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Reaching out:  
McLean County  
community  
food pantries



PHOTO BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

**Beth Anderson**, fills emergency and express baskets at The Lord's Pantry in Trinity Lutheran Church, Turtle Lake. Emergency baskets assist individuals and families with sudden, urgent food needs while express baskets help facilitate food during distribution days.

LORDS PANTRY



PHOTO BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Community Cupboard of Underwood volunteers **Mark Wood**, left, and **Jerry Eman** unload cases of food from the Great Plains Food Bank. While the food pantry received food from Great Plains, it also accepts qualifying food donations, as well as monetary support.

## Reaching out: McLean County community food pantries

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Sometimes, the hardest thing a person can do is open a door. Even if it means opening a door that provides food for a much-needed meal.

It's hard to admit the inability to afford to feed themselves or their family.

It's hard to admit someone is choosing between buying medications or food.

It's hard to admit tough times are hitting hard – tough times that aren't always in the control of those

dealing with them.

As a retired elementary school educator, the numbers don't surprise Susan Hanson, Turtle Lake. She knew some of her students came to school hungry. She knew they possibly weren't getting a full nightly meal.

When Underwood's Harmony Higbie thought about the numbers and how it relates to her community, she was stunned: The U.S. Census Bureau estimates McLean County has a 10 percent poverty rate.

“When you think about a town of 750 people, that's still 75 people,” Higbie exclaimed.

It was underscored when the Great Plains Food Bank's mobile food pantry made its first delivery to Underwood. “We had a line of vehicles around city hall,” Higbie described.

The chilling statistics of hunger needs in their communities prompted Higbie and others, like Hanson and Ray Iverson, Max, to do something.

They and an army of volunteers organized food pantries. They established locations and stocked shelves with food for people who, for whatever reason, are struggling to afford putting food on their table. They wrote bylaws and obtained federal nonprofit 501(c)3 status. They wrote funding grants.

The Lord's Pantry, Turtle Lake, is where volunteers like Hanson and Beth Anderson dedicate their time and energy. Higbie is the Community Cupboard of Underwood president. Iverson spearheads Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry in Max.

They adamantly stress that success isn't possible without dedicated volunteers, area businesses,

churches, schools and others throughout the communities donating money, food or other assistance.

"I'm just overwhelmed ... the community support, the people's support. I just can't say enough," Iverson expressed. "This would not be here without the great volunteers."

Community support and Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry efforts garnered recognition from the Great Plains Food Bank as the 2018 Agency of the Year, an honor humbling Iverson as much as the community's support for the food pantry.

Higbie and Community Cupboard Manager Merton Hailey credit their

five-member board and volunteers throughout the community as being the heart of the pantry's success – everything from monetary and food donations to sponsoring food drives, unloading deliveries from the Great Plains Food Bank - which provides food items at no cost except for transportation fees - to even organizations such as Augustana Lutheran Church's youth group cleaning the food pantry.

The numbers are chilling. Just look at the Community Cupboard's January through September 2019 fact sheet:

- 94 families served, distributing 16,935 pounds of food.
- Of 147 clients, 34 percent were children, 53 percent adults and

## About the local food pantries

### Community Cupboard of Underwood:

- Food distribution days: 4-6 p.m. first Thursday, and 10 a.m.-noon, third Saturday, monthly, located at 208 Lincoln Ave.
- Donation drop-off locations: Cottingham Insurance, Underwood, and Underwood City Hall.

### McLean Family Resource Center Food Pantry, Washburn:

- Call 701-462-8643 or 701-460-6389 and leave a message, if needed, to request an express food basket. Pickup is 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday; food pantry south door located a block off Main Street behind Chase Drug.
- Donation drop-off location: McLean Family Resource Center Food Pantry east side main door.

### Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry, Max:

- Food distribution day: Noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. third Monday, monthly, Max City Hall.
- Donation drop-off location: Max City Hall.

### The Lord's Pantry, Turtle Lake:

- Food distribution day: 2-4 p.m. second Thursday, and 10 a.m.-noon fourth Saturday, monthly, Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St., Turtle Lake.
- Donation drop-off locations: Main Street Market, all community churches, and Northland Community Clinic, Turtle Lake.

### Wilton Food Pantry:

- Food distribution days: "Mini distributions," with items donated by North Cashwise Foods, Bismarck, every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until items are gone. Full express box distributions 4-6 p.m. third Thursday, monthly, Wilton Senior Center, 42 Dakota Ave.
- Donation drop-off location:

Wilton Senior Center. Make checks to Sunne Lutheran Church, earmarked "food pantry."

Food pantries can accept canned and dry food items, with the exception of expired baby food. They must follow all food safety rules and regulations, and volunteers adhere to confidentiality requirements.

Food pantries can also accept homegrown fruits and vegetables. "People that have excess want to share, they don't want it to go to waste," Community Cupboard of Underwood President Harmony Higbie described. Meat and wild game can be accepted, but must be only processed from the U.S. Department of Agriculture certified meat processors or butchers. Homemade food items or canned goods cannot be accepted

Personal care items and laundry soap are often in greatest demand at the food pantries, along with food items such as peanut butter, jelly, soup, ketchup, canned vegetables and fruits, tuna and pasta. ■



PHOTO BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Community Cupboard of Underwood President **Harmony Higbie** unloads boxes the food pantry ordered from the Great Plains Food Bank, Fargo. The food pantry serves McLean County residents with food distributions two days each month. They also provide emergency baskets.

- 13 percent senior citizens.
- 13 percent of the clients visited twice; 40 percent once.

Max's food pantry distributed 5,700 pounds of food in October 2019. It serves an average of 50 families monthly.

Turtle Lake's food pantry served between 21 and 43 households from January through September 2019.

Sunne Lutheran Church Pastor Paul Schauer, Wilton, said they anticipated serving about 12 households when the Wilton Food Pantry opened in 2013.

"We get anywhere from 24 to 36 (households)," he said. "There's a lot of food insecurity."

Wilton clients receive express boxes stocked with food, so they simply pick them up, Schauer described. "We have them (boxes) ready to go. I would love to have a place where we could have people come and be able to pick out their own food," he said.

The McLean Family Resource Center also provides express boxes,

determining the household size, allergy constraints and other needs when clients call, described Resource Center Food Pantry Coordinator Susan Balditsch.

The Max food pantry launched in December 2015 in Our Savior Lutheran Church before moving to its present location in Max City Hall.

"The city council has been on board since the beginning," Iverson described. Benedict's Lutheran Church serves a meal on distribution days, Iverson added, in the city hall auditorium. He credits the Rev. Erin Gullickson for sparking the food pantry concept.

The pantry crafted a relationship with Minot's Cashwise Foods, where it receives free food products. The pantry shares extra items with Turtle Lake and Underwood's food pantries.

Trinity Lutheran Church contributes to the success of The Lord's Pantry, providing space and utilities, Anderson described. Area churches play a huge role in

the pantry's success. Each church has a representative on the pantry advisory board.

In addition, churches rotate volunteering on food distribution days. That involves more people directly with the food pantry, spreads out volunteer workload, and – perhaps most importantly – helps increase understanding of the need for an area food pantry, Anderson and Hanson explained.

The Community Cupboard of Underwood is undertaking a pilot project to identify its client's dietary needs. Beginning in January 2020, the pantry will survey clients to try to determine the extent of the need to address special dietary concerns, such as diabetes or gluten-free diets, Higbie described.

The food pantries work hard to obtain grant support, which assists with everything from acquiring much-needed food items and equipment, and even operating expenses.

McLean Electric Cooperative consumers have assisted through their support of Operation Round Up, in which monthly electric bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar. Past Operation Round Up grants have been awarded to The Lord's Pantry, while Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry received a grant in October 2019 to defray operating expenses. An earlier grant helped the pantry purchase a large cooler, Iverson added.

Fundraising also takes on some unique forms. The Community Cupboard of Underwood conducted a Facebook fundraising drive, quickly meeting its \$400 goal. The pantry was halfway toward its \$10,000 goal in November to raise money for an air conditioner to deal with the building's summer heat.

In Turtle Lake, online Amazon Smile customers can dedicate their

contributions to The Lord's Pantry.

People often have a difficult time coming to a food pantry in their own community, Hanson offered. But the throng of dedicated volunteers don't care what circumstances draw someone to open that door on food distribution day.

They're there to help. "We're here because we care," Hanson explained.

It's all part of what helps make a community. ■



The Lord's Pantry volunteer **Susan Hanson** loads ketchup into emergency and express baskets at Turtle Lake's Trinity Lutheran Church. The pantry is located in the church and is open two days each month for food distributions. Area churches are represented on the pantry's advisory board.

## HUNGER IN AMERICA STATISTICS

Feeding America, the United States' food bank network, conducts a national Hunger in America study. Some Hunger in North Dakota 2018 numbers:

**79%** of those served by a food pantry have household members employed within the last year.

**48%** are currently employed.

**\$17,690** average annual income.

**36%** are children, **12%** senior citizens.

**37%** live in rural areas, **33%** in urban cities.

**8%** are grandparents caring for grandchildren.

**53%** of adults regularly skip meals.

**8%** of children skip meals.

**83%** live in permanent housing, **15%** in temporary housing, and **2%** are homeless.

**27%** report not eating for an entire day.

**49%** choose between food and gasoline for their vehicle.

**44%** choose between paying utilities and food.

**34%** choose between food and medicine or medical care.

Source: Great Plains Food Bank, [www.greatplainsfoodbank.org](http://www.greatplainsfoodbank.org), "Ending Hunger 2020 Hunger in North Dakota 2018 Executive Report."

# Reaching out: Garrison Area Resource Center launching in 2020

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL



Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry President **Alisa Dahl** sorts items the organization collected for "Blessing Baskets" for Thanksgiving Day dinner.

**G**arrison will soon join other McLean County communities reaching out to those with what is often a silent need – a decent meal.

The Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry (GARC) was founded in 2019 through efforts of area volunteers recognizing the need to help those facing the challenge of feeding themselves and their family.

The Great Plains Food Bank mobile food pantry from Bismarck served the Garrison area periodically until 2016, described GARC President Alisa Dahl. During 2016 food distributions, the mobile food pantry provided food for 138 children, 194 adults and 50 senior citizens – a total of 224 boxes during three distributions, weighing 8,909 pounds.

With area food pantries in Max, Underwood and Turtle Lake, people in the Garrison area had to travel when the mobile food

pantry no longer came to Garrison, Dahl continued.

Spearheaded by Garrison area residents Dawn Kolden and Nancy Leidholm, the concept for a local food pantry began to take root. "People who need food shouldn't have to travel," Dahl added.

A board of directors including Dahl, Kolden, Leidholm, the Rev. Janis Sloka, Vickie Lindquist and Jill Denning-Gackle was established, exploring ways to bring the food pantry to reality.

"What we have now is a group who bring a lot of different skillsets to the table," Dahl described.

GARC partnered with realtor and Garrison Area Improvement Association board member Mike Matteson to identify a suitable facility and location. During the search, they also wrote organizational documents and their business plan, filed required paperwork with the North

Dakota Secretary of State's office, acquired federal 501(c)3 nonprofit organization status, and began applying for funding grants.

Remodeling and stocking the new resource center began in November, Dahl continued. The organization anticipates having a regular food distribution schedule established in January 2020. The building will be accessible for those with disabilities. The food pantry will be located in the back of the building, which is on the south end of Garrison's Main Street. There is also adequate parking available in the rear of the building.

Partnerships are essential to the center's success and its ability to meet area needs, Dahl added. GARC will collaborate with Fargo-based Great Plains Food Bank, which works across North Dakota to get food to those in need. The Garrison food pantry must meet all Great Plains Food Bank rules and regulations to receive U.S. Department of Agriculture commodities and purchase food at reduced rates.

In addition to its GAIA partnership, the resource center is reaching out to area businesses and churches.

One of the organization's first ventures – even before it acquired a building – was to sponsor a Thanksgiving "Blessing Baskets" food drive. People took items to nine locations around Garrison, including McLean Electric Cooperative. Several Garrison Public School classes held food drive contests to encourage student involvement, Dahl added.

The Garrison Area Resource Center is also thinking long-term. Some of those visionary goals include expanding services to sponsor food-related and nutrition classes. They would be open to

anyone interested, Dahl described.

In addition, they eventually hope to offer additional resources, including “gently used” clothing or basic household items.

People sometimes have emergency needs, which is why the organization will provide emergency baskets with items already in boxes. Food pantries can also help bridge financial gaps for individuals and families, offer help for those who find themselves in the “working poor” category of the job sector, or people on fixed incomes juggling things like winter heating bills, food and medical needs.

GARC accepts food and monetary donations. “The dollar you give gives so much more,” Dahl continued. They know they will have to purchase some food items, as well as cover basic operating expenses such as rent, insurance and utilities. Food drop-off locations will soon be determined, Dahl said.

Their efforts were bolstered by grants from Great River Energy,

Walmart, Operation Round Up - funded through McLean Electric member donations when they “round up” their monthly electric bill – and Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

In addition, McLean Electric assisted in securing support from CoBank, a rural electric cooperative financing cooperative, and Rural Development Finance Corporation, a rural economic development organization through North Dakota’s rural electric cooperatives – including McLean Electric – and their statewide organization, the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives.

The Garrison Area Resource Center is fully focused on meeting the needs of people throughout their area and eagerly anticipate their 2020 opening. It’s important to recognize that the role of a food pantry is to serve those in need, Dahl stressed. “We are not here to judge, we are here to serve.” ■

## Ryder food pantry serves area, too

The need for food stretches far beyond government boundaries like county lines.

Other community food pantries in adjacent counties serve residents from bordering McLean County. For example, the Community Food Pantry, in the old Ryder school gymnasium, serves people from northern McLean County and Ward and Mountrail counties. It has a drop-off box in Krause’s Market, Garrison, food pantry manager, Kathy Kimball, added.

An independent food pantry, the 501(c)3 nonprofit organization was founded in 2017. Like many

volunteers across McLean County, Kimball said their volunteer involvement comes from the harsh realization people within the area were hungry and not eating regular meals.

They serve anywhere from 30 to 60 households each distribution, which is held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. the second and fourth Saturday monthly. Soup and sandwiches are served during that time, Kimball described. Volunteers also assist clients who can’t make regular distribution hours to obtain food boxes, she continued. ■

### McLean Electric Cooperative ITEMS FOR SALE ON BIDS



**2006 Chevrolet Trailblazer**, 152,049 miles, 4.2 liter, white with gray interior



**2006 Buick LaCrosse**, 53,907 miles, 3.8 liter, white with gray interior



**2011 Chevrolet Silverado** 3500 extended cab, 111,601 mile, white with gray interior

Send sealed bids by 4 p.m. Dec. 16, 2019, with your name, address, phone, item you are bidding on and the bid amount to:

**McLean Electric Cooperative**  
ATTN: Keith  
P.O. Box 399  
Garrison, ND 58540  
For further information, call Keith or Kelly at the office at 463-6700  
Or drop off at the office:  
4031 Hwy. 37 Bypass  
Garrison, ND



## McLean County community calendar:

# Events and activities to see and do

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

### McLean County food pantries:

- **Community Cupboard of Underwood:** 4-6 p.m. Dec. 5 and 10 a.m.-noon Dec. 21, 208 Lincoln Ave.
- **The Food Pantry, Max:** Noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. Dec. 16, Max City Hall.
- **The Lord's Pantry, Turtle Lake:** 2-4 p.m. Dec. 12 and 10 a.m.-noon Dec. 28, Trinity Lutheran Church.

### December:

- **Dec. 1:** Annual Tree Lighting and Christmas Gathering with special guest appearances by Santa and Mrs. Claus, 4 p.m., Riverdale City Plaza.
- **Dec. 1:** Dickens Village Festival, Garrison. Visit [www.dickensfestival.com](http://www.dickensfestival.com) for details.
- **Dec. 4:** Community Christmas Concert, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Mercer, 7:30 p.m. Special performance by Occasional Gospel Quartet, Hazen. Free and open to the public. Goodies and fellowship to follow.
- **Dec. 4:** Foot Care Clinic, 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1-4 p.m., Northland Health Center, Turtle Lake. \$25. Contact 701-448-9225 for appointment and insurance pricing options. Walk-ins welcome.
- **Dec. 4:** Santa Day, Dakota West Credit Union, Turtle Lake, 3:30-6 p.m. Sleigh rides, weather-permitting, with open

houses at all local businesses.

- **Dec. 6:** Angel of Hope Memorial Service, Garrison Wilderness Park, 7:30 p.m.
- **Dec. 6-7:** Dickens Village Festival, Garrison. Visit [www.dickensfestival.com](http://www.dickensfestival.com) for details.
- **Dec. 7:** Holiday Craft and Bake Sale sponsored by the Kountry Kids 4-H Club (with concessions), Underwood City Hall, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- **Dec. 7:** Santa Day, Washburn.
- **Dec. 9:** Santa Store, 3:30-6 p.m., Turtle Lake American Legion. Shopping for all community children to purchase items for families, friends and teachers. Children will go home with wrapped and ready gifts.
- **Dec. 11:** Trinity Lutheran Church Cookie Walk, Turtle Lake. Purchase holiday cookies, 4-6:30 p.m. with free soup and sandwiches
- **Dec. 13-14:** Dickens Village Festival, Garrison. Visit [www.dickensfestival.com](http://www.dickensfestival.com) for details.
- **Dec. 14:** Santa Day, Max City Hall, 9:30-11 a.m., with Santa collecting canned goods and monetary donations for the food pantry.
- **Dec. 14:** Milk & Cookies with Santa, 1-3 p.m., Garrison Lamplighters Center (Senior Citizens adjacent to City Hall), Garrison.

- **Dec. 14:** Santa Day, Wilton Memorial Hall.
- **Dec. 14:** Washburn Riverboat Days committee sponsoring Johnny Holmes Band and silent auction, Memorial Hall. Doors open at 7:30 p.m., with 8:30 p.m. performance. Tickets available from committee members and at the door.
- **Dec. 17:** Underwood Public Library Story Time: Dog Sleds, 2 p.m.
- **Dec. 18:** Foot Care Clinic, 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1-4 p.m., Northland Health Center, Turtle Lake. \$25. Contact 701-448-9225 for appointment and insurance pricing options. Walk-ins welcome.

### Early January 2020 events:

- **Jan. 1, 2020:** First Day Hike, Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison, 6-7:30 p.m.

*McLean County organizations and communities can contact Patricia Stockdill by emailing [stockdill.patricia@gmail.com](mailto:stockdill.patricia@gmail.com), or calling 701-337-5462, to submit listings.*

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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District 7, Mercer

**Darcy Klain**, vice president  
701-448-2408  
District 4, Ruso

**Rod Stockdill**, secretary-treasurer  
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District 3, Garrison

**Clarence Behles**, asst. secretary-treasurer  
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District 2, Garrison

**Troy Presser**, director  
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District 5, Turtle Lake

**Karen Hanson**, director  
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District 6, Washburn

**James Odermann**, director  
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### STAFF:

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**Keith Thelen**, Operations Manager  
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