



Our Neighbors' Place

ANNUAL REPORT



Connecting our neighbors with support, shelter, and housing services to foster self-determination

2024

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 2024, we were proud to celebrate 15 years of serving our neighbors who were working hard to meet their basic needs in Pierce and St Croix county. Like any major milestone, 2024 was a chance to pause and reflect on the struggles and the triumphs that have gotten us here. Throughout the years, we've created, refined and added programming to best meet the needs that we see and hear about from those we serve.

Across our 5 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!!!

We look forward with appreciation and optimism to the next 15 years of continuing our mission: Connecting our neighbors with support, shelter, and housing services to foster self-determination!

SHELLY SMITH

Executive Director



"I'm so glad you're here to hold my hand. I feel hopeful for once in my life."

Woman working with Sara for help finding housing.

"You've taken so much weight off my shoulders - I could just cry - thank you!"

Man and woman in for help with housing - they were getting evicted after falling behind on rent.

"I'm going to miss Our Neighbors' Place - it's been a home base for me for so long!"

Woman moving away after finally finding an opening in a housing program a few hours away.



Our Neighbors' Place

"This is my happy place!."

Woman living in her car - comes to the Day Center for shower, laundry, food, personal care items, clothing, wifi, and to connect with staff and volunteers.

DAY CENTER



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 1-4pm Mon and 10-4 Tue - Fri for the following resources:

- 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 over 4,900 points of contact through the program (in person visits and phone calls) in 2024. We work hard to create a safe, non-judgmental environment where everyone is welcome.

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

- 2024 = 4,927
- 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>
(Mar 2024)



THE CLOSET

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 2024, 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.



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. 2024 sales brought in just over \$16,000 and we look forward to that number continuing to grow each year.

"Please donate to this store! A wonderful place. The people who work here are so kind and full of joy. They also provide clothing for people in need and my heart has been warmed time after time hearing them cheerfully helping people. A rare gem!"

Google review from a public shopper



Public shopping prices:

Sweatshirts / Pants: \$3
Shorts / T-Shirts: \$2
Dresses: \$4
Jewelry / Belts / Ties: \$1
Winter Coats: \$8
Fall Coats: \$5
Hats / Gloves: \$2

**Shop
with us!**

BACKPACK PROGRAM

Families in the Backpack Program have choices!

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

Ptacek's Family 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.

In 2024, the Backpack Program provided 4,207 bags (35,670 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 2024, we have had 30 families in the Transitional Housing program.

- 4 families were housed in the program at the end of 2024
- 5 families did not successfully complete the program due to a variety of complicated, contributing factors
- 21 families completed the program and found permanent housing

Those 30 families were made up of 41 adults and 70 children – most of them now have permanent, stable housing thanks to this program.

Program facts:

- Open to families experiencing homelessness
- Tenants pay 30% of their INCOME toward rent
- We have a tenant selection policy as well as a standard lease that tenants sign and follow
- No security deposit required / utilities included
- Building is maintained by a volunteer Maintenance Committee
- Onsite laundry room, garbage disposal, and off-street parking



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

**NEW
IN
2024**

THE HELPING HANDS FUND



"Thank you so much for this help with daycare - I would have to quit school and close my small business if I couldn't keep my child in daycare."

Young mom who reached out to the Helping Hands Fund for assistance. Daycare costs are something that other organizations don't generally provide assistance with.



59 households received help from Oct - Dec 2024 through the Helping Hands Fund.

NEW IN 2024 - - - The Helping Hands Fund was formed as a response to the closure of ARC (Assistance & Resource Center). The Helping Hands Fund provides emergency financial assistance to River Falls and Ellsworth School District households in need to cover basics that other nonprofits do not address. In addition, the Helping Hands Fund also helps those experiencing homelessness or housing instability who come to the Day Center in search of housing help.

Examples of assistance the Helping Hands Fund provided:

- Vital documents (birth certificate/driver's license)
- Vehicle registration tabs / car insurance
- Phone/phone minutes/phone bills
- Daycare
- Prescriptions
- Campground fees
- Propane
- Gas cards

Our Neighbors' Place partnered with Operation HELP to have them cover other financial assistance requests (past due rent & utilities and small car repairs) so that there is no duplication of services. Our goal is to provide assistance for needs that other nonprofits are unable to cover.

Applying for help is easy - simply call the Day Center and staff will complete an application over the phone. Requests for help are reviewed 3 times per week so guests receive an answer within 24-48 hours. All assistance is paid directly to the service provider to ensure funds are being used for the stated request.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024

Our Neighbors' Place celebrated 15 years of providing help and hope to anyone struggling to meet their basic needs. Throughout the years, we have responded to the changes we've seen from those who rely on our programs to become a respected community resource.



(2009-2024)



New event this year - Coldest Night of the Year - a walk designed to raise funds and awareness in the fight against hunger and homelessness. River Valley Charities took the lead on organizing the event and we partnered with Operation HELP, Hudson Area Backpack Program, and Grace Place to promote and run the event raising over \$60,000.

The Helping Hands Fund was also a new addition in 2024. Through this 5th program, we are helping people with emergency financial assistance across a variety of areas - all of which promote housing and job stability for those in the River Falls & Ellsworth School Districts as well as those experiencing homelessness.



We've got the power! Our Neighbors' Place won the Impact Award at the April River Falls meeting AND at the October Ellsworth meeting for the Power of 100 Women group. 3 nonprofits present at the meeting, Power of 100 Women members vote for their top choice, and then members each write \$100 checks to the winning nonprofit.

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 90+ 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)

Brian Manion (Vice President)

Brock Raffaele (Treasurer)

Rachel Sixberry (Secretary)

Julie Larson

Adam Axvig

Wes Kisting

Jill McNamee

Amy Peterson

Renee Doerre

JW Matheson





Our Neighbors' Place

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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Comcast

PARTNER LEVEL (\$2,500-\$4,999)

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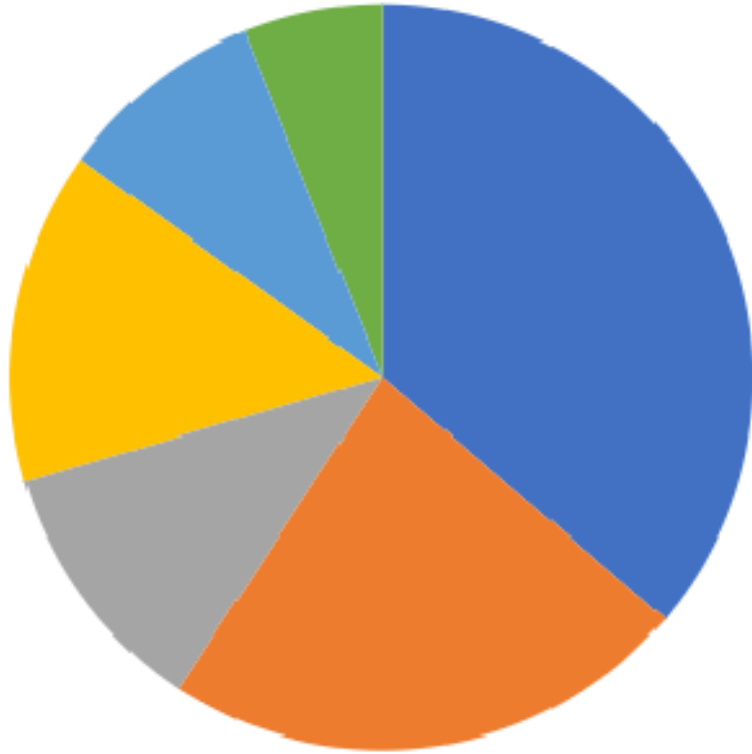


Financials – Fiscal Year 2024 Overview

Our Neighbors' Place would not be able 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.

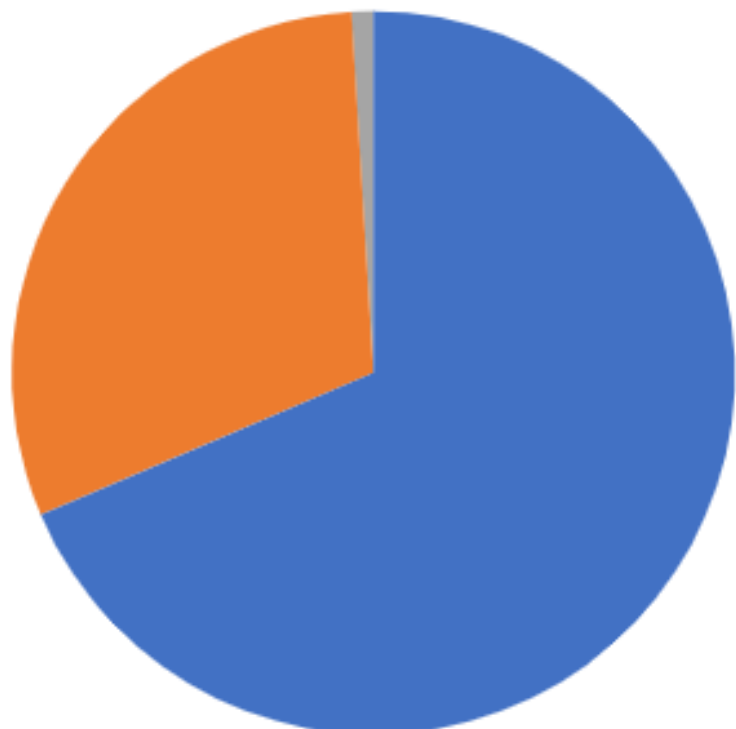
Revenue

- Donations 36%
- Grants 23%
- Fundraising 11%
- In-Kind Donations 14%
- Program Revenue 9%
- Other 6%



Expenses

- Program Services 69%
- Management and General 30%
- Fundraising 1%



**Year-end financial overview not reviewed independently; Capital Campaign excluded from above charts*

WORKING TOGETHER FOR ONP



Natalie & Brock - Casino Night



Julie, Shelly, Kathy - Basketball Game Food Drive



Karen, Jeanne, Kristi - Closet Volunteers



Girls Hockey Team Food Collection Event



Linda - Empty Bowls



Harper, Tanya, Kaia - Empty Bowls