

FAVORITES

UW Health Sports Rehabilitation Clinic
SSM Health St. Mary's Care Center



LOCAL



BEST CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION

The River Food Pantry

Number of Years in Business: 15

2201 Darwin Road, Madison, WI 53590

(608) 442-8815

<http://riverfoodpantry.org>

The River is South Central Wisconsin's busiest food pantry. Serving over 1,000 diverse households each week, our services include free groceries for curbside pickup or delivery, freshly prepared to-go meals, and mobile lunches for children and adults in low-income neighborhoods. We also partner with local organizations to minimize food waste and improve access to reliable sources of food. Since opening in 2006, our vision has always been to achieve a fully nourished community.

What's something your customers may not know about your business?

More than a food pantry, The River does so much more than provide food:

- We offer other necessary essentials including personal care items, cleaning supplies, diapers, formula, pet supplies.
- In 2020, The River rescued nearly 410 tons of food to nourish our community. Our food recovery efforts are thanks to dozens of local grocery stores, restaurants, food banks, food pantries, and other food retailers that partner with The River to recover both perishable and non-perishable food.
- We organize a holiday gift program every year for clients.

What brings customers back to your business?

The top reasons clients come back to The River:

Quality: In addition to nonperishable items, we focus on always providing fresh, healthy food, including fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, special dietary items (e.g., gluten-free), and more.

Quantity: Each household receives over 100 pounds of groceries per visit or delivery.

Frequency: The River invites households to receive groceries once a week and pick up to-go meals up to 4 days a week.

Choice: We do our best to allow clients to choose their own groceries and seek regular feedback to improve our service.

Customer service: Our staff and volunteers have built meaningful relationships with our clients. Each day, we live our core values: respect, compassion, community, caring and generosity.



What makes your business a good place to work?

Working at The River makes a difference in our community. Our team of 20 diverse employees, compassionate people who believe in The River's vision of achieving a fully nourished community. Benefits include group insurance plans, a retirement plan, paid holidays and paid time off. In 2020, The River began offering mental health days and 8 hours of paid time off to volunteer at other organizations. Bonus: employees receive free lunch every day prepared by our professionally trained chefs and volunteers!

What do you love most about having your business in this community?

We absolutely love the generosity of this community. As the need for food assistance grows, The River has been able to meet that need because of our generous supporters. This includes thousands of volunteers, monetary donors, in-kind donors, community partners and food partners. We rely on financial support from individuals, businesses, faith communities, grants and service groups and we are committed to being good stewards of the funds receive. With only 2.5% in administrative costs, 97.5 cents of every dollar donated goes directly to getting food to our neighbors in need.

What can customers expect when they walk through your doors?

Whether they use delivery or curbside pickup, our clients can expect excellent service with a smile — even if it's under a mask. We listen and do our best to accommodate households' different needs because we realize there is no one size fits all when it comes to hunger.

What does it mean to be voted Madison.com's People's Choice?

In a community of approximately 3,000 charitable organizations, we are extremely honored and humbled to be voted Madison.com's People Choice! Winning this award is reassurance we have people's trust to do what is best for our community, especially after all the sudden pivots made throughout the pandemic to ensure our neighbors stayed fed and healthy.

What are you most proud of?

We are most proud of the dedication of our supporters. With the community's generosity, The River has grown from serving a handful of families to over 1,000 households every week in just 15 years. We have become a staple in the community for anyone facing food insecurity: children, seniors, veterans, families, people of color, people with disabilities or those who are homeless. We are nourishing Dane County together.

How do you build trust with clients, patients, or customers?

We continually strive towards building trust with our clients, volunteers, donors and partners by treating them with respect and transparency. We believe feedback is a gift. Because we regularly receive feedback, we can continuously improve to better meet our stakeholders' needs. Through listening and responding, we have been able to overcome obstacles to help more people.

What makes your business popular with families?

In 2020, The River served a record 3.7 million pounds of food to over 6,000 Dane County households. Families can access the food they need in a way that works best for them by choosing from our free services—curbside groceries, deliveries to the homebound, to-go meals for entire households, mobile lunches for low-income neighborhoods, and a new online ordering system.

FAVORITES

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