



Our Neighbors' Place

ANNUAL REPORT



2023

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Life in the St Croix Valley is wonderful for many – unless you are part of the ALICE population. ALICE is an acronym standing for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed – and these are the households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but less than the basic cost of living for the county. In Pierce and St Croix counties, a family (2 adults, 1 infant, 1 preschooler) needs to earn an average annual income of \$74,634 in order to afford a household survival budget (no emergency or future savings).

Luckily, Our Neighbors' Place is here to help. Guests from all walks of life and every situation imaginable stream through our doors looking for help and looking for hope.

Across our 4 programs, we connect guests to what they need – food, shelter, housing, clothing, personal care items, referrals, advocacy, a place to go, a sense of belonging, and most of all – hope.

For those of you who are just learning about Our Neighbors' Place – welcome and please reach out with questions. For those of you who have helped us get to where we are – thank you!!!

SHELLY SMITH

Executive Director



"This place is really different than a lot of other place - I got so much help here!!"

Woman staying at Turningpoint with her kids - she came in to get help finding housing. She met with Sara, our Case Manager, got food, a gas card, clothing, and personal care products, as well as referrals to other local resources she didn't know existed.



Our Neighbors' Place

DAY CENTER

"I just need hope - that's all I need. Thank you so much for your help! We were doing really well - until I got sick."

Man who came to the Day Center for help - he lost his housing following a divorce, job loss, and health struggles. He was living in a camper, trying to manage significant medical needs, and wasn't able to continue doing so on his own.



The Day Center is the first point of contact for most guests of Our Neighbors' Place. Staffed by 3 employees, the Day Center is open 10-4pm Mon - Fri and provides the following:

- Laundry
- Shower / restroom
- Lockers
- Phone/fax/internet/wifi
- Mailing address
- Food
- Personal care products
- Gas cards
- Taxi vouchers
- Motel vouchers
- Housing counseling
- Case management
- Referrals

There were 3,829 points of contact through the program (in person visits and phone calls) in 2023. We work hard to create a safe, non-judgmental environment where everyone is welcome.

Points of Contact (phone & in person) at the Day Center

- 2023 = 3,829
- 2022 = 3,505
- 2021 = 4,085
- 2020 = 3,039
- 2019 = 4,870
- 2018 = 4,123
- 2017 = 3,171
- 2016 = 1,648
- 2015 = 1,043
- 2014 = 989

33% of the population in Pierce & St Croix county do not make enough to afford a basic household budget.

<https://www.unitedwaystcroix.org/meet-alice>
(Mär 2024)



THE CLOSET

"Maybe now I can go to school and not be bullied so much . . ."

The Closet thrift store is located within the Day Center building and provides guests with clothing, shoes, accessories, outerwear and more – helping guests stretch their budget while supplying their families with the things they need.

In 2023, The Closet provided over 1,000 vouchers to ONP guests – meaning that those individuals could "shop" at no charge. Voucher holders also have access to personal care items, diapers/wipes, feminine care, new socks and underwear, blankets, towels, and more.

Local teen shopping with his mom - he was able to find new shirts, pants, shoes, and an appropriate winter coat - so he didn't have to wear the same few things to school every day as he had been.



The resources in The Closet are made possible by generous donations from the community – please consider donating!

The Closet is open to the public for everyone's thrift store shopping needs. Prices range from \$1 – \$8 and funds raised from The Closet's sales go to support ONP programming. 2023 sales brought in just over \$20,000 and we look forward to that number continuing to grow each year.



BACKPACK PROGRAM

Families in the Backpack Program have choices!

They can choose which store they would like to receive vouchers for:

Dick's Fresh Market
Family Fresh

Kwik Trip (north RF location)

They can also choose if they want their student's bag delivered to the school or if the family would like to pick up their student's bag at Our Neighbors' Place Day Center.

Families appreciate the options to customize the program to what works for them



Since 2010, Our Neighbors' Place Backpack Program has provided food to families in the River Falls School District who need help feeding their children when school is not in session. 7-9 pounds of non-perishable food as well as vouchers for perishable food are sent home each week.

During the 2022-23 school year, the Backpack Program provided 3,795 bags (28,462 pounds of food) to families in need.

During the summer of 2022, the Backpack Program provided 572 bags (4,576 pounds of food) to families in need. Special THANK YOU to The Lions' Club of River Falls for providing funds and volunteers for our summer program! Participants also receive fresh produce through our partnership with River Valley Charities and YMCA Camp St Croix.

What's in an ONP Backpack Program bag?

- 7-9 lbs of non-perishable food
- Voucher for perishable food (rotates weekly between milk, meat, eggs, bread, produce)
- Birthday bag with cake mix, candles, balloons, plates when a child has a birthday

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Transitional Housing (TH) is a bridge from homelessness to permanent, stable housing. Our Neighbors' Place owns a 4-unit building in River Falls to provide stable housing to families experiencing homelessness. Working with our Case Manager, families can stay in their unit for up to 2 years, contributing 30% of their income toward rent, as they work toward the goal of securing permanent housing. This program is unique to ONP because TH programs are not readily found in Pierce and St Croix counties, despite the incredible need.



Since program inception in 2016 through the end of 2023, we have had 26 families in the Transitional Housing program.

- 1 family was housed in the program at the end of 2023
- 5 families did not successfully complete the program due to a variety of complicated, contributing factors
- 20 families completed the program and found permanent housing

Those 26 families were made up of 36 adults and 63 children – most of them now have permanent, stable housing thanks to this program.

"Thank you for being real! I don't know what I'm going to do without you. You are such an important factor in my journey. You believed in me when nobody else did and because of that I will never let you down. Thank you a million times over!"

A note to Sara (our Case Manager) from a grateful mom who lived in our building for just over a year.

While she stayed with us, she worked hard to:

- Regain full custody of her children
- Find employment
- Complete post-secondary classes
- Secure permanent subsidized housing



Safe, stable housing in a quiet neighborhood near downtown River Falls

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023



Backpack Program sees a record-high 150 students enrolled – fall of 2023.

This vital program is serving the most vulnerable in the community – our students. Food insecurity is at an all-time high – and the Backpack Program is here to help. This program is run by volunteers and housed in Ezekiel Lutheran Church – thank you to all who help with this important program!!!



Strategic Planning. Our board identified 3 focus areas as we look to and plan for what's next:

- 1.) Future Growth – Day Center limitations and needs; Food insecurity programming; Transitional Housing capacity
- 2.) Advertising/Social Media/Events – Reviewing our current approach and refining plans for future outreach and ensuring people know how and where to find us and WHY we exist in the first place.
- 3.) Staffing – Our staff and volunteers are crucial to the success of our programming – requiring us to review staffing/programming levels for future success.



Introducing Empty Bowls! In October, we hosted our first Empty Bowls event in response to the overwhelming increase in requests for help with food that we've seen recently. We had 11 local establishments donate soup and nearly 300 people attend the event at St Bridget Church. Make plans to attend Thu, Oct 24, 2024 at St Bridget and help in the fight against hunger in our community!

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

At the heart of Our Neighbors' Place, our volunteers provide the caring, compassionate help that our guests have come to expect. Whether it's packing backpacks of food, attending Board or Committee meetings, doing repairs and maintenance at our Transitional Housing building, or providing assistance to a guest at the Closet - our volunteers touch the lives of hundreds of people in our community every month.

There are numerous opportunities to volunteer in River Falls - and we are honored that our volunteers choose to help us further our mission. THANK YOU!

Special thank you to our Board of Directors for their leadership and guidance!

Tanya Franta (President)
Kurt Helmrick (Vice President)
Brian Manion (Treasurer)
Shari Frisbie (Co-Secretary)
Jane Kelley (Co-Secretary)
Adam Axvig
Rachel Sixberry

Janet Wilson
Julie Larson
Stacia Johnson
Wes Kisting
Jill McNamee
Amy Peterson



THANK YOU DONORS!

We could not do the work we do without the support of our donors! From corporate sponsors and area churches, to individuals, businesses, and civic groups - we appreciate ALL the ways countless people step up to provide crucial funding and other support. Thank you for helping us help others!!!!

Special thanks to our Corporate Sponsors:

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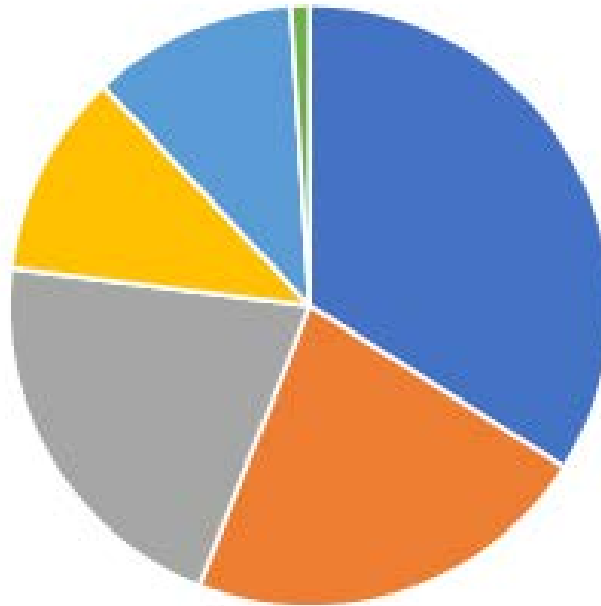


Financials – Fiscal Year 2022 Overview

Our Neighbors' Place would not be able to support our guests and programs without the many generous donors, businesses, and organizations who financially assist us every year. With our greatest appreciation, thank you for your support.

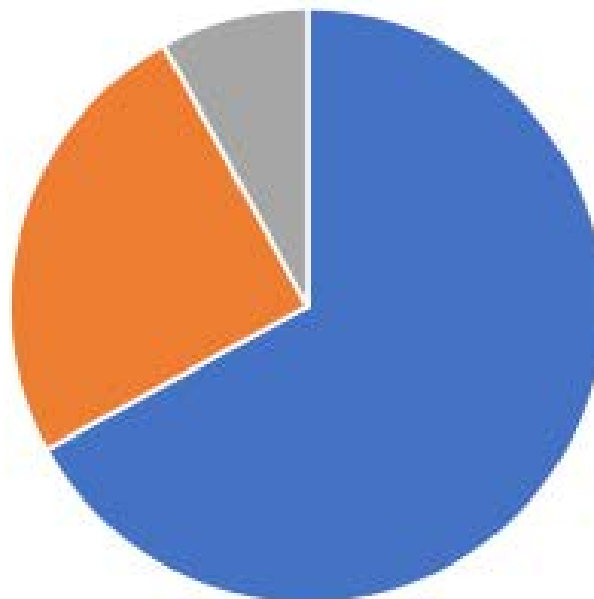
Revenue

- Donations 34%
- Grants 22%
- In-Kind Donations 21%
- Program Revenue 11%
- Fundraising 11%
- Other 1%



Expenses

- Program Services 67%
- Management and General 25%
- Fund Raising 8%



*Year-end financial overview provided by independent accounting firm.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR ONP

