



# The River

The River Food Pantry  
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**Want to get email updates from The River?** Sign up on our website and be sure to add us to your contact list.

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## Our Mission:

To bring a message of mercy and hope to those in need by providing nutritional basics and encouragement; to be a unifying, servant hearted and community building expression of Jesus Christ in Madison.

Quarterly Newsletter of The River Food Pantry

Winter 2015

## Life After Foreclosure: Andi & José's Story by Steven Potter

After a five year struggle to hold onto their home, Andi and José lost their court battle and were forced to live in their car when their home was foreclosed on last Spring. When they weren't sleeping in the car, the couple and their three children bounced from campground to campground.

While they were familiar and had visited The River Food Pantry in the past, feeding three children, ages 7-10, became an even greater challenge as they now lacked a refrigerator, stove and so many other kitchen appliances we all take for granted.

Their already limited options were now far more limited, remembers Andi. But somehow, she remains hopeful and thankful. They don't have much, which makes her appreciate the little they do have

that much more.

"I've become more grateful The River is a part of my life and my family's life," she says. "I know we need this. I know we have to be here."

This experience has helped her connect with others, especially those at the pantry. "I finally started to stop and look up at people around me at The River," she says. "Being available to connect with others [at the pantry] is very important."

In particular, Andi and her kids have connected with staff at the pantry, calling them "rays of light."

"The staff interacts with everyone — the people eating, volunteers, other staff," she says. "They bring a sense of friendliness and comfort to the situation."



Over 2,000 lbs. of fresh produce are distributed at every public pantry session.

Her recent difficulties



Andi, Jose and their children had hot meals available because of The River.

have also helped her grow as a person. "It's hard to reach out and ask for help as a mom but I finally realized I needed to ask," she says. "I'm now willing to accept the help given at The River."

She also feels welcomed. "There is a level of trust and comfort when we walk into The River," she says. "I can sit at any table and enjoy dinner with my family and other families — there is no hesitation, no fear."

After spending the summer homeless, Andi, José and their children now have a small apartment. Ever the optimist, Andi holds on to hope and wants to help others who have similar struggles, she says. "Coming into challenges that threaten my family and my children has made me aware of how I can share my knowledge with others."

\*\*\*

**PANTRY NEEDS**

## Non-perishable Food:

- Canned Protein (Tuna, Chicken, Spam, etc.)
- Peanut Butter
- Canned or Boxed Pasta Meals
- Canned Fruit
- Canned Veggies
- Cereal
- Hamburger & Tuna Helper
- Soup
- Pasta
- Canned Pasta Sauces

## Personal Items:

- Soap, Lotions, TP, Diapers, Vitamins
- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Feminine Hygiene Items

## Donation hours:

Mon-Fri from 9am-6pm

**Word from the Directors: Andy & Jenny**

The River just set another service record! 2,846 household visits in October. September was fairly busy also with 2,683 household visits. So far this year, we have a 4% increase (1000 additional households visits). While these statistics can be very informative as to how busy we are, it's also nice to be able to see that the statistics translate into real people in need.

A family of five, dad, mom, and 7, 9 and 10 year old children, recently shared how they had been homeless and living in a tent all summer. They fought a foreclosure on their home for years, but lost the battle in May. Fortunately, they found an affordable apartment right before school started. They also shared their appreciation for the hot meals

served three times a week. While homeless, the free community meals at The River were often the only substantial meals they would have all day.

Another mom of five recently shared how she and her husband were struggling since she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She often brings her children to the food pantry after treatments so

they can all get a hot, balanced meal.

We haven't seen a senior woman in a few weeks. She let us know she would be going through a fairly difficult life saving surgery. When we last talked, she was worried about keeping healthy food in her kitchen while recovering.

Asking for help is one of the most difficult things we ever do in life. At The

*"I've become so grateful. The River is a part of my life and my family's life. I know we need this. I know we have to be here."*



River we strive to make each person's experience as uplifting as possible. We watch people come in with the weight of their burdens on their shoulder and then watch them leave with a smile on their face!

Thanks to all of you who help as best you can to support people in need with nutritional basics and encouragement.

*The River has seen a 4% increase, 1,000 additional household visits, this year.*

The River Bakery takes special orders. To order, please call Bakery Manager, Tina at 608-345-4105 or email [bakery@river-foodpantry.org](mailto:bakery@river-foodpantry.org).

*"This training program is such a wonderful opportunity to open up doors to a new career for those with no resources to change their circumstances."*

*Thank you so much for the chance to begin again doing something I enjoy."*

*-Bakery Graduate*

**On Sale at The River Bakery!**

Looking for the perfect gift for your holiday party, hostess gift, New Year's Eve event, client thank you, anniversary or just because? Show someone you care by giving them made from scratch treats from The River Bakery, The River's job training and placement program. The River Bakery is now taking orders for gift boxes.

**Gift Box 1: \$15****Gift Box 2: \$15****Gift Box 3: \$18****Gift Box 4: \$28****Number of Households Served in Recent Months**

August 2015:

2,401 Households

2,130 Hot meals

September 2015:

2,683 Households

2,461 Hot meals

October 2015:

2,846 households

2,511 Hot meals

**Your support makes this possible.**

## A Time to Share Hope by Amy Lord

*Dear Friends of the River,*

At the 2015 Harvest Dinner for Hunger, we met Shenise Morgan. Shenise and her family moved from Indianapolis looking for a fresh start. Upon arriving in Madison, she found a job, got her kids enrolled in public school, and hoped to get on her feet. Unfortunately, even with having a job, making ends meet was difficult.



Shenise Morgan is overwhelmed with gratitude by the kindness of The River volunteers and staff.

Shenise learned about The River almost a year ago and has found a second home. She enjoys shopping at the pantry and bringing her kids to dinner. Shenise is overwhelmed by the generosity and kindness of The River staff and volunteers. “The River goes above and beyond to make people feel welcome.” Shenise says. “They got a birthday cake from one of my kids. A birthday cake is something we aren’t able to buy and they got one for us.” For many a birthday cake is an expected part of the celebration but from some it’s a luxury they cannot afford. “That birthday cake meant so much to me and my family.”

It’s people like Shenise and her family that The River help each week. Moms and dads working to provide for their families who are your neighbors, your co-workers and your fellow parishioners. There are families in our community struggling, and you can do something to help.

As we enter the holiday season and 2015 comes to a close, we ask for your help.

**Your donation makes a difference at The River.**

**97 cents of every dollar funds programs and services.**

When you support The River, you not only send people home with food, you also make it possible for them to make rent or mortgage payments, cover utility bills and afford medical care or prescription drugs. The River is there for people in their time of need, when a cart full of groceries means not having to go hungry AND being able to pay the bills. **Your gift offers a hand up to families in need in our community.**

Donate today to keep The River’s shelves stocked and doors open. The River is a grass-roots, local non-profit and relies on your generous support to serve people in need in Dane



County. The River does not receive annual funding from the government or other large non-profit organizations. **The River's programs and services are entirely funded by compassionate and generous people like you who want to lend a helping hand to someone in need.**

*"It's hard to reach out and ask for help as a mom, but I finally realized I needed to ask. I was willing to accept the help given at The River."*

Gifts of any and every size helps The River create hope for those facing hunger.

**\$10** Provides \$100 worth of food with The Power of Ten

**\$25** Provides fuel for one Friday night of driving families home with groceries

**\$50** Keeps the truck running to pick up 38,000+ pounds of food weekly

**\$100** Provides food for 5 families a week

**\$150** Serves 100 hot meals

**\$200** Provides rent and utilities to The River for one day

A community meal at The River was the only hot meal for Shenise and her family at times while they were living out of their vehicle. Free community meals are available to anyone in need three nights a week, no questions asked. Shenise, along with other parents, can give her children a nutritious and healthy hot meal because of your donation.

Your donation helps people, like Shenise and her family, experience the peace of mind that comes with knowing there's enough food to put dinner on the table and a hot meal available for her family. You offer hope, mercy and a hand up in their time of need. For that, we are truly grateful.

With Gratitude,

Andy & Jenny Czerkas, Directors

P.S. The River is YOUR local, grassroots, non-profit and works every day to be a good steward of your gift. Please pay us a visit, take a tour, or volunteer during a pantry session. We look forward to meeting you!



Ready to distribute produce!



# SET SAIL TO FIGHT HUNGER

## HARVEST DINNER FOR HUNGER



## 2015 Harvest Dinner for Hunger

October 11, 2015 Set Sail to Fight Hunger

Over 230 guests joined The River on a voyage to end hunger in Dane County at the 2015 Harvest Dinner. The event raised over \$60,000, which will purchase nutritious and healthy food for four months.

1. Gina Leahy, The River Food Pantry administrative assistant, and volunteer Brenda Bernstein are ready to register guests. 2. Appetizers from Market St Diner were available along with beverages donated by Ale Asylum and Woodman's Market 3. Director Jenny Czerkas poses for a photo with daughter Cheryl and granddaughter Liliana. 4. Auction items were on display for attendees to bid high and bid often. 5. Emcee Dave Delozier, photojournalist from WISC TV Channel 3, and his wife Cindy enjoy the dinner. 6. The talented Beth Kille entertained guests the entire evening. 7. River Bakery assistant Emme Thorpe and manager Tina Dilks invite attendees to learn more about the bakery job training program.

*Photos courtesy of Althea Dotzour Photography.*

# Thank you 2015 Harvest Dinner Sponsors!

## Platinum Sponsors

**Findorff**



## Gold Sponsors



## Silver Sponsors



## Friends of The River Sponsors

DCI Property Management

Dentistry for Madison

Genesis Painting

Martee's Consulting, LLC

Park Bank

Summit Credit Union

WisPACT

## In-Kind Sponsors





## Hands of Hope

*Give monthly and be the Hands of Hope to our neighbors in need.*

97 cents of every dollar goes to food and services provided by The River.



Join online at:  
[riverfoodpantry.org/donate](http://riverfoodpantry.org/donate)

## Did you know?

- ⇒ **\$10 Provides \$100 worth of food**
- ⇒ **\$25 Provides fuel for one Friday night of driving families home**
- ⇒ **\$50 Keeps the trucks running to pick up 38,000+ lbs food weekly**
- ⇒ **\$100 Provides food for five families a week**
- ⇒ **\$150 Serves 100 hot meals**
- ⇒ **\$200 Provides Rent and utilizes for one day**

97 cents of every dollar donated to The River goes directly to providing food and services for thousands of children, adults, and seniors right here in Dane County. Join the Hands of Hope team and give on a regular reoccurring basis. Your ongoing gift stays right here in our community. Your support allows The River to continue the mission of providing fresh, nutritious food to neighbors struggling to make ends meet. Your support provides a stable and welcoming place for neighbors to come together and celebrate the essence of community. Your support provides hope to neighbors who need to visit and shop at the pantry.



## Staff

### Directors

Jenny & Andy Czerkas

### Development Director

Amy Lord

### Operations Manager

Rhonda Adams

### Pantry Manager

Dwayne Jordan

### Kitchen Manager

William Berkan

### Warehouse Coordinator

Vacant

### Administrative Assistant

Gina Leahy

### Driver

Shawn Dilks

### River Bakery Manager

Tina Dilks

### Bakery Assistant

Emme Thorpe

## Stay connected



## News Bites



### Vehicle Love & Attention

It's been a busy year for the vehicles at The River. With 8-10 weekly food pick-ups, 40+ miles of daily volunteer pick-ups and and more and more bakery deliveries, The River depends on our fleet of vehicles on hand. And it's been a tough year for some. The large cube truck had a

\$2,000 maintenance expense this past summer and now a "new to us" van needs new brakes—another \$2,000 expense. Are you able to help keep The River moving? Your donation is very important in keeping our vans and trucks running to keep the shelves, freezers and refrigerators stocked. \*\*\*

### Food Drive Resource Kit



Support The River Food Pantry by organizing a food and clothing drive.

You can now download a food drive resource kit online with information to help you execute a successful food and clothing drive at your office, church, or neighborhood center. Visit [www.RiverFoodPantry.org](http://www.RiverFoodPantry.org) and start planning your food and clothing drive today! \*\*\*

### Fun on Ice 2016

Fun on Ice is back for its second year! Mark your calendar for an afternoon of winter fun on **Saturday, February 13th**. It starts at 1pm at The East Side Club on Monona Dr. Join The River for a family-friendly fundraiser on the ice of Lake



Monona. The Old Fashioned and Good Eats Madison will be bringing chili, soup, and mac and cheese. The River Bakery treats will be available for purchase. Bucky Badger, the UW marching band, and Madison Capitols mascot DC eagle have been invited. Thank you sponsors Oak Bank, Windward Consulting, and Circle M Marketing. \*\*\*



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## **The River Hours**

### **MONDAY — FRIDAY**

**Donations:** 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

### **TUESDAY & THURSDAY**

#### **Food & Clothing Pantry:**

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

### **TUESDAY & THURSDAY**

#### **Pantry, Clothing and Dinner:**

5:00 - 6:30 p.m.

### **FRIDAY**

#### **Pantry, Clothing and Dinner:**

6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

(doors open at 5:00 p.m.)

The River is an equal opportunity  
provider.

## **ABOUT THE RIVER FOOD PANTRY**

The River Food Pantry was created to serve the low income neighborhoods concentrated along Northport Drive and the NE side of Madison, but the pantry is open to all Dane County residents. We are located in an 11,000 square foot warehouse at the end of Northport Drive, at 2201 Darwin Road, Madison, WI. Hours of operation are on the left of this page. We provide pantry assistance, hot nutritious meals, clothing and household goods and furniture. Your support is absolutely critical to meeting the needs of families in our area. No family should go hungry just because they cannot afford to buy food. We can affect so many lives by giving them hope. Please consider financially supporting the River Food Pantry today. If you are interested in learning more about The River Food Pantry, please contact us at (608) 442-8815 or e-mail us at [river@riverfoodpantry.org](mailto:river@riverfoodpantry.org). We would be happy to hear from you!



**THE RIVER FOOD PANTRY IS A NON-PROFIT 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION AND YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE.**

If you would prefer to be removed from our mailing list please contact us by phone or email.