



The Neighborhood Table ■ P.O. Box 512 ■ Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495 ■ (715) 422-1980 ■ www.theneighborhoodtable.org

Joint Release From:

Hope's Door
South Wood County Emergency Pantry Shelf
The Neighborhood Table

December 21, 2013

Holiday baskets will help many

WISCONSIN RAPIDS, Wis. – There's a wonderful story to tell about people helping people in our community. Three nonprofit organizations pulled together to assemble over 500 holiday food baskets for those in need. Hope's Door, South Wood County Emergency Pantry Shelf (SWEPS) and The Neighborhood Table (TNT) joined forces over the last few weeks to gather the food, verify the recipient lists, prepare the baskets and distribute them. This was the first time these organizations worked together on such a project. It is estimated that about 2,700 people will be served with food from these baskets over the Christmas holiday.

More than 35 volunteers contributed their time and effort to gather food for the baskets, assemble all of the items in them and then distribute them. The baskets were assembled on Sunday, December 15, and distributed the following Monday through Thursday. The baskets contained the fixings for a holiday meal: hams or turkeys, potatoes, green beans, mushroom soup, cranberries, beverages and other items.

Hope's Door worked with SWEPS, local schools, area churches and Social Services to develop a single list that made the best effort to avoid duplicate baskets for families. Many families qualified for toys and children's clothes (until the supply lasted) in addition to the food baskets.

The food for the baskets came from local purchases and donations. SWEPS, TNT and others in the community also contributed to the baskets. For example, Wisconsin River Cranberries contributed about 465 pounds of cranberries. Through a sharing relationship with the Waushara County Food Pantry, volunteers from TNT and SWEPS picked up additional items to add to the baskets.

Hope's Door contributed their volunteers, the location for the basket project, and then coordinated the distribution with SWEPS. Karolyn Weber, president of Hope's Door commented, "My first thought when approached to do these baskets was, 'Can we pull this off in such a short time?' My next thought was, 'We WILL pull this off.' My VP Jennifer Concklin, Director Donnetta and I felt it was a great

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collaboration and an extremely successful project. We hope to continue this as a tradition in years to come, working together with SWEPS and TNT to provide some happiness and ease the burden of food insecurity in our community during the holidays.”

Karlene Dillingham, food pantry coordinator of SWEPS, diligently worked on organizing the food assembly line and making sure there were the right numbers of holiday baskets matched to the appropriate sized family. She was at Hope’s Door each day of distribution ensuring the quantities and assisting with the distribution. Dillingham said, “By the three agencies working collaboratively, we were able to pull this project off in about 2½ weeks from start to finish. It was a pleasure to work with a fantastic group of volunteers from all agencies, serve a huge need in the community, and have our clients’ anonymity and dignity preserved.”

Many of the volunteers who helped assemble the baskets were called into action by the efforts of Dale Bikowski, president of TNT. Bikowski commented, “There were a number of great things that came out of this project – the first being the various community groups and their volunteers who worked together and learned about each other’s programs. They found out we share a lot of common goals in the community which strengthened our working relationships. By working together, we were able to serve a greater number of people in need by eliminating duplication that may have happened if we worked independently. Everyone that helped from TNT had a great time helping on this project. Many have already asked about helping out next year. It was a very rewarding project for all involved. We hope this project will have a large impact on our community over the next few weeks.”

About Hope’s Door

Hope's Door is a nonprofit organization that helps people in need in the South Wood County area. Its 501(c)3 nonprofit umbrella is provided by the New Horizons Foundation.

Hope's Door is based on the belief that its clients' needs are of the utmost importance. The entire team is committed to meeting those needs. As a result, a high percentage of its business comes from donations within the community.

Hope's Door also provides an infant pantry; natural disaster pantry; Boy Scout and Post Office food; and information/referrals to other programs.

Currently, over 3,000 families are registered at Hope’s Door. More than 500 families are served a month, reaching more than 15,000 individuals per year. Hope's Door is in need of financial support in order to keep doors open and give hope to those in need in the South Wood County community. For more information, visit www.hopesdoor.info. Hope’s Door location is 1430 - 2nd Street No., Wisconsin Rapids.

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About South Wood County Emergency Pantry Shelf (SWEPS)

The mission of SWEPS is to provide food to meet emergency hunger needs in the South Wood County area. The pantry began in 1975 as an outreach ministry of the First Congregational Church. It has grown to become the ecumenical effort of many area churches and community volunteers, who participate in staffing and board representation. For more information, call (715) 422-2050.

About The Neighborhood Table (TNT)

The Neighborhood Table is a nonprofit 501(c)3 charitable organization with the mission to reduce hunger, improve the quality of life and create an awareness of the needs that exist in the Wisconsin Rapids community and surrounding area. The organization was formed in late 2003 and grew the frequency of meals served since that time to every Thursday and the last two Tuesdays of each month. Currently, approximately 175 and 375 meals are served each Tuesday and Thursday, respectively, to local participants. Over 100 different groups, businesses and clubs in the area sponsor TNT meals.

The Neighborhood Table is staffed by volunteers who carry out the meal/soup kitchen program by offering a free meal to anyone who is in need. Meals are served from 4:30 to 6 p.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church, 320 Oak Street, Wisconsin Rapids, with take-outs available Thursdays only. The Neighborhood Table is governed by its Board of Directors. The program services the communities of Wisconsin Rapids, Nekoosa, Port Edwards and surrounding areas in central Wisconsin. To learn more about TNT and available volunteer opportunities, please visit www.theneighborhoodtable.org.

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