for veterans called MACV, which might offer additional help beyond the county social services.

He said asking for help made him feel bad about himself. He felt like he'd been close to stable before, and he'd lost it all again. Mental illness is such an invisible wound. People appear healthy and happy, but a big symptom can be dysfunction. People who are mentally ill sometimes struggle to take care of basic needs, like making sure their food support stays active because filling out the forms feels impossible.

I told this young man that sometimes I try to think about the brain like a car engine. Would we be mad at an engine for running rough because it was low on oil? When the brain is low on neurotransmitters like dopamine, it runs rough. Everything feels hard to do. Everything is hard to do.

It turned out, Neighbors had been there for this young man throughout his whole life. During his childhood, his mother sometimes used our food shelf and other programs. He comes in for services about once a year, during times when he's struggling, I'd guess. He said we're always so helpful and kind to him. "Neighbors feels like a safe space to me," he said. "And that means a lot."

I told him that my hope for him was that the county would get some extra support services in place for him, help him back into stable housing, and get his Social Security disability income and food support restarted so that he could focus on getting healthy again. "When I feel better," he said, "I'll come back and say 'I'm doing OK, guys.' And maybe I'll be able to help some people then."

Annie Nelson
Emergency Services Intake Worker

Come As You Are Shines on First Ever Prom Night

On April 4, guests from all around the metro dressed up in their best outfits for a night full of live entertainment, dancing and memories to last a lifetime. Prom Night instantly became a fan favorite for participants of Come As You Are – a social program for adults with developmental disabilities, yielding the highest participant turnout so far on the 2016-2017 calendar! Of course, this could not have been possible had it not been for the hard work and

dedication of the program's outstanding volunteer corps. A huge thank-you to all supporters of Come As You Are. The friendships you help form make a huge difference in the lives of these individuals.

To learn more about getting involved with Come As You Are, please contact Dylan at dylan@neighborsmn.org.



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

Phone: 651.455.5000
Fax: 651.455.1319
Email: info@neighborsmn.org
Web Site: www.neighborsmn.org



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Neighbors, Inc.'s annual Taps & Apps Happy Hour Fundraising Event will be held on Tuesday, July 11, from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. at Wabasha Brewing Company in St. Paul. Join us for a night of craft beer, games, silent auction fun and great company! Tickets on sale soon.

Save The Date



It's Almost Time to 'Stamp Out Hunger®'

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the National Association of Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger® Food Drive and we are grateful to once again be the recipient for local South St. Paul, West St. Paul and Inver Grove Heights donations. Be sure to tell your friends and mark your calendar: this year's drive will be held on Saturday, May 13, and it's easy to participate! Just put your non-perishable donation in a bag by your mailbox before your mail is delivered that day. Your letter carrier will pick it up and deliver it to us.