



Neighbors News

Winter 2017

2016-2017

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Building Community for 45 years

Anniversaries are often a time of reflection – both on the past and the future – and this year is certainly no exception. Forty-five years ago, a group of volunteers from local churches came together to help those in the community who had been impacted when two of the area’s largest employers closed their doors. Since then, Neighbors, Inc. has worked to continue those efforts by providing emergency and supportive services to individuals and families living in northern Dakota County.

A lot has happened since 1972, however the foundation built during those first meetings remains steadfast. People still need food and clothing, shelter and transportation, and our core values of respect, fairness, compassion and empowerment still hold true.

With the help of our volunteers, donors and partners, Neighbors has been able to help countless people who struggle to put meals on the table, keep their lights on, avoid eviction, pay a medical bill, have weather-appropriate clothing and so much more. More than that though, Neighbors has provided hope and relief, strength and support at times when it can be hard to be positive.

This year, especially, we are also looking to the future. In just a few months, Neighbors will continue its work under the leadership of a new executive director. This transition will bring with it new opportunities, and we can’t wait to see what’s in store.

Thank you for all your support – whether you’ve been with us since the beginning or recently found us. We look forward to building on the success of our programs and seeing what possibilities await in the days, weeks, months and years to come.

2016 At-A-Glance

Last year, with the help of 1,482 volunteers, Neighbors, Inc.:

- Served 14,131 people in the food shelf and 43,437 at the bakery shelf
- Distributed 979,647 pounds of food
- Provided clothing vouchers to 1,582 people
- Coordinated 2,122 rides to medical appointments
- Served 45,165 meals to students attending summer school in five schools



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



Get Ready for FoodShare!

March is just around the corner, which means it's time for the annual Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign! This campaign not only helps us have enough food for the busy summer months ahead, but food shelves from across the state will be vying for funding that is distributed later in the year.

Last year, we raised 347,639 pounds/dollars during the campaign, which placed us third in the state – however, the fourth place finisher wasn't far behind! In 2017, our goal is to collect 350,000 pounds/dollars to feed our neighbors in need. Will you help us stock the shelves? Here are just a few ways to get involved:

- Organize a food and/or fund drive
- Donate food or funds
- Host a speaker from Neighbors at an upcoming meeting or event

For additional details, visit www.neighborsmn.org/mnfoodshare.



Love Your Neighbor Holiday Program Helps More than 700 Families

“Are we going to have Christmas this year?”

A client's son asked that very question in early winter. He'd noticed that his mom was struggling to get hours at work and was old enough to know what that might mean for their holiday. His mom told him she would try, but she really wasn't sure how the family would manage it.

Then she heard about the Love Your Neighbor Holiday Program at Neighbors, Inc. She applied and was one of the 705 families who received gifts through the program in 2016. She shared this story with us as she picked up the gifts for her family and said she was so grateful – and excited – to be able to give her son the Christmas he didn't think he'd have.

We often call our adopters and donors angels; and the families who use the program often echo that sentiment. The faces of parents light up as they pick up the gifts for their children, and shock appears on the faces of seniors when they see – in the form of a pile of gorgeously wrapped gifts – the generosity and love a complete stranger has given them.

Every single present given out to the 1,523 children and 86 seniors through the program this year was provided by the community. We are so grateful for everyone who donated, adopted and volunteered with the Love Your Neighbor program in 2016. Your generosity shows families that are hurting that they are not alone, and that is a truly profound gift.

*Annie Nelson and Scott Andrews
Holiday Program Coordinators*



Five Simple Steps for a Successful Drive

If organizing a food or fund drive sounds daunting, don't worry! Just follow these five simple steps to a successful drive:

1. **Set a goal** – Put some thought into how much you want to raise...
2. **Promote your drive** – then figure out the best way to get it done! Share information via email, social media, posters and announcements; provide shopping lists with suggested items; create a friendly competition to encourage donations. The more fun a drive is, the more successful it tends to be.
3. **Collect food and/or funds** – Conduct your drive and check collection sites often.
4. **Get the food and/or funds to Neighbors** – Schedule a time to drop off your donation at the office/food shelf (Monday – Friday between 8:15 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. and 1 and 4:30 p.m.) or, if needed, request someone stop by to pick up.
5. **Celebrate your success** – Upon receipt, Neighbors will provide you with information about the total number of pounds and dollars you collected. Feel free to share with those who participated so that they know how important their contribution was to helping their neighbors in need.

Having a Drive? We're Here to Help!

We appreciate your support and want to make participating in the March Campaign as fun and easy as possible. Check out the resources we have available below and visit www.neighborsmn.org/partner-resources for downloadable information.

- Speakers for meetings and/or events
- Posters
- Newsletter articles
- Statistics
- Planning guides
- Collection barrels and boxes
- Plastic bags
- Stickers
- Brochures
- Informational presentations

Contact Darcy at 651.306.2149 or darcy@neighborsmn.org if any of these items would be helpful for your drives.



Our community partners are an essential part of our Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign success! From chili cook-offs to friendly competitions, CANstruction projects to more traditional food drives, we so appreciate the effort and enthusiasm put into helping our neighbors in need.



New at Neighbors



The end of 2016 was bittersweet. Not only did we have to say farewell to Tricia Goers and Mark Oppitz who had joined us on temporary intake and food shelf assignments during the holiday season, but we also had to say goodbye to Lon Berven, who retired. However, we were thrilled to welcome Darcy Wetzel as our new community outreach coordinator.

Prior to joining the staff, Darcy spent nearly two years volunteering with the organization, helping at the Front Desk, working in the Clothes Closet and assisting with community events. In addition, she has spent time fielding questions and helping customers at the front desk of a church and through a variety of positions with several airlines. She is excited to be with Neighbors and is generally in the office Wednesday to Friday, so please stop in and introduce yourself.

Welcome New Volunteers

We also welcomed some new ongoing volunteers in the last few months – thank you for helping your neighbors in need!

Clothes Closet

Lori Frye
Lizzie Levak

Daily Check-In

Lynsie Stumbris

Donation Pick-Up

Kody McCollam
Skyler McCollam

Food Shelf

Bill Huebsch

Front Desk

Lizzie Levak
Sherry Patterson

Marketing & Communications

Griffin Danes

NAPS Distribution

Hannah Ender
McKenzie Hollar

Current Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are an integral part of Neighbors – we wouldn't be able to serve the community in the way that we do without them. If you'd like to share of your time and talents, we'd love to have you! Some of our more immediate needs include:

Clothes Closet *(ongoing opportunities)*

- Cashiers
- Wednesday afternoons
- Friday mornings

Dial-a-Ride *(ongoing opportunities; flexible scheduling)*

- Monday through Friday

2017 Food Fight Cards Now Available

Are you ready for the Great Neighbors' Food Fight? Six local restaurants have signed on to see who has the best chicken wings – and you can help decide who wins! Plus, all proceeds from card sales benefit Neighbors, Inc.

Cards are \$30 each and can be redeemed for one order of the highlighted wings listed below at each participating restaurant through March 31, 2017. After determining your favorite, just visit www.neighborsmn.org to vote for your favorite by April 7. The winning restaurant will be announced shortly thereafter.

Highlighted Wings

Each restaurant has selected two flavors to highlight during the contest. These include:

- B-52 Burgers & Brew: buffalo or sweet Thai chili
- BLVD Bar + Grille: BLVD or buffalo
- Cherokee Tavern: buffalo or jerk
- Jersey's Bar & Grill: buffalaki or hot buffalo
- Mississippi Pub: Cajun or buffalo
- The Coop: sweet chili or spicy



Cards are limited, so be sure to get yours soon by visiting www.neighborsmn.org/events or stopping by the Neighbors office during regular business hours.

A big thank you to all six participating restaurants – we appreciate your support!



Continuing Education Workshops for 2017

As we start 2017, we are working to schedule engaging continuing education workshops that will provide information relevant to our volunteers' work at Neighbors and beyond. These sessions will take place every other month on either Tuesdays or Thursdays, so be sure to mark your calendar and join us on the following dates!

- Thursday, March 9 – CPR Training
- Tuesday, May 16 – Urban Immersion: A Training on Poverty and Privilege
- Thursday, July 13 – TBD
- Tuesday, September 19 – TBD
- Thursday, November 9 – TBD

Questions? Contact Dylan at 651.272.1133 or dylan@neighborsmn.org.

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Neighbors Helping Neighbors: Gwen Weiler

For Gwen Weiler, volunteering with Neighbors, Inc. was a natural transition. As the organization began the process of relocating more than six years ago, she was preparing to retire. Having spent years planning and facilitating corporate moves, she volunteered to put her skills to work helping Neighbors do the same.

“I can’t imagine how we would have made the move without Gwen,” says John Kemp, Neighbors’ executive director. “She helped us find all of our furniture, organized the packing up of every office – including computer equipment – made sure it was all moved safely to the correct place, and coordinated the set-up of all the furniture in our new space. We learned that if we did what Gwen told us to do, it would go smoothly!”

A long-time resident of Inver Grove Heights, giving back to the community – and Neighbors, specifically – has been a part of Gwen’s life since she was young. Her mom volunteered with the organization soon after it was created, her dad helped drive people to medical appointments and they have given countless bags of clothing to the Clothes Closet over the years.

“Service to the community was always in the background growing up,” she says. “It’s just what you did; you got involved.

As time went on, Gwen began to give to Neighbors financially, as well as volunteering with the Love Your Neighbor Holiday Program and summer meals program. The hours she spent were a good transition from working to retirement, and she saw first-hand the impact her dollars were making.

“I know that Neighbors is a good steward of the donations it receives,” she says. “I feel confident giving knowing that the organization is doing what it says it’s going to do.”

It’s Neighbors’ stewardship, along with the support for those in need in the community, that keeps Gwen engaged in helping the organization work toward its mission.

“Everybody has to have something they can count on,” she says. “Neighbors provides support when people need it most.”

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.

Recent Grants

Thank you! In the last few months, we were honored to receive a major general operating grant from the Otto Bremer Trust.

Give Back Before Giving Thanks

On Thanksgiving morning, community members, volunteers, churches and local businesses came together to support Neighbors, Inc. in the annual Walk to End Hunger! Held at the Mall of America, this year's event featured FunZones with music, games, and arts and crafts throughout the walk. Those stopping by the Neighbors booth were greeted by Delbert the Duck and some amazing volunteers – including two dressed up as soup cans – and were able to test their skills in a grocery-bagging competition. Sound like fun? We would love to grow this event, so mark your calendar and plan on joining us next Thanksgiving! Visit www.walktoendhunger.org for more information.



Holiday Tradition Highlights How One Can Impact Many

It was another magical night in December at The Saint Paul Hotel for the special benefit performance of “It’s A Wonderful Life: Live Radio Play.” This annual event has become a holiday tradition for many, kicking off the season with the wonderful story of how one person’s life can touch so many others through kindness and goodwill. Special thanks to the cast, crew and The Saint Paul Hotel for donating their time and talents so that 100 percent of the money raised through ticket sales and the fund-a-need auction benefits Neighbors’ programs.



Give to the Max Day 2016 a Success

Neighbors experienced an incredible day of generosity during 2016’s annual Give to the Max Day and we are so grateful! Despite some technical difficulties with the GiveMN website, we raised \$33,682 for our programs that provide our neighbors in need with food, housing, emergency assistance and transportation to medical appointments. Thank you to everyone who participated!

Thank You!

give
TO THE
MAX
NOV. 17, 2016



neighbors, inc.



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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If you haven't already, stay up-to-date with Neighbors and the Clothes Closet by following us on Facebook and Twitter!

Stay Connected

- April 14 – Good Friday
- February 20 – Presidents' Day

The Neighbors, Inc. office will be closed on the following dates:

Upcoming Holiday Schedule

Online Giving Made Easier

Last fall, Neighbors launched a new online giving platform that makes it even easier to donate online. In addition to making one-time gifts, there are also options to set up recurring gifts at any dollar amount or even make non-cash donations.

Plus, you can also donate via text message! Just text @neighbors and your gift amount to 52014. For your first gift, you'll be given a link to set up a text giving account; moving forward, the system will recognize your number and all you'll have to do is the first step! We appreciate your support and are committed to providing you with simple and secure options to give. If you have any questions, please contact Beth Skwira at 651.306.2148.