



Visit us online at [www.csbnet.net](http://www.csbnet.net)

Tired of waiting for a loan decision from someone who needs a map to find Hudson? At Citizens State Bank, we provide:

- Fast Loan Decisions
- Local Loan Servicing
- Local Decision Making
- Experienced Decision Makers

375 Stagline Road • Hudson • 715-386-9050  
Additional offices in Elmwood, Menomonie, Roberts, and Woodville



Tom VanPelt  
President, CEO  
[tvnpelt@csbnet.net](mailto:tvnpelt@csbnet.net)



Todd Van Wambeke  
VP, Business Banking  
[tvnwambeke@csbnet.net](mailto:tvnwambeke@csbnet.net)



Jon Fumich  
VP, Business Banking  
[jfumich@csbnet.net](mailto:jfumich@csbnet.net)

# Star-Observer

Thursday, April 7, 2022 | [hudsonstarobserver.com](http://hudsonstarobserver.com) • [riverfallsjournal.com](http://riverfallsjournal.com) • Serving Hudson, River Falls and New Richmond

\$2.00

## INSIDE



The cold didn't seem to bother River Falls in its baseball season opener against Osseo Monday at First National Bank of River Falls Field. **Page B1**

Polls were open Tuesday across western Wisconsin where voters cast ballots for county, city and school elections. **Page A8**

The First Congregational Church sanctuary was transported back 100 years for a Sunday concert that could have been set in a grand ballroom at Downton Abbey. **Page A5**

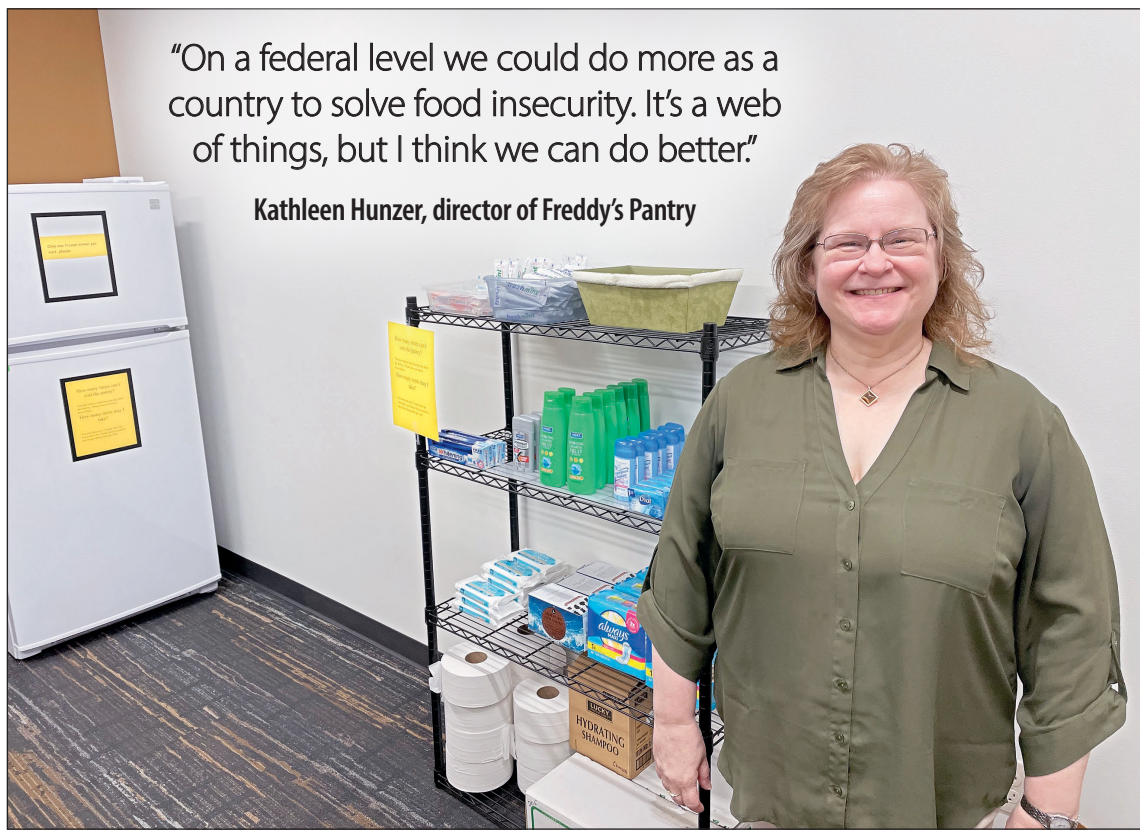
"I've always had a passion for fashion," says Krystal Pelant, the new owner of La Rue Marché in Hudson. **Page A6**

## OBITUARIES PAGE B8

Arnold "Arne" Anderson  
James "Jim" Bauer  
Thomas Gerlach  
Melba Hansen  
Susan R. Kampmeyer  
Gordon Kirchoff  
Jeffrey A. Larson  
Floyd C. Nahkala  
Ronald Frances Palmer  
Gerald "Jerry" Soderquist



## FOOD INSECURITY



"On a federal level we could do more as a country to solve food insecurity. It's a web of things, but I think we can do better."

Kathleen Hunzer, director of Freddy's Pantry

SAM FRISTED/STAR-OBSERVER

Freddy's Pantry Director Kathleen Hunzer.

# Fighting *the* stigma

## Food pantries work to get food to those in need

BY HANNAH COYLE AND SAM FRISTED  
Staff Writers

There is not one face to food insecurity. Those experiencing it come from all walks of life.

Economic difficulty results in choices no one should have to make.

Does one buy groceries for the family or pay rent? Does one choose heat in the winter or food on the table?

Those choices are partially alleviated with free grocery stores, food pantries, backpack programs and other services.

Even faced with the tough choices, many people are reluctant to use food services. Staff and volunteers running food programs know that they are not reaching everybody who needs assistance.

Stigma is one of those barriers.



HANNAH COYLE/STAR OBSERVER.

In addition to volunteering time to an organization that serves others, one of the draws for St. Croix Valley Food Bank volunteer Bev Lightfoot is the exercise. A bag of onions like this one isn't light.

River Falls Community Food Pantry Director Candice Anderson said there is a stig-

ma to seeking help. She feels not enough people reach out

See Insecurity Page A10

## RIVER FALLS



SUBMITTED

All three plans are expected to be implemented by spring 2023.

# City wants help updating plans

Comprehensive Plan; Bike, Pedestrian Plan; Outdoor Rec Plan

BY SAM FRISTED  
Staff Writer

RIVER FALLS – The city of River Falls is looking for increased community feedback for its Focus River Falls project. The project focuses on updating three important city planning documents. The three city planning documents are the Comprehensive Plan, the Bike and Pedestrian Plan and the Outdoor Recreation Plan, Community Development Director Amy Peterson said. She said the plans are important because they will set actions for the next 20 years in the city.

The Comprehensive Plan will "guide the community's future physical, social and economic development." The Bike and Pedestrian Plan will

See Plans Page A9

## BUSINESS

# Lucky Guy's has roots in family

## New distillery overlooks St. Croix River

BY HANNAH COYLE  
Staff Writer

It has been years in the making, but Guy and Michelle Whitehead and their three boys finally have the family business they've been working toward.

Lucky Guy's Distillery is officially open, serving craft cocktails and house distilled spirits.

The couple currently lives in Stillwater, Minnesota, but

looked to Hudson for the perfect place to run their business.

"We are Wisconsinites who were born in the wrong states," Michelle said.

Guy's grandfather was one of his first hero's and a romantic cocktail drinker. He recounted the nostalgic moments of learning how to mix the drink his grandfather would have every evening at 5 o'clock on the dot: a jack and soda.

Guy has worked in finance

for 25 years, so he doesn't have a history as a business owner, but opening a family-run distillery was an ode to his grandfather that's been on his mind for over a decade.

About 10 years ago, Guy started to dabble with the

See Distillery Page A9

Guy and Michelle Whitehead have opened the doors to Lucky Guy's Distillery, 101 Second St., Hudson.

HANNAH COYLE/STAR OBSERVER



June 27 - August 12

# SUMMER ARTSCAMP

715.386.2305  
[ThePhipps.org](http://ThePhipps.org)



## SOMERSET

# Food pantry breaks ground

## Expanding space for growing need

BY HANNAH COYLE  
Staff Writer

After eight years serving the community of Somerset at St. Anne's Parish, the Somerset Community Food Pantry has grown out of its space. On Monday, April 4, a groundbreaking ceremony was held at the new location.

Grace Place, born into a space at St. Anne's Parish in 2002, needed a larger space and moved in 2014, a sign of the change of times and the economy, said Mary Williams, president of the Somerset Community Food Pantry board of directors.

The goal of Grace Place is to fulfill the need for short-term housing for families in western Wisconsin. Part of its services included a small food pantry and school backpack program, but it took those to its new location in New Richmond, in 2014.

This left an unmet set of needs in the Somerset area.

"Need is often right in your backyard," Williams said.

"According to United Way's statewide ALICE study, which utilizes income data from the American Community Survey, there are 731 households in Somerset Village and Township that are living at or below the basic cost of living for our county," Scott Berget, Somerset Community Food Pantry treasurer, said. "That is 39% of households in Somerset Township and 23% of households in Somerset Village."

Enter the Somerset Community Food Pantry.

It took many of the original partnerships and more to found the new nonprofit under



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Members of the Somerset Community Food Pantry board, past and present, came together with the builder, Hartman Homes, and members of the local community, including River Valley Charities out of Hudson, many volunteers, local businesses and members of the American Legion to celebrate the groundbreaking of the new pantry.

the same roof as Grace Place had once been. The food pantry continued the backpack program and expanded the food pantry, growing over the past eight years.

Those at the pantry knew there was great need in the area, but the pandemic brought up food insecurity numbers even more, catapulting a relocation process.

"Was there value in the pantry in 2014? Yes," Williams said. COVID-19 made it more apparent, she continued.

In 2019, the pantry board of directors worked with the Village of Somerset to purchase a lot, 700 Rivard St., to buy a piece of property for a new pantry for \$1.

The new location is strategically located near other community essentials, like the post office, dentist and a day care center.

The initial goal was to work with Hartman Homes and Anitzberger



Tom Anitzberger from Anitzberger Designs worked along with Hartman Homes on the pantry design.

Designs to break ground in August 2021, but it was decided that enough funds had not yet been raised. The design and contract work of the two businesses has been a crucial part of the relocation process.

Come Monday, April 4, with a goal of opening

this fall, the Somerset Community Food Pantry broke ground.

The new pantry location will expand many of its already substantial offerings, working to create a "normal" shopping experience.

Currently, the pantry has been delivering food

to THUG House (a homeless shelter for teens) located in Somerset, the Senior Apartments (near Christ Lutheran) and providing all the backpacks for the school's backpack program for families with school aged children.

The pantry has a goal

of offering educational classes on food planning and preparation, helping customers figure out how to "turn [the food pantry] shelves into healthy meals," Williams said.

The board is grateful for the existing support from the community and looks forward to expanding partnerships with volunteers, organizations, businesses and everyone in between.

Before the pantry can achieve this goal and its other ones, it must complete its capital campaign.

As of groundbreaking day, the pantry had raised \$388,000, but anticipates the end dollar amount to be more than its initial \$400,000 goal.

Donations are currently being accepted at [somersetfoodpantry.org/test](http://somersetfoodpantry.org/test).

Readers can reach Hannah at [hcoyle@ourourkemediagroup.com](mailto:hcoyle@ourourkemediagroup.com)

## INSECURITY PAGE A1

because of it.

"People are embarrassed," she said.

University of Wisconsin-River Falls senior Breanna Weiler is one person who deals with food insecurity. She uses Freddy's Pantry, the university's food bank for students, about once a week.

"Being a young adult in college means I didn't have the time or the money that comes with paying expenses," Weiler said.

She said she is not embarrassed about having to use the pantry but has thought about the stigma that comes with using a food pantry.

"It doesn't matter how you look, you still need food," she said.

Weiler said her on campus job doesn't pay her enough to cover bills, tuition, housing and other expenses college students face. Weiler said she has had to cut necessities to pay for food.

School programs have also seen reluctance from those who need food.

The Hudson Area Backpack and Food Programs was asked by the school district, after its inception in 2007, to incorporate a summer distribution program for district families, expanding their already existing backpack pickup system during the school year.

"That's when we knew we were on to something," Kris Knott, chair of the Hudson Area Backpack and Food Programs, said.

It was when the backpack program expanded

and started distributing food to families during the summer that they realized they had been missing a key population.

They now could see that older students in the district avoided picking up a backpack full of food they would have to carry around the school.

Finding ways to rewrite the narrative of food insecurity is a constant battle with any free food location.

### Healthy, active lifestyle

Food insecurity is a measure of a household's having enough food to participate in a healthy and active lifestyle. That's the definition from the USDA, the agency charged with running the programs providing assistance to low- and no-income people to buy food.

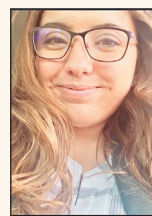
When nutritious food becomes unavailable or access is limited the household is deemed insecure.

Between federal and local programs, a variety of support is offered to those experiencing food insecurity.

In River Falls, federal programs, like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, known as WIC, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP, are virtually nonexistent, according to Anderson and Kathleen Hunzer, director of the UW-River Falls Freddy's Pantry.

Anderson said the pantry does not deal with WIC or SNAP regularly but that most qualified customers are on at least one program. Conversa-

### Those in need



Weller

#### Breanna Weiler

Breanna Weiler is a senior at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. The animal science major from Stevens Point, Wisconsin began using Freddy's

Pantry her junior year. She said she began to use the pantry after seeing an increase in bills and not enough income to cover food expenses.

"Being a young adult in college means I didn't have the time or the money that comes with paying expenses," Weiler said.

Weiler says her current job doesn't pay enough to cover the expenses that come with being a young adult in college causing her to use the pantry about once a week. She is also a customer at the River Falls Community Food Pantry, which she visits about once a month on average.

"It gives me relief. I know it's not always going to be this way, but for now I can know where I can find food," she said.

Weiler said she has had to compromise other necessities to budget for food. She admitted she has made no major sacrifices but has had to cut back on some items such as her credit card spending.

Weiler said she doesn't feel a stigma when shopping but has "had some small flashes" of determining if she belongs.

Overall she doesn't judge herself or others if they have to use the pantry.

"It doesn't matter how you look, you still need food," she said.

Weiler uses that quote for herself and around other students who are unsure if they want to reach out to the pantry. She encourages students to use the pantry if they are unsure or dealing with food insecurity.

Weiler believes food insecurity is an issue outside of the university and in western Wisconsin. She is happy the university opened a second pantry to help students who are suffering from food insecurity.

Weiler said the pantry has made it easy to get accessible food because it's daily and convenient. When she occasionally volunteers, her favorite part is the friendly atmosphere and students.

"Most students are cautious about using the pantry their first few times, but they get more comfortable over time," Weiler said. "I encourage students to use the pantry if they are unsure."



Marshall

#### Jessalyn Marshall

Freshman Jessalyn Marshall from Benson, Minnesota, is studying marketing communications and communication studies at the University of

Wisconsin-River Falls. She said she uses the pantry because finding time for grocery shopping is difficult.

"Being a full-time student, it's hard to find time to shop," Marshall said. "It's also hard to set aside money for food when there are bills and tuition to pay."

Marshall, a first-generation college student, said her family struggled with food insecurity when she was growing up.

"Not having everything I need has never been new to me, I just knew I needed some extra help," Marshall said.

Marshall began using the pantry two weeks after it opened, saying it was more accessible than the River Falls Food Pantry. Marshall is not active at the pantry, but said she could use it more than she does. She said the main reason she is not a frequent user is because of opportunities for others.

"I feel that there are others who might need it more than I do, and I don't want to take that opportunity from them," she said.

Marshall has never sacrificed anything for food, but said Freddy's Pantry has made it easier for students who are struggling to make those tough choices. Her advice to students is to give the pantry a try.

"I know it's hard and can seem scary, especially if it's not something that you're used to, but everyone needs a little help sometimes. It won't hurt to get what you need because it is a need," Marshall said.

Marshall thinks there is a stigma at the pantry because students can feel ashamed when using it. She said she has no feelings about the stigma toward the pantry. Marshall has reflected on her feelings about the stigma and the pantry.

"I have come to realize that I am not the only one who struggles, and it doesn't define who you are as a person if you get help," Marshall said.

Marshall thanked those who have gotten the pantry running and the great resource it provides. She thanked the volunteers who have donated their time to keeping the pantry open.

tions Anderson has had with customers reveal that those who use SNAP have seen access barriers such as strict income limits.

"Let's say \$2,000 is the income cutoff to be a part of the SNAP. If you make \$2,005 you'd be denied," Anderson said. "They do not pro-

vide leeway despite you only being \$5 over the threshold."

Anderson said customers are often intimidated when signing up because of the large amount of paperwork required to file. That paperwork is greatly reduced for local food pantries.

Both WIC and SNAP

representatives planned to increase their awareness and presence of their programs in the area within the next few months, according to Anderson. Both programs are great and hope to create a partnership moving forward, she said.

On the UW-River Falls

campus, the university does not partner with WIC or SNAP. Hunzer added that both programs are great but "underutilized." The university is working toward partnering with SNAP in the coming months, as well.

See Insecurity Page A11



Michele Dudar-Sehr, Mike Burton, Diane Manemann, Denise Flaherty, Roy Sjoberg and Joe Foss volunteered at the St. Croix Valley Food Bank pop-up pantry in Deer Park on March 24.

## INSECURITY PAGE A10

“On a federal level we could do more as a country to solve food insecurity,” Hunzer said. “It’s a web of things, but I think we can do better.”

### Wisconsin FoodShare

In January 2022, Wisconsin FoodShare, which administers the federal programs in the state, provided benefits to just over 720,000 individuals. This is up from January 2019, just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, when the number of individuals receiving benefits was about 625,500.

Despite the numbers, food insecurity continues to rear its ugly head and proves to be a larger issue than reported, said Ann Searles, executive director of the St. Croix Valley Food Bank.

And the numbers are not decreasing.

In 2020, Feeding America, a program that brings awareness to ending food insecurity, reported St. Croix County faced a food insecurity rate of 6.5%, compared to the state rate of 8.9%.

“It’s an issue everywhere,” Anderson said. “Anything over 1% is an issue to me.”

The most common reason for facing food insecurity is economic instability as households spend money on bills, housing and medical expenses. Other factors include long-term poverty, but also sudden unemployment and the rapidly rising cost of living.

In St. Croix County, the median household income is higher than the national average, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

That doesn’t exempt families from food insecurity.

Many populations struggle to cover the cost of living in Hudson and St. Croix County, according to Knott. Additionally, a significant population that utilizes food resources in the area are part of what Knott and other organizers refer to as ALICE – asset limited, income constrained, employed.

It’s “a new way of defining and understanding the struggles of households that earn above the federal poverty level, but not enough to afford a bare-bones household budget,” states the United for ALICE website. “For far too many families, the cost of living outpaces what they earn.”

Area programs

People need food, but they also need that food to be accessible regardless of their circumstances.

Distributors meet people “where they’re at” by physically and emotionally curating services to what people need. Some programs offer delivery for those who are homebound. Some programs have drive-through pickup options for discretion and efficiency. Some programs provide private shopping for those looking for another aspect of anonymity.

“Meeting people where they’re at” comes in a variety of forms, but the overall goal is to avoid barriers for various situations. This is one important aspect that separates locally run programs from federal and state programs.

The St. Croix Valley Food Bank prioritizes creative ways of distributing food, including sending pallets of food to smaller distributors, operating mobile pop-up pantries and collaborating with government entities, like the St. Croix County ADRC to reach homebound seniors.

A smaller partner that receives food from the food bank is Hudson Area Backpack which has expanded its operations every year since its inception in 2007.

When the organization first began, it was simply a backpack program. Students would pick up a backpack filled with food at school to bring home to their families.

Now the program provides this service in addition to running a free grocery store and offering bulk food pickups and delivery.

In River Falls there is one community food pantry and two at the university. The River Falls Community Food Pantry is located downtown, the Free Food Shelf in the Agricultural Science building at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and Freddy’s Pantry in Rodli Hall, also on campus.

The River Falls pantry, opened in 2013, receives an average of 8,000-10,000 items from the food bank each month and distributes it to the university operations. The food bank is the largest contributor, keeping the food pantry shelves stocked.

In 2022, the food bank has a goal of distributing six million pounds of food to organizations like the food pantry. It is estimated that 30% to 60% more food will be needed to respond to those in need within the next year.

When the need for food grows, so does the need for space.

The River Falls pantry moved to a larger facility in 2019, and was followed a few years later by an expansion of options on campus.

Freddy’s Pantry is



Jeff Gibson, a St. Croix Valley Food Bank volunteer, worked to collect items in the large refrigerator for an order.



River Falls Community Food Pantry changed locations in October 2019 after outgrowing their space, Director Candice Anderson said. One reason for outgrowing the space was the lack of space for storing donations.

the second pantry to be opened on the UW-River Falls campus in the last year. It started serving students in January 2022.

“We’re addressing the issue of food insecurity and daily living and security because students got us started,” Hunzer said. “So without the students being involved we might never have gotten this off the ground.”

COVID-19 was the main trigger for this second location, another aspect that isn’t unique to one operation.

One student who uses the pantry is Jessalyn Marshall. She began to use the pantry two weeks after it opened. The main reason she uses the pantry is because it’s hard to find time to go grocery shopping.

“Being a full-time student, it’s hard to find time to shop,” Marshall said. “It’s also hard to set aside money for food when there are bills and tuition to pay.”

Marshall isn’t a frequent customer of the pantry but said the opening of a second pantry has helped her.

“I don’t use it as much as I could, but it has helped me,” she said.

### Emergency fund

In the fall of 2019, the university created an emergency fund program for students. In the emergency fund program students could receive up to a \$500 grant to address

unplanned expenses. Since the program was launched, 176 students have been assisted and over \$66,000 has been distributed, Hunzer said.

She said the most common reason for applicants needing to apply for the emergency fund was because of food insecurity fears. The number of applicants accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, Hunzer said.

Food insecurity rates are based on unemployment and poverty rates, which were both at recent lows heading into the pandemic, according to Feeding America. This was followed by the largest monthly increase in and highest rate of unemployment since 1948, when such data was first collected.

Feeding America estimated that 1 in 7 people may have experienced food insecurity in 2020, but it hasn’t been experienced evenly across the nation.

Those who previously experienced food insecurity or were at risk pre-pandemic, were faced with greater hardships when COVID-19 hit, more so than those who hadn’t faced food insecurity at all.

Additionally, rural communities generally face higher food insecurity rates as well as communities of color. Again, these numbers were exacerbated by the pandemic.

“After the Great Recession, it took nearly



SUBMITTED

St. Croix Valley Food Bank has been operating on a drive-thru system at its mobile pop-up pantries in communities with few accesses to food. This line-up was from the March Deer Park pop-up pantry.

## The volunteers

### Chuck Pedretti

About a week after the St. Croix Valley Food Bank opened its new facility on Industrial Drive in Hudson, Chuck Pedretti started volunteering.

With experience working with a food pantry when he lived in Naples, Florida, this seemed like a good fit.

Every Monday, except maybe one, since July 2021, Pedretti has been at the food bank.

Currently living in Amery, Pedretti comes over to help pack orders. On average, he probably moves 5,000 pounds a day.

The delivery from the food bank to the Amery Area Food Pantry is made on Tuesdays, so sometimes you can find Pedretti helping unpack the order on the other end.

As a retired accountant, he started off doing some work on the computer but is really there to do whatever needs to get done.

### Rebecca Bender

Rebecca Bender is a student at UW-River Falls and has been volunteering at Freddy’s Pantry for about four weeks. She said her favorite part of volunteering is seeing the diversity of students come in. She said the university made the right choice to open a second pantry.

“It’s a great addition to campus,” Bender said.

In her time volunteering she said most students are relaxed and open when they stop in.

“Some people are timid, but the majority of students are comfortable,” she said.

Bender believes food insecurity is a problem outside of campus. She said the issue is larger than the university and the whole community can be affected by it.

10 years, until 2018, for food insecurity to reach pre-recession levels, and even then, 37 million people were still at risk of hunger,” Feeding America states as they anticipate rebounding post-pandemic.

Since the pandemic began, nonprofit organizations have had to reinvent the way they move food.

At the River Falls pantry, anyone in St. Croix and Pierce Counties can get food; however, their services were reorganized to contactless and outdoor pickup. They are still using this system today.

Hudson Area Backpack distribution moved from a school district location to St. Patrick Church, twice a week. Here, the program provides drive-up distribution, reducing contact, but continuing to fill the grocery bags of those in need.

Hudson Area Backpack is open to families that are a part of the Hudson School District, but the other food programs offered by the nonprofit, like the Fresh Harvest free grocery store, are open to residents of St. Croix County.

Similarly, the St. Croix Valley Food Bank’s mobile pop-up pantries around western Wisconsin each month are continuing in the drive-up-distribution format to reduce contact.

At Freddy’s Pantry only students and faculty have access once a day, for up to five items, using their university

ID’s. This system allows the pantry to track how many students use it.

Lots of need

Food insecurity is a widespread issue that isn’t contained to one community or population. The food bank provides for 27 food pantries, seven backpack programs, four shelters and seven mobile “pop-up” pantries, reaching the rural and underserved populations across western Wisconsin.

The two most common populations Anderson said use the River Falls pantry are single adult households and senior citizens. Single adults don’t have much disposable income and senior citizens have fixed income and cannot afford rising prices, she said.

COVID-19 was the largest factor for increasing the number of customers shopping, those a part of these populations or not. She said during the pandemic people became unemployed and lost paychecks, contributing to the uptick.

Inflation has had a large impact on the increasing need for customers. Financial instability that goes along with the increased grocery and gas prices made customers reach out to the pantry.

Just in February 2022, the River Falls Food Pantry served 330 households, 894 individuals,

See Insecurity Page A12



SAM FRISTED/STAR-OBSERVER

**Freddy's Pantry opened in January 2022. Currently one in three UWRF students face food insecurities.**



HANNAH COYLE/STAR OBSERVER

**The St. Croix Valley Food Bank is home to aisles, shelves, pallets and refrigerators full of food to be distributed to pantries, backpack programs and more across western Wisconsin.**

## INSECURITY PAGE A11

saw 25 new participants, distributed a total of 28,016 pounds of food.

Hunzer, who has served on the Hunger Prevention Council of Pierce County, said numbers have “skyrocketed” since she began to look at food insecurity nearly 15 years ago. She remembers it being “a big deal” when they distributed 300,000 pounds of food in Pierce County.

“The last time I checked, Pierce County has given out in one year like 760,000 pounds of food,” Huzer said.

That need is reflected at Freddy's Pantry, too.

According to a survey conducted in January 2022, Freddy's reported one in three students face food insecurity on campus.

Additionally, 41% of students reported not getting enough nutritious food.

In February 2022, there were 357 visits from 243 different individuals at Freddy's Pantry. Those numbers increased in March with around 500 total visits being recorded from 240 individuals.

She said a positive way to look at the numbers is increased awareness about the program around campus. Hunzer said another reason the numbers are up is because students use the pantry to supplement their meals between classes. Still, Hunzer expects pantry numbers to continue to increase even if students don't need to use the pantry.

“It's become routine for students to use the pantry, so I think those that have recovered are still going to use it,” she said. “I think it's only going to get busier.”

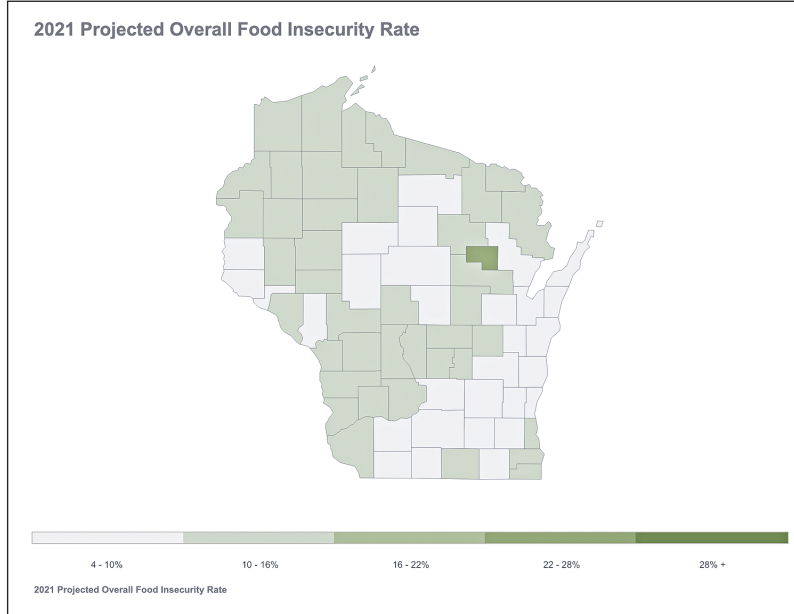
The population of student food pantry customers is diverse. The same survey conducted by Freddy's reported about half the visits from students are from first-year or transfer students and 35% of students reported being involved in campus athletics.

Marshall said she reached out after figuring out her job didn't pay her enough to cover other expenses. She said she has no regrets about reaching out when she did.

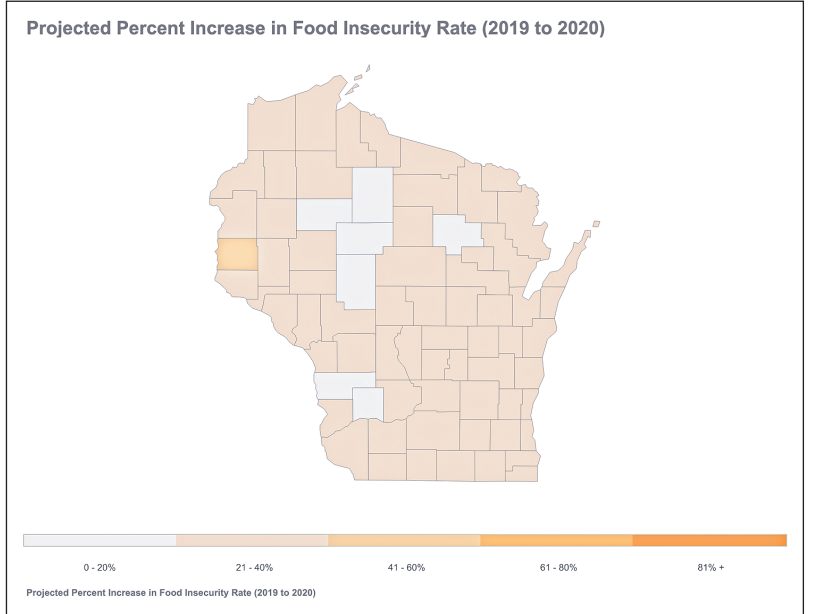
“I know it's hard and can seem scary, especially if it's not something that you're used to, but everyone needs a little help sometimes. It won't hurt to get what you need because it is a need,” Marshall said.

Moving the food there, but that doesn't always mean it's getting to those who need it. Searles describes much of what the county food bank does as “moving” the food. It is the same for other area nonprofits.

When it comes into their possession, the job has only just begun. As a food bank, staff and volunteers organize pallets of food, perishables and non perishables for



**Left: Feeding America produced a chart of the nation's projected food insecurities in 2019-21. This is a visual representation of the Feed America 2021 Projected Overall Food Insecurity Rate in Wisconsin. Right: Feeding America produced a chart of the nation's projected food insecurities in 2019-21. This is a visual representation of the Feed America Projected Percent Increase in Food Insecurity Rate (2019-20) in the state. St. Croix County was expected to increase by 43%, more than any other Wisconsin county.**



### Get involved

It takes a lot of effort to keep the pantry open, Anderson said. Five to six volunteers per shift are required to serve the customers.

The biggest help is from the community Anderson said. Without the support of donors and volunteers the pantry would not exist. And that sentiment has been echoed by the other food service organizations as well.

Financial support is an excellent way to contribute. The food bank, as part of the Feeding America program, has significant buying power. For each dollar, they're able to get about \$8 worth of food.

“We're just so fortunate,” Searles said about how the Food Bank functions. “It's just really all about building a stronger community for all.”

The River Falls pantry took in 401,623 items in February 2022 and 62% of those items were donated, including items from the food bank.

At Freddy's, people can get involved by donating money through the website. Hunzer said financial donations are the preferred way because it allows the pantry to buy more goods.

“It allows us the most flexibility to purchase food,” Hunzer said.

Of course, volunteers are always welcome at the food bank and Hudson Area Backpack and Food Programs as well.

Hudson Area Backpack and Food Programs: [hudsonbackpack.com/](http://hudsonbackpack.com/).

St. Croix Valley Food Bank: [stcroixvalleyfoodbank.org/](http://stcroixvalleyfoodbank.org/).

River Falls Food Pantry: [rfcfc.org/](http://rfcfc.org/).

Freddy's Pantry: [uwr.edu/Give/Freddys-Pantry.cfm](http://uwr.edu/Give/Freddys-Pantry.cfm).

orders to deliver to other locations, like Hudson Area Backpack and the River Falls Food Pantry.

When it reaches this set of volunteers, the food is one step closer to the mouths of those that need it.

But it's not there yet.

Sometimes, food insecurity is a constant battle for families or individuals, but sometimes, it is unexpected and temporary. Something like an unexpected layoff or medical emergency can result in a need for services.

“The problem isn't hunger,” Knott said. “The problem is economic instability.”

There is no blueprint for why someone needs these services, but organizers see it's a constant conflict for people to seek out the available resources.

Knott said she often tells people to think about it this way: It's a win on many levels.

A lot of the food they receive in food banks and pantries needs to move to mouths quickly or it's going to become waste.

You're reducing food waste, and it's “a really smart way to stretch your family budget,” she said.

“It makes great economic sense for our country.”

The River Falls Food Pantry is working on encouraging patrons to stretch the budget, too,

and help customers get the most of their food. Anderson said the pantry is planning educational classes in the future for users to help them find value in food, not unlike some current programming through the Hudson Area Backpack.

“The class will help people realize the value of a dollar, meal planning and proper nutrition,” Anderson said.

Mind you, once the food makes it from the food bank to the pantry and the customer has overcome any hesitation to use resources, other barriers may still present interruptions.

When living in a small town or city, or especially in a rural area, the primary mode of transportation is a car. If that isn't an available resource for someone, things become more complicated.

That is one of the main reasons Operation Help and Hudson Area Backpack are moving to a shared building on Second Street in Hudson. By combining locations, they're trying to further meet people where they're at. If a customer can make it to pick up food, they'll be able to access other services in the same trip. With a central location downtown, they're furthering the walkability of the area as well.

Humanity's good side Although Marshall

isn't a frequent customer of the pantry, she is thankful for its existence.

“I give my thanks to all that chipped in to make it happen,” Marshall said. “Thank you for what you did and continue to do.”

Marshall added she is thankful for volunteers and students who keep the pantry running. Marshall's advice for students is to give the pantry a try, even if they are unsure about reaching out, as it's a great resource with great people who help address food insecurity.

For Weiler, she knows her situation is temporary, as she expects her life to be more stable when she finds post-grad employment and permanent housing.

She is grateful for Freddy's Pantry and the River Falls Community Food Pantry.

“It gives me relief. I know it's not always going to be this way but for now I can know where I can find food,” she said.

There is no way to end food security on a local, state, national or even the international level.

But there are ways to raise awareness and support the existing need, through both big and small operations. Food drives, volunteer work or donations all contribute to how we fight food insecurity in

### Federal programs

#### 5 things to know about SNAP

1. SNAP stands for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
2. It provides food benefits to supplement the grocery budget of low-income individuals and families. The benefits can be used at stores to purchase healthy foods with a long-term goal of moving them toward self-sufficiency. SNAP is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service but run by state offices.
3. Anyone can apply for SNAP, also known in Wisconsin as FoodShare, but those eligible for enrollment have to meet the following criteria: family income is at or below the monthly program limit, which varies yearly and is determined by the federal poverty level; live in Wisconsin; and are a U.S. citizen or qualifying immigrant.
4. A 78-page handbook attempts to explain the overwhelming amount of details pertaining to Wisconsin's health care coverage and nutrition benefit opportunities.
5. Once an applicant has submitted their information for SNAP in Wisconsin, they'll be interviewed prior to receiving services. The Department of Health and Human Services office in New Richmond services the area; however, applications and interviews go through the Great Rivers Consortium, serving 10 counties in western Wisconsin.

#### 5 things to know about WIC

1. WIC is the shortened acronym for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, known as WIC.
2. It provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals and nutrition education for low-income pregnant and postpartum women, as well as to children up to age 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk.
3. WIC income eligibility is based on 185% of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines, which is the same criteria as free and reduced-price school lunch.
4. WIC is administered at the federal and state levels. St. Croix County Public Health in New Richmond operates the program. If you are eligible, you will receive an eWIC card to purchase specific healthy foods at the grocery store.
5. At clinic appointments, trained WIC staff will conduct a health and nutrition screening for all family members applying for WIC, including height and weight measurements, potentially a finger stick blood test, and questions about your health and nutrition. The first appointment will conclude with the determination of eligibility for WIC services. Appointments with WIC continue throughout a person's use of the program, about every three months, to receive nutrition education, relevant health care referrals and more food benefits.

our own backyards.

Weiler wants to raise awareness and give back to the community that is helping her through her difficult times.

“We love the good side of humanity, and I want to give back,” she said.

Weiler encourages people who are dealing with food insecurity to reach out to their local pantry. For those who do not want to reach out

because of the stigma that comes with it, Weiler has a personal note. With a smile, she said, “It doesn't matter how you look, you still need food.”

Readers can reach Hannah at [hcoyle@ourorkemedia-group.com](mailto:hcoyle@ourorkemedia-group.com)

Readers can reach Sam at [sfristed@ourorkemedia-group.com](mailto:sfristed@ourorkemedia-group.com)