



The Neighborhood Table ■ P.O. Box 512 ■ Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495 ■ www.theneighborhoodtable.org

December 10, 2012

My View: It takes neighbors to serve The Neighborhood Table meals

Volunteers are the life blood of most not-for-profit organizations and that is certainly true for The Neighborhood Table (TNT), a community meal program that currently offers free weekly meals each Thursday and the last Tuesday of the month. Our meal program has no paid staff and is run completely by volunteers.

We would not be able to provide our meals without the countless hours from our dedicated volunteers, both from our sponsor groups and our own corps of volunteers, as well as the various donations of food and money we receive from community members and sponsors throughout the year. We serve five to six meals per month and serve approximately 375 meals on Thursdays which includes carryout meals and about 180 at our Tuesday meal. At the end of December, we will celebrate our ninth year of operation. And by then, we will have served more than 170,000 meals by working with more than 100 different sponsor groups in our community.

We have done a lot over the years, and we feel there is still more that needs to be done. As a result of this continued need, TNT is very excited to announce that we will serve an additional Tuesday meal starting in January 2013. This means we will serve meals on the last two Tuesdays of the month and every Thursday with the exception of Thanksgiving Day. The additional Tuesday meal provides an opportunity for new sponsor groups or existing groups to sign up to sponsor one of these new meals in 2013. Our sponsor groups are as diverse as our neighborhoods: churches, businesses, school groups and sports teams, employee groups, individual families and numerous other community groups. The majority of our sponsors continue to sponsor a meal (or multiple meals) each year. Our guests really appreciate the meal and community atmosphere we offer, and our volunteers have fun working together to serve the meals. If you or your community group would like to help by sponsoring a meal, please contact me at bikowski@wctc.net or 715-325-2962.

It takes a lot of hard work to make this program happen. There are many tasks required to run our program – from scheduling the meals and working with potential sponsors, to planning and preparing the meals, securing volunteers to serve the meal, helpers to prepare the to-go meals on Thursdays, cleaning up to make sure the meal site is left clean and secure after our meal, to picking up food donations and deliveries, and to those who organize our volunteers and take care of all the administrative tasks that are required to run a nonprofit. Our volunteers gladly work together for TNT, and we are grateful for all the countless hours they donate to us. If you have an interest in helping at our meals, please visit the United Way of Inner Wisconsin's Volunteer Center website at <http://www.volunteerinnerwisc.org> to get more details on the volunteer opportunities available at TNT or visit our website <http://www.theneighborhoodtable.org>.

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Volunteers and sponsors are the nuts and bolts of our operation but we are also grateful for the support we receive from others in the community. We are most grateful that Saint John's Episcopal Church allows us to serve our meals in their Parish Hall. We are also thankful for the many ways the United Way of Inner Wisconsin provides their continued support of our program. We are appreciative for the many financial contributions that allow us to provide all of the meal supplies and equipment needed to run our program. And, we are also grateful for the many food donations we receive from local farmers and others when excess food becomes available. If you are considering year-end donations, we certainly would appreciate your help. Please send donations to: The Neighborhood Table, PO Box 512, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495-0512. All donations are tax deductible. As you can see, it takes the combined efforts of many in our community – our neighbors – to make The Neighborhood Table happen. Thank you to all of our volunteers, sponsors and numerous supporters for all you do to make The Neighborhood Table a successful program in our community!

Dale Bikowski
President
The Neighborhood Table