

Summer 2020



2201 Darwin Rd. • Madison, WI • 53704
(608) 442-8815 • info@riverfoodpantry.org

Curbside Distribution Hours

TUES-FRI: 10am-3pm

Donation Drop-Off Hours

MON: 9am-1pm

TUES-FRI: 1pm-3pm

The River Food Pantry is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and your contribution is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.
EIN: 20-4179749

riverfoodpantry.org



Fully Nourished

Community Newsletter

THE RIVER GIVES UNITY

For Shantell, The River means more than giving back to the community. As a regular volunteer since May, Shantell has experienced how The River builds compassion between people during these times of division and hardship.

“With everything going on in the world today, The River unifies us instead of separating us,” said Shantell. “The River staff are loving, compassionate and open to different people. They help us realize that we are more alike than we are different. There are differences in the path we take or the color of our skin, but we all have something in common.”

Shantell believes The River is making a difference and he feels good to be a part of it. One of his most heartfelt volunteer experiences happened when people who were homeless walked up and said they had not eaten in days. Although The River was not open for curbside distribution at the moment, Shantell and the team immediately provided them food. He said, “The gratitude from the people we help brings a smile to my face and my heart.”

Before Shantell began volunteering, a friend suggested he visit The River for groceries and a meal. “Where I came from, I didn’t realize places like this existed,” said Shantell, who grew up in Chicago but has lived in Madison for the past 20 years. “From the first time I came here, everything has been very good. It’s very healthy eating, the amount of groceries is overwhelming, and you get the things you need like toiletries and laundry detergent.”

Overall, Shantell describes his experience with The River as eye-opening. He encourages anyone who is considering volunteer work to get involved here too!



“Like branches on a tree, we all grow in different directions, yet our roots remain as one. Love, Peace, & Unity.”

—Shantell, Volunteer & Client

LEADING THE RIVER FORWARD



I am both thrilled and humbled to lead the mission forward as The River Food Pantry's Interim Executive Director. In my seven years with The River, I have witnessed firsthand The River's core values of **respect, compassion, community, caring and generosity** displayed by our staff, donors and volunteers. It's been wonderful to see so much deep passion and commitment emerge in the work toward ending hunger.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, **the need for our services is greater than ever**. We have successfully continued to provide nutritious groceries through

curbside distribution, while taking all precautions necessary to keep our clients, staff and volunteers safe. I'm so proud of The River staff's efforts in providing selfless service on a daily basis as frontline workers in this pandemic.

Since we discontinued hosting community meals at The River due to the pandemic, we were very excited to begin Phase I of **FAM (Family At-Home Meals)** in mid-June. Clients are now able to pick up a healthy, ready-to-eat meal prepared by our Chef Chris to enjoy as a family at home. Later this summer, we will implement Phase II of the FAM program by delivering these meals to local neighborhoods in our continued efforts to meet hunger at its doorstep.

There is much work to be done toward our vision of a fully nourished community, but I'm confident that we can do this together, as we have thus far, one day at a time. I hope you will walk with me in the days and months ahead on this incredible journey. Thank you for your continued support.

With deep gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rhonda Adams".

Rhonda Adams
Interim Executive Director

IN THEIR WORDS

We recently surveyed our clients to understand how our emergency food response has met their needs throughout the pandemic. **Out of 183 responses, 75% said they receive "the right amount of food" each visit.** Clients also shared comments in the survey like:

"Thank you so much"

"Everything is great"

"Thank God for The River"

"Always grateful"

"One heck of a job"

"Appreciate everything"

"Great service"

"Terrific job"

"Incredible security"

"Really happy"

"Wonderful"

"Excellent resource"

"Very helpful"

"Life saver"

"All good"

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED URGENTLY!

If you are healthy and under 70 years old, we invite you to volunteer with us:

AT THE MARKET:

Help with curbside distribution, sort produce, pack boxes, prep carts for pick-up, load vehicles and more.

WITH REGISTRATION:

Welcome clients and help them register for curbside distribution and FAM meals.

WITH FAM:

Help prepare and serve ready-to-go meals for entire families to take home.

WITH MUNCH:

Assist with lunch production and/or distribution.

IN THE COMMUNITY:

Raise funds, food and awareness in the community by hosting a food drive or starting your own fundraiser.

From March 16–July 2, 406 volunteers donated 6,063 hours of service! We appreciate the time volunteers have spent helping The River serve our community.

Learn more and sign up to volunteer at riverfoodpantry.org/volunteer.

PASSING THE TORCH



Dear Friends, If you haven't heard already, I'm getting a promotion! Yes, it's true that I'm being promoted to the highest rank possible at The River, as a volunteer.

I love this quote from Winston Churchill, "You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give." So, as I move on from my role as CEO, I am honored to join the ranks of gracious, generous and dedicated volunteers who support the mission of The River so selflessly every day.

The past three years have been a time of growth and transformation for me and for The River. And even with the challenges we are experiencing with the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest throughout our community and nation, The River is uniquely positioned and prepared to serve the needs of our community. We do what we have done consistently for the past 15 years and that is building community. We envision a fully nourished community for all, built on our core values; Respect, Compassion, Community, Caring, Generosity.

We dare to imagine a community and a world built on those values, armed with the tools of food, resources and faith to advance our mission. I am incredibly grateful to continue this journey along with all of you.

Peace and love,

Charles McLimans
Volunteer, Past President & CEO

The River Staff

Interim Executive Director
Rhonda Adams

Director of Operations
Lee Cole

Director of Development
Sandy Lampman

Controller/HR Manager
Bob Garrison

Communications Manager
Becca Carpenter

Program Manager
Helen Osborn-Senatus

Operations Leads
Jon Clark & Ben Kauth

Community Meals Coordinator
Chris Tuttle

Volunteer Coordinator
Debbie Bormann

Grants & Donor Data Coordinator
John McCracken

MUNCH Coordinator/Admin Assistant
Cheris Nelson

Program Assistant
Erica Dorsch

Operations Assistants
Melvin Hershberger, JJ Meyer,
Damon Fletcher & Michael Peters

Weekend Driver
Levi Gallegos

OUR CORE VALUES

respect

compassion

community

caring

generosity

GIVE TODAY AND YOUR DONATION IS DOUBLED!

We are grateful to announce that a good friend of The River has offered to MATCH up to \$25,000 for all gifts received by September 1, 2020, in support of our newest program, FAM (*Family At-Home Meals*).

Gifts from generous donors like you have helped The River sustain operations through one of the most difficult times our community has ever endured. With thousands furloughed and out of work, The River has seen a rise in individuals and families needing assistance.

The River continues to help, but we need your support more than ever. Thank you for considering a gift today.

Give to FAM at riverfoodpantry.org/donate-FAM or mail your check using the enclosed envelope.



CURBSIDE CONNECTIONS

Over the last four years, The River's Operations Lead Jon Clark has built many relationships and experienced many changes, especially after the pandemic hit. For Jon, the biggest challenge with COVID-19 is not being able to connect as directly with clients. "I definitely miss the one-on-one family connections we had when families were able to shop and meet inside The River. Being outside, the interaction is different, but we do our best to connect with the families and make them happy," Jon said.



These days Jon prefers working outside to help with curbside distribution so he can continue his connection with long-time clients. "I like being outside interacting with clients. A lot of them come here to socialize, so it's important we keep that bond. I get to say hi and ask how their families are doing."

Jon also focuses on welcoming first-time clients. "I helped a woman who lost her job due to COVID-19. She said she never thought she would need to visit a food pantry and felt weird asking for food. As we loaded her car, she couldn't believe how much food she was getting," said Jon, who noticed she had a baby carrier in the backseat. "When I asked if she would like diapers too, she started to cry. I told her, 'I wish I could give you a hug.' Every time she comes back, she thanks me. If she no longer wants or needs to visit us for food once she can go back to work, we will miss her. At the same time, we will be happy for her."

Although the pandemic and social distancing make it even harder for people to get enough food, Jon says, "No matter what, we'll be here to help whoever needs us—it might just be in a different way."

FEEDING THE WHOLE FAM

This June, The River launched a new family meal program, called FAM (*Family At-Home Meals*), which provides healthy, ready-to-eat meals for families to enjoy together in the safety of their homes!

FAM helps fill the nutrition gap of our onsite community meal program, which was discontinued to keep our community safe from COVID-19. We provide balanced meals portioned to meet the needs of different family sizes with vegetarian alternatives available. Meals are available for pick-up once a week in combination with curbside groceries.



OUR COVID-19 EMERGENCY FOOD FUND IMPACT

from March 16–July 2

THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT, THE RIVER SERVED:



1,031,456
pounds of
food and supplies



2,930
households



9,454
household visits



17,910
lunches to children and
their caretakers through
our mobile lunch program,
MUNCH



2,611
ready-to-eat meals
through FAM
(Family At-Home Meals)



361
deliveries of groceries to
homebound clients

WORTHY OF NOTE

- The River registered 946 new families since March 16. New registrations per month increased by 80% compared to before COVID-19!
- Each household has taken home an average of 109 pounds of emergency food and supplies per visit.
- MUNCH has distributed an average of 200 mobile lunches per day to children and their caretakers in 9 low-income neighborhoods.
- 255 of the 406 volunteers were new.

MADE POSSIBLE BY:



406
volunteers



6,063
volunteer hours



\$528,326
in support



1,849
generous donors

NEW VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: BRINNAN SHAFFER

From preparing meals in the kitchen to serving clients during market hours, Brinnan Shaffer has had a variety of volunteer experiences at The River. Brinnan began volunteering at The River on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2019 as a way “to do something positive in the spirit of MLK.” With a goal to provide her service locally, Brinnan has been returning to The River to volunteer ever since.

Things have changed since COVID-19 began, but Brinnan continues to support The River by loading carts of food, preparing produce and dairy boxes. Her favorite task is transferring large boxes of eggs into portable containers, lovingly known as “egging.” These tasks allow her to physically see her progress, which gives a sense of pride and purpose in her work.

Changes to The River’s volunteer schedule have allowed Brinnan to master many new tasks; she feels like a “more well-rounded volunteer” who enjoys getting to know the staff and other volunteers. Although she is not able to see each client’s smiling face as she normally did while serving community meals, she still “loves the feeling of being busy, because it means we’re helping people.”

Thank you, Brinnan, for giving The River your valuable time and energy!



VOLUNTEER Q&A: KAREN MITTEN



When did you first get involved with The River and why?

I began volunteering with The River by assisting in procurement and staging its auctions for the annual Harvest Dinner. In 2016, I became a weekly volunteer at the Tuesday morning pantry sessions. I have loved helping to provide

the necessities of food, clothing, and friendship and caring on a deeper level when a prayer was needed.

What has it been like to not be able to volunteer at The River during the pandemic?

I have really missed being onsite and the weekly connection with both the volunteers and The River staff. But I have also missed connecting with the regular clients who we would see each week. I wonder how they are doing, hope they are well, and wish that we could be together again.

How have you spent your time during the pandemic?

I’m a private music teacher (piano) and have finished this year’s lessons via FaceTime and Zoom. I’ve also recorded and released some original music via online platforms. Most importantly, I have kept up with my children and six terrific grandchildren as best as we could with socially distanced visits and lots of phone calls.

What does your future with The River look like?

The River’s connection to the community has dramatically changed yet has remained solid and has expanded to fit the need in new and creative ways. I want to continue as a volunteer so will likely be learning to contribute in new ways, as well! Being a volunteer changes you and enlarges your heart to embrace others.

Is there anything else you want our community to know about you and The River?

Always, I want to tell folks about how The River provides food and more in a caring and compassionate way. They will do their best to meet you at the point of your need—with a smile!



2201 Darwin Rd.
Madison, WI 53704



Thanks to community support
of our COVID-19 Emergency Food Fund, we have served over
1 MILLION POUNDS OF FOOD since March 16!