This year’s theme for the NBC15 Share Your Holidays campaign is “one _____ makes a difference.” The great thing about Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin and the work we do is that many things can fill that blank spot and make a very big difference!

Earlier in my food banking career, a notable, but unpredictable donation would arrive in the mail every few months. It was $1 in an envelope, with no return address, no note inside, just a single dollar bill. I knew that $1 helped us provide 3 meals, but that particular dollar in my hand gave me a different perspective. It was a magic dollar full of potential, with no expectation of acknowledgement. I kept the envelope and put my own dollar bill inside. It sits on my desk as a reminder that small things can make big differences. Differences like $1 helping provide 3 meals, or the value of your volunteer hour equaling 75 meals! Want to think bigger? If 10 of your friends or co-workers volunteered just three hours, that value would be 2,250 meals. Now think about what a whole company volunteering together could mean to those facing hunger!

Our community needs us, which is why we need you. Together we are partners in turning dollars and volunteer hours into meals. You may only have $1 to give, or one hour to volunteer, or one can for a food drive, but it starts with one. What will be your “one________”? 

One dollar makes a difference

Hospitals don’t always need some big piece of expensive equipment to help people. Sometimes it’s a non-descript room at the back of the building that helps patients live a healthier lifestyle.

Upland Hills Health in Dodgeville has a room in the back with no monitors, no beeping machines, no doctors and nurses coming in and out to check on you. Yet from that room they treat patients with chronic health problems like diabetes and congestive heart failure; and help them manage their condition and reduce stress.

Upland Hills Health is part of Second Harvest’s HungerCare program which is designed to treat certain chronic health problems in food insecure people by providing healthy food, recipes, and education. Each month participants in the program drive around to a back door at the hospital, knock on the door, give their name, and receive a box with 1-2 weeks of restricted-diet appropriate food, recipes, and education information.

For Laura Isaacson, Director of Clinical Nutrition & Community Outreach at Upland Hills, participation in the HungerCare program was an easy decision; which was enthusiastically supported by her CEO and boss. “This program is very exciting because it gives my patients the tools to be able to follow the recommendations that we give them so they can stay healthy, out of the hospital, and they can better manage their chronic health condition.”

As a registered dietician, Laura knows the link between a healthy diet and effective management of chronic conditions like diabetes and congestive heart failure. But she also recognizes that many times the cost of the types of food she recommends to her patients can be a barrier. “I know that there are many people in this area who struggle with food insecurity and it becomes an obstacle to following the recommendations I give them. I might recommend they follow a low-salt diet, which would include things like fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean non-processed proteins, and if they are limited on where they can get their food, sometimes they’re not able to follow those recommendations.”
This is the 24th annual NBC15 Share Your Holidays campaign. Over the last 23 years we have come to realize there are many “ones” that make a positive impact on the lives of those facing hard times. Whether the “one” is big (like the difference one year of enough nutritious food can make in the life of a child), or little (like sharing a social media post about hunger) every “one” helps make our community a better place to live. Here are some “ones” you can do to help our community:

**Check Out Hunger (October 28 - December 31)**
Make a donation at many area grocery stores.

**Social Media Blitz (November 21)**
Download and print our Social Media Blitz sign (SecondHarvestMadison.org/BlitzSign), take a picture holding it, and post it to our Facebook page using #SYH24. For every picture posted Naviant, Inc. will donate 24 meals (up to 1,250 pictures).

**Giving Tuesday (December 3)**
Visit SecondHarvestMadison.org/Donate to make a recurring monthly gift of $10 or more (or a onetime gift of $120 or more) and you will receive a cozy sweatshirt blanket thanks to Chase Brieman of CBRE!

**NBC15 Share Your Holidays Grand Finale**
(December 11, 6 a.m. - 10:30 p.m.)
Gifts made online will be doubled ALL DAY and DOUBLED over the phone during Mike’s Miracle Minutes on NBC15. To make a gift you can go online at SecondHarvestMadison.org/Donate or call 844-8HUNGER.

We are grateful to you and the following generous sponsors who make the NBC15 Share Your Holidays campaign possible:
Isaacson and Upland Hills Health have three goals for the program:

- Help patients stay healthy
- Provide education
- Community outreach

Patients chosen to be part of the program come from a number of sources including her patients as a dietician, the cardiac rehabilitation staff, and the Community Connections Free Clinic in Dodgeville. Once chosen, patients will be asked a few basic questions to help them determine a baseline that will be used to help determine whether the program is successful after a year of receiving the boxes.

When asked to fill in the blank for this year’s NBC15 Share Your Holidays campaign theme of “one ________ makes a difference,” Sue Steinmetz, Co-Manager of the McFarland Community Food Pantry had a profound response…”opportunity.” That word represents both the practical need for guests to have more opportunity to come to the pantry to get more food, and the aspirational goal of pantries giving guests the opportunity at a better life.

Sue has been helping the McFarland community for more than 10 years. When asked why she decided to help those struggling with hunger, she said:

“When I first started to do this ten years ago I was retired and I was looking for something to do and I wanted to do a volunteer activity. My heart spoke to doing this and giving back to the people in need. Now I do it because I really feel good about what we do here and the impact that we have on people’s lives. Because we’re a smaller food pantry we get to know the families and the individuals a lot better, so I get to have that connection to them and then you can feel how much you’re making a difference to them.”

The McFarland Community Food Pantry is open once a week plus the third Saturday of the month. In an average week they will serve 45-50 families. Some come every week just to pick up a few things, others come every other week, and some come just once a month. Sue will tell you that for some, coming to the pantry is not just about getting food, it’s also their social time. Regardless how many times their guests come, or why, the pantry is an important lifeline for those who need it.

Anecdotally, Laura tells of one patient who came to the program from the hospital’s cardiac rehabilitation unit. In addition to having a lot of heart-related issues, he was also very depressed because of his chronic health problems and his limited finances.

Luckily the HungerCare program not only provides heart-healthy food, which helps with his cardiac condition, but the food is provided free of charge which helps relieve some of his stress over finances as well. “He is one person I see who benefits greatly. I see a huge difference in him.”

Thanks to the Alliant Energy Foundation and the Drive Out Hunger Golf Classic outing’s numerous sponsors, the 2019 outing will provide approximately 1.3 million meals to Feeding America member food banks throughout Alliant Energy’s two-state – Iowa and Wisconsin – service territory. This brings the total raised over 13 years to 14.8 million meals. The Foundation also provided an additional gift of $5000 in honor of Dan Stein’s retirement for the HungerCare Program.

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