



Waunakee Rotary Club

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While Waunakee may seem like an affluent community, the Waunakee Food Pantry has seen an increasing number of individuals in need of support.

Natalie Dresen has been the food pantry director since 2001 and has watched client numbers grow, along with the pantry itself.

Natalie spoke at the Oct. 27 Rotary Club meeting and said in 2001, 383 people used the pantry. In 2010, 2,350 people came through its doors.

And the demand only continues to rise. In the first nine months of 2011, the pantry saw a 13 percent increase in number of client households over the same period in 2010, and a 16 percent increase in the number of individuals, Natalie said.

The pantry generally serves 65 households or 225 individuals per month.

"Our economy has hurt those most in need," Natalie said.

She estimated that about one third of the families visit once a month; another third visit once or twice a year, and another third more sporadically.

Natalie said as one Waunakee school district social worker remarked to her, people don't think of families in need in Waunakee, and that's because community groups like the Waunakee Food Pantry and Waunakee Neighborhood Connection are so supportive.

The majority of people who come to the food pantry are living on the edge and have experienced a setback – a job loss, an illness or a costly car repair, Natalie said. The food pantry acts as a safety net for those families.

The Waunakee Food Pantry began in 1978 and had until recently operated out of St. John's School. Last year, the Waunakee Ecumenical Board moved the pantry to a larger

space in the lower part of St. Andrew's Church on Woodland Drive. Phil Simon of Simon Builders was instrumental in finding shelving and a refrigerator, and now with freezers, the pantry can offer frozen food items.

Clients appreciate the new space, too, as it has changed the delivery service. Now clients can shop for food items, rather than just picking up prepackaged boxes.

"It's a much more respectful way of serving the community," Natalie said.

While family sizes are used as guidelines for how much food clients can receive, Natalie said the volunteers err on the side of generosity.

"It can't be easy to come in and visit a food pantry. It's got to be a humbling experience," Natalie said.

She said volunteers are respectful.

Currently, the Thanksgiving Food Drive is under way for the Waunakee Food Pantry. Schools and churches throughout the area are collecting items, as are the State Bank of Cross Plains, Waunakee Public Library and Waunakee-Westport Chamber of Commerce.

The pantry's other donations come from the Boy Scouts food drive and the Postal Workers drive in May. Natalie said the drive in May helps during summer break, a peak time since children receive no school lunches.

Other items:

•Bill Erickson said he could use help Monday morning with the Rotary Lights displays. The group meets at Qual Line Fence. Lots of help is needed Nov. 19 and 26 when lifts will be available to hang lights at the park.

•Phil Willems said Piggly Wiggly is accepting donations for the light displays.

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Calendar of Events:

- Oct. 23, *Food for Kidz*, noon-1:30 p.m. at the Village Center.
- June 8-9, *Rotary District Conference*, The La Crosse Center on the Mississippi.

•John Cullen said participation in the Food for Kidz event was great. Also, the club received a thank you note for its donation to Vogel Brothers school supply drive. John also mentioned that a local Rotarian, Mary Beth Grownley Selene, has been nominated to the Rotary International Board of Directors.

Guests: Paul Gadian, guest of Phil Willems. Visiting Rotarians: none.

Birthdays: Nov. 4, Jeremiah Gollon; Nov. 4, Roxanne Johnson.

Anniversaries: Oct. 5, Dan and Kristin Statz; Oct. 7, Betsy Flanagan and Larry Nummerdor.

Prayers: Oct. 27, Leonard Allen; Nov. 3, Pat Durden; Nov. 10, Susan Vergeront.

Programs: Nov. 3, Club Assembly; Nov. 10, Robert Schuettpelez-FOCUS-Executive Director, Chernobyl Consequences Efforts and Fukushima Lessons; Nov. 17, Tom Sawyer (aka Phil Willems); Nov. 24, Thanksgiving.

Greeters: Nov. 3, Katie Shephard and Eugene Smith; Nov. 10, Daniel Statz and DuWayne Statz; Nov. 17, Ray Statz and Daren Steuart; Nov. 24, Don Tierney and Lucas Tierney; Dec. 1, Jon Townley and Jim Tubbs.