

# RSVP Volunteer Program

RSVP IS A PROGRAM OF THE WESTERN DAIRYLAND COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

## *RSVP Partnering Site – The Friends Food Shelf*

Nov/Dec 2019



Walking into the Gebhardt School in Black River Falls on Friends Food Shelf pantry day, chances are you will be greeted by RSVP volunteer and pantry Coordinator, Lois Smetana. Once inside, you will witness RSVP volunteers busy organizing and getting ready for the pantry. Banana boxes filled with fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, baked goods, and pantry items are loaded onto carts to be rolled down the hallway into the gym by volunteers. In a matter of an hour, the gym transforms into a pantry. Tables are set up and the boxes of goods are unloaded for distribution. Each volunteer has their own task and knows just what to do at their stations. From 2:30-4:30 on Monday afternoons, individuals and families in need come to get local rescue food.

The Gebhardt School is home to many different programs besides the Friends Food Shelf. These include: the Neighborhood Food Pantry, Jackson County Food Pantry, and three of the Black River Falls School Districts alternative school programs.

The Friends Food Shelf was developed when a local organization realized the poverty situation in their own backyard. They decided to reach out to local businesses, and start rescuing food that would have otherwise been thrown away. Over the years, Hansen's IGA (previously Burnstad's & Gordy's), Kwik Trip, and Walmart have supported the pantry by allowing RSVP volunteers the opportunity to pick up food to distribute to those in need. Lois stated, "I cannot say enough about my faithful volunteers. We have a wonderful team of volunteers who show up every Monday-even when they are feeling under the weather." Typically, two volunteers pick up food from the locations. On Mondays and Fridays volunteers pick up from Hansen's IGA and Walmart. Volunteers go to both of Black River Falls' Kwik Trip locations as well on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of each week. Local farmers also donate their produce to the food pantry too. Volunteers help sort and bag the produce to prepare for the weekly distribution.

Black River Falls businesses are supportive of the pantry. However, compared to previous years, Lois shared that donations are down. The pantry used to receive about 20,000 pounds of food per month and now the pantry receives half that amount [10,000 pounds] for almost the same amount of people. Currently, the Friends Food Shelf service 90-100 households per week. Some of the pantry participants come to the pantry for more than just food. For some individuals, the pantry offers an opportunity for them to socialize. The pantry may be the only time for some to get out of their homes and see/talk to other people. Lois states the majority of the families come in each week to get food.

Lois began volunteering for the Friends Food Shelf when it began in December 2009, becoming the coordinator in 2013. Lois was previously a RSVP volunteer at the Jackson County Food Pantry when it was located in Taylor. Her responsibility was to register food pantry participants as they arrived for distribution. Lois mentioned her greatest reward for volunteering is knowing that individuals are getting food that they wouldn't receive otherwise. Prior to retiring, Lois worked at Black River Country Abstract Company where she still helps out [from home] today. If she wasn't an RSVP volunteer at the pantry, Lois doesn't know what she would do otherwise, joking "There is only so much you can sew!"

**Continued on Page 3...**

Western Dairyland EOC Inc. is a private, non-profit community action agency established in 1966 for the purpose of alleviating poverty-related conditions and assisting low-income families to achieve their economic self-reliance. We welcome your comments & suggestions about the Western Dairyland RSVP program.

#### **RSVP Contact Information**

##### **Address:**

Western Dairyland EOC Inc. RSVP Program  
23122 Whitehall Road  
PO Box 125  
Independence, WI 54747

##### **Office hours:**

Monday - Friday from 8 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.

##### **Website:**

[www.westerndairyland.org/rsvp.phtml](http://www.westerndairyland.org/rsvp.phtml)

##### **RSVP Program Director**

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## **Have You Moved? We want to hear from you!**

The RSVP Program has had the pleasure of working with many wonderful volunteers and watching the impact each person has made in their own community through volunteerism.

We ask that you please help the RSVP office stay updated. Are you still volunteering? Perhaps you are not feeling well or maybe you have been physically unable to volunteer due to an illness or surgery? We also know summers are busy and you may be enjoying more time with your family which may result in being too busy to volunteer at this time.

Whatever the reason, we would really like to hear from you. To insure that you receive RSVP volunteer recognition and to assist you with future RSVP volunteer opportunities, we ask that you be sure to record all volunteer hours at your volunteer work site.

Feel free to contact us at anytime; we welcome your input, concerns and volunteer stories.

**Call us at 1-800-782-1063 ext. 1205, 1207 or 1232.**

**We look forward to hearing from you!**

## **Welcome New Volunteers!!**

Rita Carroll  
Betty Wozney  
Nan Setterlund  
Michael Bever  
Ellen Hieb  
Richard Deno  
Sue Kotlarz  
Jan Bauer



**Continued from Page 1...**

For RSVP volunteer Marie Eddy, volunteering gives her a chance to socialize. She especially likes to share stories and talk with those coming in for food. Her reward is making friends, both with fellow RSVP volunteers and pantry participants. Marie comes in each Monday and Friday morning to help unload and repack for about one hour each day. Volunteering, Marie says, "It makes you aware of your blessings. I worked in a school for 27 years as an aid for Kindergarten to Second Grade and as a Secretary. There was a need back then even. I heard children saying that they hadn't eaten since yesterday [at school]. When it came time to eat, those students were not fussy- they were glad to eat what was provided."

RSVP volunteer Ellen Gearing volunteers a couple times a month, on average, when her sister-in-law is unable to make it to the pantry to volunteer. Ellen really enjoys coming to the pantry to help because of the overall experience. Ellen said, "Lois is an amazing lady. She knows what needs to be done and has a lot of wonderful volunteers to help her get everything accomplished." Ellen has a lot of fun volunteering at the pantry and feels that each volunteer finds it very humbling. Ellen added that she likes to get to know the volunteers and pantry participants. A lot of food pantry participants come every distribution but there are always a few new people as well who have experienced a recent hardship. Participants on several occasions have said that they are in need of food primarily because of unexpected medical costs. Ellen said, "That is what we are here for." Prior to volunteering, Ellen worked as a Dental Assistant at Community Dental in Black River Falls for 40 years. She is passionate about volunteering and has advised others of its importance- believing that both the volunteer and the community benefit from volunteerism.



Lois Bahnub, also a RSVP volunteer, has been a volunteer since the pantry began. Lois is responsible for sorting the dry goods (canned goods and cereal) and replenishes the items as needed. She volunteers because she likes working with people. Prior to retirement, she worked for 25 years as a Customer Service Representative for a gas company; she was also a guardian for about 12 different individuals.

Being able to help others is what keeps RSVP volunteer, Dean Wakershauser, coming back each week. Dean has been volunteering at the pantry for a few years and enjoys helping at the pantry and getting to know the food recipients. He is one of the volunteers that picks up food from Kwik Trip on Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays. He fills in when he needs to pick up from other locations if someone else is unable to do so. Dean stays to unload the items, sort it, and put it away until distribution. On distribution day, he helps put out the goods and stays to hand out food to pantry participants. Prior to becoming an RSVP volunteer, Dean worked for a drywall company in Milwaukee for 50 years. He moved back to Jackson County and helped out once a month at the food pantry. Once he retired, he became a volunteer for the Friends Food Shelf and is there regularly.

RSVP volunteers agree that Lois as a pantry coordinator makes everything easy. Each volunteer has a job to do- in general, you know what to expect every week. The volunteers take pride in what they are doing for individuals and families in their community. Ultimately, it is a victory for everyone involved in the pantry. Stores are able to donate food that would otherwise go unused, volunteers have a place to go each week to help others, and community members in need have increased food security.

RSVP volunteers surely make an impact no matter what it is they are doing. If you would like an opportunity to contribute in your community, please give Cheryl a call at 715-985-2391 Ext. 1205.

## RSVP FEATURED VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**Tax Assistance** - Jackson County is in need of 3-4 volunteers to prepare individual tax returns. Volunteers will attend a 3-day training in either La Crosse or Eau Claire depending on preference; mileage reimbursed for the training portion. This short-term volunteer opportunity offers a big impact. Current RSVP volunteers love what they do. Don't miss out, call us today at 715-985-2391 Ext. 1205!



**Trempealeau County Tax Assistance-** Do you enjoy doing taxes or are you willing to learn? This short-term volunteer opportunity (February through April) offers a 3-day training in La Crosse.

We are also looking for a volunteer to come to the Western Dairyland office in Independence to schedule tax appointments during the upcoming tax season. Call 715-985-2391 Ext. 1205 to learn more!

**Get Involved.**

**Have Your Say.**

**Make A Difference.**

**RSVP Advisory Council (Buffalo, Jackson & Pepin counties):** The RSVP Program is looking for members in several counties to join the RSVP Advisory Council. This is a great opportunity to share ideas and come up with new ways to serve your community. Meetings are held three times a year at the Western Dairyland office located in Independence from 1:30-3:30 pm. Currently, RSVP is looking to fill one or two more spots on the Advisory Council in Pepin County, one more in Buffalo county, and one additional individual in Jackson County. Give us a call at 715-985-2391 Ext. 1205 to learn how you can make a difference in your county!

**Volunteer Drivers (Trempealeau & Jackson County):** The ADRC's in Jackson & Trempealeau County are seeking volunteers to transport individuals to medical appointments. This is a very flexible opportunity; snow birds are welcome! If you are interested in making an impact by becoming a volunteer driver, give us a call at 715-985-2391 Ext. 1205!

BECOME A  
**VOLUNTEER  
DRIVER**

**Mission Thrift Store (Arcadia):** RSVP is seeking volunteers to work the sales floor on Fridays from 3-6 pm and Saturdays from 10-1 pm and/or every other month as needed. Please call 715-985-2391 Ext. 1205 for more information.

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## RSVP FEATURED VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



**Gundersen Tri-County (Whitehall):** The Care Center is seeking a committed volunteer to come in in twice a week for one hour each time to wash the display windows, water the birds, and clean up the bottom of the display. Please call us to learn more about getting started with this opportunity at 715-985-2391 Ext. 1205!

**Volunteer Drivers (Pepin & Buffalo County Aging):** Volunteer drivers are needed to transport individuals to medical, social & personal appointments. This flexible volunteer opportunity is based on your schedule & availability, so you can choose or deny rides @ the time of booking. Use your own vehicle or possibly a county vehicle based on location/availability. Mileage reimbursement is paid monthly when you use your personal vehicle. Give us a call today at 715-985-2391 Ext. 1205 to start making a difference in your community!



**Durand Meal Site—(Pepin County):** The Pepin County Senior Nutrition Program is actively recruiting four volunteers to help out at the Durand Meal Site (located at Corral Bar & Riverside Grill) from 11:15am-1pm Tuesday-Friday. Duties would include; greeting participants, answering the telephone, & completing a small amount of paperwork. For more information, please contact us at 715-985-2391 Ext. 1205.

**Heartland Hospice Services (Buffalo, Eau Claire, Pepin & Trempealeau County):** Compassionate individuals are needed to provide hospice services @ facilities & in homes in several locations including cities in Buffalo, Eau Claire, Pepin, & Trempealeau counties. Interested volunteers will attend an orientation & are trained @ the Heartland office in Eau Claire. This opportunity is very flexible & can be as little as an hour @ a time. (Includes friendly visits, reading, playing cards, singing to patients/playing music, or keeping patients company while family members take a break.. Please contact us at 715-985-2391 Ext. 1205.



RSVP is seeking volunteers to put plastic on house windows before winter in multiple counties. Give us a call to learn more at 715-985-2391 Ext. 1205!

RSVP is seeking volunteers to complete handyman jobs on an as-needed basis at homeless shelters throughout the Western Dairyland service area (Buffalo, Eau Claire, Jackson & Trempealeau counties). This could include assessing repairs needed at the shelters, patching drywall, drilling holes for/installing doors, etc. Please contact Cheryl at 715-985-2391 Ext. 1205 to learn more about this opportunity!

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## 6 | RSVP VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION EVENT - JACKSON COUNTY

On Wednesday, September 11th, the RSVP Program hosted the RSVP Volunteer Recognition Event for Jackson County RSVP volunteers. The event was held at the Skyline Golf Course in Black River Falls. RSVP volunteers enjoyed a delicious meal, great conversation, and a program. Local businesses donated awesome items for the raffle, showing just how valued RSVP volunteers are in their community!



RSVP would like to thank the following businesses for contributing items to the 2019 Jackson County RSVP Volunteer Recognition Event. We appreciate your support!

Banner Journal, BRF Furniture Outlet, BRF Memorial Hospital, Candy's Styling Salon, Community Dental, LLC., Culver's of BRF, Falls Florist & Greenhouse, Federation Co-op, First Fruits Common Market, Gross Motors, Hair 4 All Seasons, Hardees, Ho-Chunk Gaming BRF, Hoffman Construction, Holiday Station Store BRF, Jackson County ADRC, L&M Café, Lunda Community Center, Mocha Mouse, Moe Hardware, Papa Murphys, Perkins Restaurant & Bakery, Scheels All Sports, Scholze Ace Home Center, Skyline Golf Course, Taylor Lutheran Church, Western Dairyland RSVP, and the Corporation for National & Community Service.





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Call the Housing Authority for application, income guidelines, and other qualifications

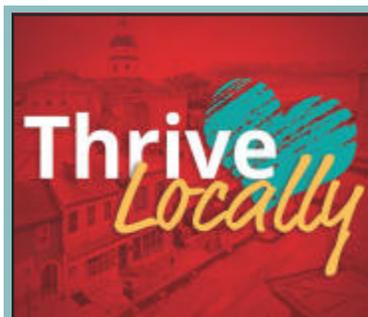


## 8 | RSVP VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION EVENT— BUFFALO COUNTY

The Buffalo County RSVP Volunteer Recognition Event was held at the Waumandee House on Saturday, October 12th. Volunteers enjoyed a great meal, lots of friendly visiting, and a recognition program. Several local businesses donated prizes to the event, showing support for all of the important work that RSVP volunteers do in their community.



A special thank you goes out to the following businesses & organizations that have helped make this event a success. We appreciate your support! Alliance Bank (Mondovi) Art & Soul Gallery, Bank of Alma, Buffalo County Department on Aging, Corporation for National & Community Service, Dairyland Power Cooperative, Déjà Vu Salon, Green Bay Packer Foundation, J&J BBQ, Marten Transport, McDonald's, Midtown Foods— Winona, Midwest Dental (Mondovi), Mondovi Health Mart Pharmacy, North End Pub & Grill, Scheels— Eau Claire, Seven Hawks Vineyards, Water Lily Gifts, Waumandee House, Western Dairyland RSVP Program, Whole Heart, and Wings Over Alma.



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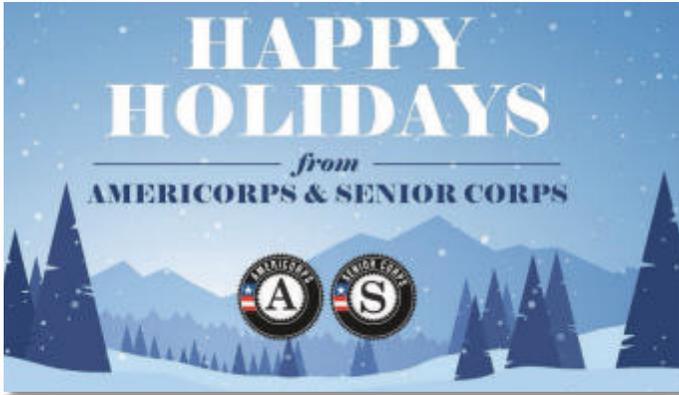


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## RSVP Volunteers—

Thank you for joining RSVP & serving your community!  
Together, we are providing valuable service & impact  
throughout Buffalo, Eau Claire, Jackson, Pepin, &  
Trempealeau counties.

We are looking forward to 2020 with all of you!

*Cheryl*

*Erika*

*Heather*

**Ingredients:**

- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1 tbsp. minced garlic
- 2 tsp. minced fresh thyme
- 2 lbs. ricotta chees
- 1 egg
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- 1 squeeze lemon juice (optional, to taste)
- 12 no-boil lasagna noodles
- 1-24 oz jar of spaghetti/marinara sauce
- 2 C. shredded mozzarella cheese



Servings: 12

\*See more at: <https://cutt.ly/pwJF0v3>

**Directions:**

- 1-Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the garlic & thyme; sauté for 2-3 minutes. Add the spinach; sauté until just barely wilted, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat.
- 2-In a large bowl, combine the ricotta, egg, salt, nutmeg, & a squeeze of lemon juice. Add the spinach; stir to combine. Transfer some of the mixture to a food processor & pulse a few times to break up some of the spinach pieces (optional, but makes for a really nice texture).
- 3-Preheat the oven to 375°. Spread a little bit of tomato sauce in the bottom of a 9×13 pan. Layer with 3 lasagna noodles, 1/3 of the spinach mixture, 1/4 of the tomato sauce, & 1/4 of the cheese. Repeat & pour 1/2 cup water over the two layers. Repeat once more, ending with noodles, sauce, & cheese. Pour 1/2 cup water over the whole thing again. Cover tightly with oiled foil.
- 4-Bake for 30-40 minutes; when the liquid is bubbling & the noodles have softened, remove the foil & bake uncovered for 10 more minutes. Let stand for 10-15 minutes before serving so that the lasagna noodles can soak up all the extra moisture.



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**WE LISTEN, WE ACT, WE CARE**