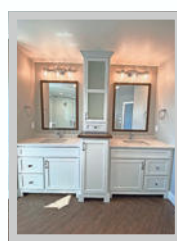


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# THE POST~CRESCENT

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2021 | POSTCRESCENT.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## The **BIG** Thanksgiving Issue

## Readers share what they're thankful for

**Caitlin Shuda** Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune  
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

For many, Thanksgiving is a time to reflect and share why they're thankful and grateful in life.

That can be harder to do in the second year of a pandemic, where life seems so much different than it did before March 2020. Many people are dealing with unexpected changes as they grieve the loss of how their lives were before COVID-19.

But many others are finding new ways to be grateful, sometimes even because of the pandemic. Change has a way of altering perspectives, and while the thankful season might look different again this year, hope and gratitude is still alive in Wisconsin.

Earlier this month, we asked readers throughout the state what they're thankful for this year. And many of you still have so much to be thankful for. Here's what you told us.

### A long overdue reunion

Alessandra Gadsby from Green Bay said a moment she had with her family earlier this month made her especially thankful.

She said she had offered to take care of the leaves in her aunt's yard when she learned her other aunt and uncle had come to the area to visit and had already taken care of them. Since they were in the Green Bay area and had plans to stop at a book sale, they invited Alessandra to meet them after for lunch.

The weather was warm that day, and Alessandra and her family were able to socially distance outside at Culver's. She said she hadn't been able to see her relatives since the pandemic, and since she had lost both of her parents in the past two years, it meant so much to be with relatives. Alessandra and her family were able to catch up and enjoy a beautiful fall day among the trees with their fall red leaves.

"As we talked, all the sadness of the past two years melted away, and I could be in the moment and enjoy what I am especially thankful for, my extended family," Alessandra said.

### A best friend

Carolyn Lanza from Manitowoc said while she is thankful for so many things, she is grateful for her dog who came to live with her 13 years ago. She

See **THANKFUL**, Page 8A



MERRY ECCLES / USA TODAY NETWORK; AND GETTY IMAGES

### Big Crossword Puzzle is here

Give your brain a workout with this annual mind-bending challenge. **4A**

### Holiday gift guide

It's the season of giving. Find great gift ideas for friends and family. **5B**

### A closer look at Thanksgiving

The history of the holiday that you think you know may not be completely accurate. **6B**

### Thanksgiving activity page

Gobble up some holiday fun with a word search, maze, word scramble and more. **4B**

## Giving thanks for another successful Stock the Shelves campaign

**James N. Fitzhenry** Appleton Post-Crescent  
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

Each year as we begin planning for Stock the Shelves, a familiar doubt creeps in. Is this the year when things don't turn out as planned? Is there too much uncertainty and hardship out there to overcome?

Stock the Shelves is a campaign that

asks readers for donations to provide food for neighbors who need assistance. The effort is a partnership with Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin and local credit unions.

Readers have been extremely generous over the years, donating more than \$5 million since 2010. But people have been hit hard by COVID-19 and its economic fallout. There are many worthy

causes competing for attention.

Over time I've learned to channel that worry into resolve to work as hard as ever to share the stories of dedicated volunteers and organizations who turn good intentions into action.

Our reporters, for instance, wrote about:

- An executive chef, who was trained in Europe and cooked for presidents,

whose greatest satisfaction comes preparing meals at the Loaves and Fishes meal program in Appleton. "It's more than just putting a meal down for somebody," Michael Congrove said. "You're helping them stretch the few dollars they may have to put gas in their tank or pay their light bill. There's much more

See **CAMPAIGN**, Page 8A

**USA TODAY**

**Thanksgiving:** With vaccines, this year looks better, but there are COVID-19 hot spots. **11A**

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# Campaign

Continued from Page 1A

benefit to that on an emotional level than anything that I've ever done before."

• The pilot Tribal Elder Food Box Program which is distributing 900 food boxes every two weeks to Indigenous elders in Wisconsin with culturally relevant foods, such as black angus and bison from Oneida and wild caught fish from Red Cliff. "The aim was to have all Indigenous produce, but there wasn't enough out there for this pilot program," said Marlon Skeandore, Oneida Nation Emergency Food Pantry manager. "We need to push for more Indigenous producers out there."

• An Oconto County man's tearful thank you to the NEWCAP program for its delivery of a few boxes of food for his family. "He said his wife was dying from cancer, and he had two children, and only enough food in the home for two days, and he didn't know what he was going to do," said Deb Barlament NEWCAP's chief operating officer.

• Rural food pantries that are using a variety of strategies to reach people who are falling through the cracks because of time and distance. They are holding evening hours, allowing proxy pickups and in some cases doing personal deliveries. "I think there is a part of the population that we do miss because they aren't able to get here," said Rachael Bolen, director of the Antigo Area Community Food Pantry. "We've tried to troubleshoot that as best we can."

One of our goals is to shine a light on efforts like these, which can easily go unnoticed. Over the month of October, journalists across the USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin wrote 44 stories about hunger, food insecurity, government pandemic assistance and the people making a difference across our state.

Giving readers this information is central to our mission as an independent news organization providing fact-based reporting from our communities – and readers responded.

This year's donations to Stock the Shelves totaled more than \$163,000. These funds will provide 652,332 meals. Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin distributes food based on where the donations come from, meaning local dollars help your local neighbors. We're fortunate to have such great partners in Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin and local credit unions, who work tirelessly to help support this effort.

A heartfelt thank you to our readers who give so generously each year. On a day where we take stock and give thanks, we're grateful for your continued trust and support. Happy Thanksgiving.

*Jim Fitzhenry is executive editor of the USA TODAY NETWORK-Central Wisconsin. Contact him at (920) 993-7154 or jfitzhen@gannett.com. Follow him on Twitter at @JimFitzhenry, Instagram at @jimfitzhenry or LinkedIn.*



Fire pits allow friends and family to spend more time outside this year. REVIEWED.COM

# Thankful

Continued from Page 1A

is thankful for his complete trust, how he ecstatically welcomes her home and for every minute with him even if he no longer sees or hears well.

"We are his world and he is ours," she said. "I am so thankful for this sweet boy."

## A great nation

Thomas Plog from De Pere said he is thankful that all of his friends and family were able to avoid COVID-19 this year and that the country has the finest scientists, medical researchers and physicians in the world.

"And finally, I am thankful to live in this great nation, second to none," he said.

## A strong faith

Janet Delacruz from Wisconsin Rapids said she is thankful for her faith.

When she was 7 years old, she heard a story about Jesus that touched her heart, and she wished she had been alive while he was on earth. She grew in her faith, sensing God around her, and she wanted to learn more about religion. She asked her mother for her first Bible for Christmas the year she turned 16.

When Janet got married at 21, she and her husband lived next door to an empty lot. A few years later, a home was built on the lot with plans for it to become a church. When Janet's daughter was born and the couple was looking for a church for her baptism, they connected with the church next door that offered dedications for babies and baptisms for those who were old enough to understand salvation.

"The first time we attended this church was the day of our daughter's dedication," she said. "I knew this was the church I had been praying and looking for, and when I couldn't find it, God had it built right next to our property and gave us a reason to attend."

Through that opportunity, Janet said she was able to grow in her faith and understanding and became one of four teachers of the adult Sunday School class.

## A life of freedom

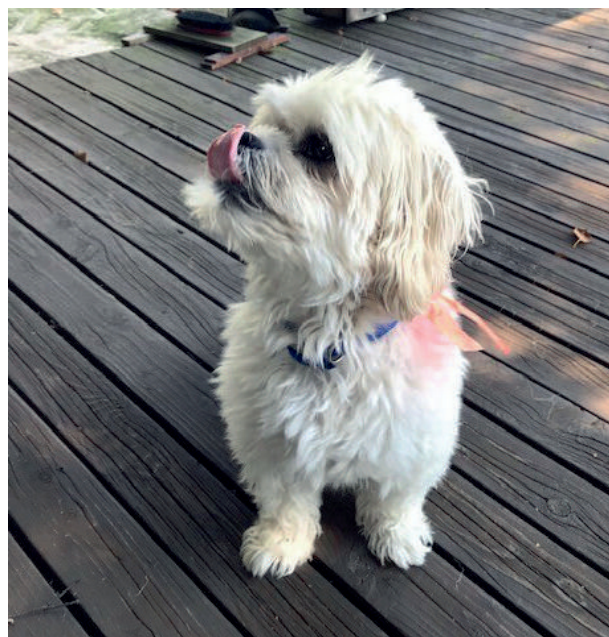
Mary Koppelman from Sheboygan Falls said she feels blessed and thankful for the parents and childhood she had growing up, and for the freedom that comes with being born in America.

"But most of all, I cherish my faith, family and friends," she said.

## An ability to enjoy life

David Vander Linden from Oshkosh said he is thankful, like so many others, for his health, his wonderful friends and everything that life has given him, including his pets, his lifestyle and the ability to enjoy life.

He is also thankful for the fortune of friends. David said he is grateful that a friend had been promoted at work, and he is thankful when those who deserve it can succeed.



Carolyn Lanza said she is thankful for her dog who came into her life 13 years ago.

PROVIDED BY CAROLYN LANZA

"I prefer to be thankful and never want," he said. "I will be thankful for the family and friends who gather with me to celebrate this special day."

## A year of connections

Marilyn Loomis from Ashwaubenon said the pandemic has created some of the most memorable moments for her and her family.

She said she's grateful for all of her neighbors who reached out to her family and offered delivery services or any other help they could provide during the pandemic. Wisconsin also offers so many parks, and Marilyn said she is grateful that she and her family had the opportunity to discover so many parks, walking paths, waterfalls and other places they could spend their time together without other people around.

She said she is grateful for her family who gathered outside in the cold last December at a county park in Madison so they could exchange Christmas gifts and spend time together. Marilyn said they were frozen to the core, but they found a fireplace and built a fire to gather around.

On Christmas Eve, a Green Bay family created space in their backyard with a fire pit so they could open gifts and celebrate together.

"Wonderful memories were created from our holiday gatherings, and I could say that was the best holiday, Christmas that we have ever had," she said.

Marilyn said she has also been grateful for the technology that allowed her and her family to stay connected with other people, whether it was with family or being able to continue attending Sunday Mass online.

"If was, in our life, one of the best years ever," she said. "Turning something that could have been disastrous into something where we connected with our loved ones on a different level was the best."

Contact Caitlin at [cshuda@gannett.com](mailto:cshuda@gannett.com) or follow her on Twitter @CaitlinShuda.

## HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

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