The word “hunger” often conjures up desperate images of families and kids deprived of basic food and nutrition for extended periods of time with precious little hope in sight. Images that jar the conscience of even the most cynical.

While hunger in our midst is less visible and—for the most part—more short-term and transitory, it is no less real. The critical difference is the power and opportunity we have to not only effectively end it but to prevent it.

For the past 30-plus years, Minnesota has stepped up with a campaign designed to ensure that no Minnesotan goes hungry—not even for a day.

The Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign brings together hundreds of Minnesota companies, civic groups, schools, congregations and ordinary people to stock over 300 community-based food shelves and to raise funds and food and community resolve to keep them stocked year-round. It’s a good thing. It’s a great thing!

But hunger, near or far, has its primary causes, and when those causes are not addressed, the cycle continues.

Causes close to home are often tied to job loss, or incomes that haven’t kept up with ordinary costs of living, or job skills that haven’t kept pace with a changing job market, or dependence on fixed incomes or inability to work due to temporary or permanent disability.

In addition to keeping our food shelf stocked, donations to IOCP’s Prevent Hunger campaign support a powerful continuum of employment and case management services designed to address those causes and not only end hunger but prevent it.

Our Prevent Hunger campaign goal is to collect 100,000 lbs. of food and $125,000 from March 1-31.

See page 2 for ways you can help. Thank you, friends. You are the best!
Together We Fight Hunger in our Community

The IOCP Prevent Hunger campaign aligns with the annual Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign—a statewide effort that keeps food shelves stocked throughout the year. From March 1-31, IOCP’s goal is to collect 100,000 lbs. of food and $125,000 to prevent and fight hunger in our community. Each year, supporters provide a critical and timely boost to keep our food shelf full of healthy and culturally appropriate food choices for 260 families every week.

IOCP core programs including the food shelf, case management and Employment Services are funded in part through this effort. These services work together to prevent hunger by addressing the immediate need for food, as well as identifying the underlying challenges families face—such as lack of affordable housing, underemployment, transportation or lack of affordable child care.

As we interviewed volunteers, retail partners, staff and clients about the Prevent Hunger campaign, these themes emerged: **Relationships, Partners and Collaborations**. We know that we can’t do the important work of preventing and fighting hunger alone. Thank you for offering your heart and hands to this campaign—together we are helping our neighbors, friends, families and each other.

**Last Year Your Gifts Helped IOCP:**

- **Distribute 909,453 lbs. of food and serve 2,033 local families.** The emergency relief of our food shelf, combined with ongoing case management, significantly changes people’s lives.

- **Work with adults to secure jobs that pay an average wage of $16.20/hour, which is double the minimum wage.** Soft skills training, computer classes, technical training, networking, job search assistance and interview coaching helped jobseekers secure good paying jobs. Better pay then translates to food security.

- **Strengthen 14 retail partnerships.** Local retailers are critical in keeping our shelves stocked! And they help us leverage your dollars—we receive $9 worth of food for every $1 you donate, thanks to partners like Second Harvest Heartland.

**How to Help**

- Make a donation online at [www.iocp.org/donate](http://www.iocp.org/donate)
- Drop off a check at IOCP with memo line “Prevent Hunger”
- Plan a group food drive—check out ideas and resources at [www.iocp.org/preventhunger](http://www.iocp.org/preventhunger)

The many hands of 880 volunteers are the heart and soul of the IOCP Food Shelf

**A little third grade girl comes into the food shelf with her mom after school and immediately runs straight to the gluten-free section. She’s so excited to have good food she can eat—her joy makes us smile.**

— Debby Donahue, Food Shelf Volunteer Leader

Learn more at [www.IOCP.org/preventhunger](http://www.IOCP.org/preventhunger)
Tracey and John: Overcoming Together

For Tracey and John, family is everything. “Our kids absolutely motivate us,” says John. “They’re the reason we live and breathe and get up in the morning.”

Tracey and John met when they were 12 years old. Their love for each other is as apparent as their overwhelming love for their three kids.

When Tracey lost her job of eight years, her world was shaken. “For the first time in my adult life, I didn’t have a job. That rocked me to my core,” Tracey said.

For the next two years, Tracey found herself caring for her ailing mother and constantly playing catch-up with bills and rent. “We were not making ends meet,” she remembers. “You feel like you’re not enough for your kids.”

When their car was repossessed, Tracey and John found themselves in an emergency. They both needed to work—wanted to work—but were left without transportation. A barrier that, in the suburbs, often tips a family into instability.

Tracey was hesitant to ask for help, but eventually came to IOCP. Two months of working with a case manager to receive rent and other assistance helped them get by. Using the food shelf stretched the family budget while Tracey worked with IOCP Employment Services to find a higher-paying job. Throughout resumé, interview and job search help, her self-esteem began to rise.

Today, Tracey is a school district paraprofessional. Tracey credits her interview success, in part, to the new professional clothes she received at ReSale 101 through the IOCP Return-to-Work program.

“A personal shopper helped me pick out new clothes, and I went to the interview super confident! I walked in thinking, ‘I own this!’” Tracey beams as she recalls this victory.

Tracey has been happily employed since November, and you can see the relief in her smile. “Asking for help doesn’t make you weak or useless, it just makes you knowledgeable because you know what help is offered in your community. That’s why IOCP exists,” said Tracey proudly.

She continues, “My son tells me, ‘Mom, seeing you go through struggles and watching you go to school makes me want to be better.’”

And that admiration in her son’s eyes makes it clear: whatever the future brings, this family will make it through. Together.

Tracey’s Journey

**Food Shelf**
Stretched income and offered healthy options when the family budget was tight

**Employment Services**
Helped Tracey improve her resumé, focus her job search and boost interview confidence

**Case Management**
Provided temporary rent assistance and transportation support to help make ends meet
The many hands of capable and creative case managers are catalysts for the life change that occurs at IOCP every day. Case managers are problem solvers, advocates, counselors and financial advisers. They are informers, cheerleaders and connectors to community resources. In 2015, case managers saw 2,033 clients. They helped 397 people with emergency rent assistance, 289 families with car repairs, distributed $26,000 in ReSale 101 gift cards, and provided 667 families with bus passes. Beyond the numbers, the real magic is the relationships.

As the first point of contact for anyone who uses IOCP services, case managers address complex and multi-layered struggles. Whoever comes in the door—be it a single parent, senior or working family—can safely tell their story and seek the help they need to achieve stability. Every person IOCP encounters has a story, and no two stories are the same. Four of our wonderful case managers share their wisdom below.

**Most homeless clients—like you and me—had a home, a job, a car, food and clothes. There’s a deep sense of loss, and they feel alone. I absolutely get them tapped into resources, but I also listen to their story and give them a safe space to process that grief.**

Emily Adams

**People in crisis often feel guilty and ashamed about having to ask for help. It’s my job to empathize with and validate their struggle. Once I’ve helped remove the immediate crisis, I make sure I address the whole person—not just the situation at hand.**

Kai Andersen

**Making sure parents can feed their children is a basic human right. We provide a safety net for families and help them either increase wages, decrease expenses or do both. We strive to ensure that everyone feels respected and supported.**

Wendy Thomas

**So many folks come in and are living off of $1,300 per month or less, which is hardly enough to get by after rent is paid. My role in their journey is to build a trusting relationship so people can feel dignified while getting their needs met. I’m amazed at the resiliency of the people I meet who make it work on such a small budget.**

Jamie Wolff

**Homeless** • These folks are in survival mode: constantly wondering where they’ll sleep, what they’ll eat or how they’ll make it through the cold Minnesota nights. Homeless children often attend school but don’t know what bus to board or where to go at the end of the school day. The need is urgent.

**Crisis/Emergency** • For many, IOCP is an open door in the midst of chaos. The crisis might be an impending eviction or utility shut-off, an abrupt job loss or reduction in hours, an all-consuming medical issue, or the uncertainty of when and how kids will get their next meal.

**Working Families** • Life is expensive, and working families are often one doctor’s appointment or car repair away from financial trouble. Parents are working, but their wages are not enough to cover the costs of living and raising a family. Extra expenses like sports activity fees create stress.

**Fixed Income** • IOCP provides a support system, connection to community and resources to help “make life work” despite a tight budget. These individuals may use IOCP as a long-term resource to supplement their income. The barriers keeping them from work may be health conditions, disability or age.
Employment Services Prevents Hunger

When it comes to employment, the stakes are high. Finding and retaining a job that pays a living wage puts food on the table, pays for housing and keeps the heat on in the winter. IOCP’s dedicated Employment Services team works hand-in-hand with case managers to overcome barriers and provide a wealth of work readiness tools, resources and encouragement. The payoff? Just ask the jobseekers who found work through IOCP last year—they now have a pathway to stability and opportunity, thanks to you.

Photo: LaDonna Hay gathered with Chris Pederson, Anne Morehouse and other Medina business leaders to discuss Employment Services at IOCP

There are motivated, skilled people coming to our doors wanting work. And there are outstanding local employers looking for workers. IOCP is the connection.
— Tanya Williams, Employment Services Manager

Did You Know?

- Minnesota’s current unemployment rate is 3.7%¹, but employers now tend to require a more specialized skill set.
- Two of the biggest barriers to employment are child care costs and transportation.
- IOCP’s Computer Lab serves 200 individuals every year with employment support and training.

What’s a Living Wage?

In Hennepin County, a living wage for a family of two is $3,578 per month². This covers housing, child care, transportation, food and other necessities. However, 60% of jobs with the most vacancies in our region pay less than that living wage³. We see that contrast daily as the average income of an IOCP family is only $1,445 per month. Together with families’ determination, staff resources and support, IOCP works to bridge that gap.

IOCP Employment Program

Initial Conversation
Introduce employment program and assess jobseekers’ employment status, barriers and interests

Employment Assessments
Discuss employment and education history, strengths, skill gaps and potential careers

Job Search
Create or revise résumé, write cover letters, maximize search and apply for jobs

Computer Skills Training
Access on-site Computer Lab tutoring from staff and volunteers

Job Coaching
Practice soft skills, interview strategies and mock interviews with Employment Specialists

Job Skills Training
Explore and connect with community-based classes, certificate or degree programs

Job Placement & Retention
Receive personalized support and encouragement after job placement

¹Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
²Confronting Suburban Poverty
³DEED

Learn more at www.IOCP.org/preventhunger
Retail Partners Provide Heavy Lifting

“I’m an early bird, so I don’t mind driving the truck to pick up produce at 6:30 a.m. It’s so great what these stores do for us. Whenever I shop at any of our partner stores, I make sure to find an employee and tell them thank you! Some of them just get a sparkle in their eye because they’re so happy to help.” — Ray Bailer, Food Shelf Volunteer

A Well-Oiled IOCP Retailer Machine

Every weekday morning, the IOCP Food Shelf is bustling with activity as early as 6:30 a.m. The volunteers arrive, greet each other, make a game plan and then hop in the IOCP truck and head off to a few of our IOCP retail partners to pick up donations. Here is what the amazing team of volunteers, staff and retail partners work on every day in order to bring fresh, healthy food options to IOCP families:

Fresh Food Schedule

Step 1 Cub Foods, Lunds & Byerlys, Target and other retail partners remove products from their shelves that are near expiration.

Step 2 Retail partners immediately refrigerate and freeze necessary items to preserve freshness.

Step 3 Retail partners box items for IOCP volunteers.

Step 4 IOCP volunteers meet at IOCP as early as 6:30 a.m. to prepare the IOCP truck/van.

Step 5 Retail partners meet IOCP staff at the loading dock of their stores and help load the food.

Step 6 IOCP volunteers unload the food onto shelves and into the refrigerator and freezer for families.

Step 7 IOCP families select food at the food shelf.

Step 8 Fresh foods are usually gone the same day they arrive at IOCP.

Step 9 Families enjoy fresh and healthy items they otherwise may not be able to afford.

THANK YOU, RETAIL PARTNERS!

**Breadsmith** – Minnetonka  
**Bruegger’s Bagels**  
– Wayzata  
**Caribou** – Plymouth  
**Chipotle** – Wayzata  
**Cub Foods** – Plymouth  
**Holiday Gas Station**  
– Plymouth  
**Kwik Trip** – Plymouth  
**Lunds & Byerlys** – Wayzata  
**Lunds & Byerlys Kitchen**  
– Wayzata  
**Panera Bread** – Plymouth  
**Target** – Medina  
**Target** – Minnetonka  
(Hwy 7 & 101)  
**Target** – Plymouth  
**Target** – Ridgedale  
**Wuollet Bakery** – Wayzata

MAKE IT SOCIAL:  
Hosting a food drive? Share your #preventhunger photos and tag IOCP!
Upcoming Events

Girls, Glamour & Giving
Thursday, April 28, 2016
6-9 p.m.
Metropolitan Ballroom
Golden Valley

Girls, Glamour & Giving is an evening of fashion, food, friends, fun and philanthropy including unique vendors, celebrity purse wall, sit-down dinner, fashion show and program. Carly Aplin, Sports & Entertainment journalist, will emcee the evening. New this year is a VIP hour including a signature drink and private shopping.

General admission is $90 per person ($50 tax deductible) and VIP tickets are $150 ($95 tax deductible). All proceeds benefit IOCP. Purchase tickets and sponsorship at www.iocp.ejoinme.org/GGG2016. Please email Cate at cfossing@iocp.org with questions.

Calendar

Thursday, April 7, 2016
Orono Empty Bowls
5-7 p.m.
Orono High School
Purchase tickets at the door ($10)

Thursday, April 28, 2016
Girls, Glamour & Giving
6-9 p.m.
Metropolitan Ballroom
Golden Valley
Register at www.iocp.ejoinme.org/GGG2016

Thursday, May 12, 2016
Caring for Kids Initiative Breakfast
7:15-8:30 a.m.
Wayzata Country Club
Register at www.iocp.ejoinme.org/CfKI2016

Thursday, May 19, 2016
Wayzata Empty Bowls
5-7 p.m.
Wayzata High School cafeteria
Purchase tickets at the door ($10)

Memorials
SEPT.-NOV. 2015

Donna Adams
Kathleen Anderson
David Bazil
Boyd Cullen
Jane Eckles
Betty Lorene Hanson
Shirley Harder
Scott Hawkinson
John Suppes Hay II
Andrew (Andy) Johnson
Christopher G. (Chris) Kluis
John Ladner
Dr. Brian T. Lew
Thomas D. McCollins
Lorraine H. Rohling
Elaine Ross
John S. Ryden
James W. (Jim) Seifert
Clint Shaw
Ted Smith
Betty Lou Snyder
Ty Alan Wilson

Grants
JUNE-AUGUST 2015

• Edina Realty Foundation
  ($2,000 for Back-to-School)
• Grainger
  ($10,000 for The Sleep Out)
• Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation
  ($30,000 for Project Success)
• Target Foundation
  ($50,000 for housing)
• Thrivent Financial Foundation
  ($25,000 for the Caring for Kids Initiative)
• Wayzata Rotary Club
  ($1,500 for Back-to-School)

We’re proud to announce that IOCP is committed to transparency and has met all requirements for basic, quantitative and qualitative information to earn a GuideStar “Gold” rating. Profile available online at www.guidestar.org.

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Interfaith Outreach & Community Partners and the IOCP Endowment Fund, which solely benefits IOCP, are registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. Gifts to either organization are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

Learn more at www.IOCP.org/events
Thank You for Helping Families Close to Home

The Williams family snuggles up for their backyard Sleep Out

The 2015 Sleep Out reached $2.16 million, thanks to you!

Since the Sleep Out began 20 years ago, IOCP has prevented families from experiencing homelessness 26,680 times. This year, the Sleep Out engaged 970 people in 31 locations during The World’s Greatest Sleep Out and faith community fireside events! Extraordinarily, 691 online donors rose to the Give to the Max Day challenge and brought IOCP to 5th place out of 5,000 Minnesota charities. And thanks to 10 local banks whose friendly soup cook-off competition contributed $22,000 to the Sleep Out. During Shop with a Purpose Day, 31 businesses designated a percentage of the day’s proceeds to the Sleep Out. Thank you for supporting our biggest Sleep Out ever. Together we raised $2.16 million to change the lives of 2,000 local families!

You Gave the Gift of Holiday Joy!

Thank you to the 300 kind hearts who volunteered with our holiday programs. You helped make this special time of year even better for families close to home!

- 289 sponsors provided gifts to 525 families (1,821 individuals)
- $20,325 in donations, resulting in holiday gift cards for an additional 202 families
- 995 vouchers for winter coats and accessories
- 200 dozen delicious cookies for the annual Client Holiday Party
- 626 families given Thanksgiving turkeys and pies
- 43,276 lbs. of holiday food distributed to 555 families

Holiday Gift Program volunteers Diane Rouillard, Jean Thompson and Cathy Deeney have a little fun during gift drop-off

IOCP 1605 COUNTY ROAD 101 N., PLYMOUTH, MN 55447-2708
763-489-7500 WWW.IOCP.ORG
Comments? Omissions?
Contact Deb Sakry Lande at dlande@iocp.org

MAKE IT SOCIAL:
Hosting a food drive! Share your #preventhunger photos and tag IOCP!