

## Encouraging Action...informing you of community opportunities

Welcome to our donor update. The following is a compilation of our community's current needs. As always, you have three ways you can support these needs through Incourage. You may:

- 1) Suggest grants through your donor advised fund.
- 2) Provide additional contributions to support the specific needs.
- 3) Provide additional contributions to support community needs as they are identified by Incourage.



Northern Lights over Vesper, WI, March 2023. Photo by David Farmbrough

By giving anonymously through Incourage for the benefit of other local nonprofit organizations and initiatives, the number of organizations soliciting you directly may be reduced. We truly are stronger together and we appreciate your ongoing support.

**Please consider supporting the following community opportunities:**



### FOCUS Food Pantry

Serving South Wood County area residents in need, the FOCUS Food Pantry provides food, hygiene products and educational services.

In 2020, they served over 6,300 households and nearly 18,500 people, and according to a conversation with Pantry director Dale Davis early in April 2023, FOCUS saw an increase of more than 13% in the number of clients utilizing the pantry from February to March. This includes more than 40 new families. Increased usage may be due to increasing food prices, decreases in food stamps, and unemployment from plant closures and layoffs. He shared that families are returning to the pantry after a two-year absence. Collaborative purchasing with other food banks is no longer an option so FOCUS has needed to purchase soups, vegetables, spaghetti sauce, etc. at higher grocery store prices to supplement donations. Dale mentors 39 other pantries.

In looking ahead at the summer, the Boy Scout food drive on April 22 and Post Office food drive on May 13 may help stock the pantry through the end of June. The summer meal programs through the schools have been discontinued. With that in mind, families that used to utilize the pantry every other month will most likely use it every month. Additionally, the Backpack program coordinated with local schools is on hiatus during the summer. The pantry seems to experience a summer giving lull; donations typically decline in the summer while the need remains high. It is anticipated that increased financial and food donations during the summer months will be needed. Learn more at [www.focusofswc.org](http://www.focusofswc.org).



## Friends of Rapids Music

Planning is in process for FRM 2023. Currently scheduled for September 9, the all-day family friendly music festival will likely be held at Robinson Park in Wisconsin Rapids again this year. Admission to the event is free and open to the general public. The festival will showcase five local bands playing from 1-5 p.m. and a regional or national headliner at 7 p.m. The music includes many different genres including country, blues, jazz, classical, and much more. Food, drink, and merchandise are available for purchase.

FRM is a nonprofit, all volunteer organization; festival organizers and “staff” are also all volunteers. Proceeds generated from beverage sales help to fund the event the following year as well as support other music-related causes in our community. The event is held rain or shine. Unfortunately, last year, the rainy cold weather greatly reduced the number of attendees which resulted in minimal proceeds. The lack of funding currently available for FRM 2023 could mean the difference between holding the festival or not. If held, funding available will also make a difference in being able to offer a free Kidz Zone. Inset photo: Last year due to the inclement weather, music, crafts and games for children and their families were moved to the Kidz Zone tent. An inflatable slide remained blown up outside.

This music festival is an economic driver and a way to bring musicians together to share the healing power of music with people from all walks of life in our community. There really is something for everyone! Learn more at [www.frmgroup.org](http://www.frmgroup.org).



... that over 100 Incurage funds are designated to support our nonprofit community annually? You can donate to Incurage to support other nonprofits through these designated funds at any time. By giving anonymously you may keep your anonymity and be able to support multiple nonprofits through one Incurage donation.



## Arts Council of South Wood County

The Arts Council relies on ticket sales to help support their operating budget. After the careful and safe reopening of a limited 2021/22 season, they were pleased to provide a full 2022/23 performance season. Unfortunately, the season ended in the red with rising performer, facility, and equipment rental fees. The organization is taking steps to increase ticket sales. This includes evaluating the performance schedule, the variety of artists booked, educational outreach opportunities, and publicity. Artist-in-education/outreach programs for local students have been very well received, often resulting in larger evening audiences. The increase in student tickets is welcomed; however, the discounted student tickets then leave a gap in meeting the program cost.

Although not part of the Arts Council's regular season, one of the performances that has been very well received in our community over the years is the Kids From Wisconsin (KFW). Scheduled for July 10, 2023, the Arts Council is seeking \$6,500 for the KFW performance fee. They are working with other community organizations and clubs to help cover other performance expenses such as meals and marketing. Additionally, this year KFW is working state-wide with Feeding Wisconsin, the state association of food banks. Local communities hosting a KFW performance are working with their local food bank to raise awareness and collect donations. The Arts Council, Wisconsin Rapids Sunrise Rotary Club and FOCUS will be holding a food drive the day of the performance. Learn more about the Arts Council at [www.savorthearts.org](http://www.savorthearts.org).

## incourage™ Friends of Incourage

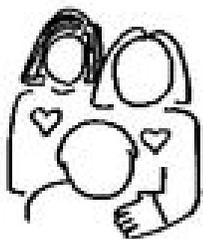
We need your support to continue our work in meeting community needs as they arise. The “Friends of Incourage Fund” supports Incourage’s ongoing community-building work and is an investment in our future that has an ongoing impact for our community. Gifts of all sizes are recognized on the Incourage website, posted publicly at the Incourage office, and may also be recognized through other media. “Friends of Incourage” include any dollar amount. “Founding Friends” are partners who make one time or multiple contributions accumulating to \$5,000 or more. Thank you so much for your support!! Learn more at [www.incouragecf.org](http://www.incouragecf.org).



## Hmong American Center

In order to retain a physical presence in Wisconsin Rapids, the Hmong American Center (HAC) is holding a one-year anniversary celebration event. To raise funds, they are hosting an Anniversary Banquet on April 22, 2023 at Hotel Mead. Learn more at [www.hmongamericancenter.org](http://www.hmongamericancenter.org).

The Hmong American Center engages in economic, social and multi-cultural development, serving as an educational and resource center for its members and surrounding communities through leadership, cooperation and collaboration. Programs and services include: preserving their heritage through cultural advocacy, building relationships between law enforcement and the Southeast Asian community, providing educational support to help prepare future generations for career opportunities including public service careers, assisting aging adults with tax preparation, helping to bridge the gap for residents facing food insecurity, and providing translation services. Financial support helps HAC provide outreach, programs and services, and supports the organization’s operating needs, including maintaining a local branch office at 2831 8th Street South in Wisconsin Rapids. Contact Incourage to support this nonprofit location in our community.



## Park Place Adult Day Services

Park Place provides supervised day programs for dependent adults and respite for family members or caregivers. During the day, clients participate in activities, enjoy celebrations like birthdays and holidays, socialize, and receive personal care services. Family members and caregivers can go to work and tend to their own personal needs, knowing their loved one is being well taken care of, nurtured, and loved.

Staff receive a monthly budget to purchase items for clients, such as puzzles, word search, sudoku and crossword pads, weekly bingo prizes, etc. However, once the monthly funding is gone, they are unable to purchase additional needs that month. Donations are always welcome. Staff would greatly appreciate funding to purchase new foam puzzles for dementia and Alzheimer’s clients, sugar free snacks for diabetic clients, and goods such as paper towels, plates, napkins, plastic silverware for celebratory events. Personal health care items aren’t needed as they are provided by the family or caregiver. Learn more at [www.ppads.org](http://www.ppads.org).



**Building Blocks Learning Center, Inc.**

## Building Blocks Learning Center

Building Blocks Learning Center, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) childcare learning program located in Wisconsin Rapids, WI. The center provides care for children ages 6-weeks to 8-years old and has earned a 4 Star Child Care Program rating from YoungStar, Wisconsin's Child Card Rating Program. Their tagline "Where Children Love to Grow!" guides their work to supplement a child's experience at home, and to continually find opportunities that allow children to learn through play, to grow their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual competence at their own pace and own style of learning.

BBLC is seeking \$2,500 to purchase S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) kits, resource materials, books and supplies for their School Age Program. They would like to explore more areas of STEAM, opening a world of creativity and learning for children who learn by doing, not just using paper and pencil. The lead teacher anticipates that the classroom STEAM area will be used daily and help remove barriers to areas of study that may have felt intimidating to some. In addition to the materials, activities will be planned to include area teachers and community members to provide demonstrations and/or small classes on various STEAM topics. Examples may include painting, cooking, writing, recycling, technology, health related systems, etc. Using resources within our community provides an opportunity for students to experience STEAM in action and in person, learning how it can enrich their daily lives. Learn more about Building Blocks at [www.buildingblockswr.com](http://www.buildingblockswr.com).



## Wood County Veterans Memorial

The Wood County Veterans Memorial Committee is dedicated to preserving the memory and honor of all Wood County Veterans. Many of these men and women have died in defense of the principles and freedoms of the United States of America. They are seeking financial support for current and perpetual care of the memorial.

In 2004, the Veterans Memorial Committee established a fund at Incourage to provide administrative services to construct a permanent memorial to veterans, from Wood County, who were killed in service during all wars. Since then, honorarium stones for Wood County veterans have been added to the memorial as well. In 2010, a second fund was established at Incourage to provide perpetual care of the memorial. Contributions to the Funds raised through donations for legacy stones help to cover the cost of the stone and engraving; however with increasing costs, additional funding is needed in order for it to sustain the Memorial.

The memorial reflects more than 400 names of those who have passed, dating back to the Civil War. There are also more than 1,000 names on legacy stones in front of the memorial, honoring those that have served in the military. Since the memorial was established, it has grown from a handful of legacy stone beds to more than a dozen. There is a bed honoring Hmong soldiers who fought along with Americans as part of the Secret Army. There is also a bed of legacy stones for area businesses to honor men and women in the Armed Forces. Last fall, names of Wood County Deputies and Corrections officers who have served in the Armed Forces were added on the black granite Wood County sign in front of the courthouse, with more names added this spring. There are flags denoting each branch of service, a county flag and POW/MIA flag on the grounds.

Twice a year, a ceremony is held at the Courthouse to honor new names on the memorial and to dedicate legacy stones. The first is held on the Friday before Memorial Day, May 26<sup>th</sup> this year, and the second is on Veterans Day, November 11. Learn more at [www.woodcountyveteransmemorial.org](http://www.woodcountyveteransmemorial.org).



## Never Forgotten Honor Flight

The Never Forgotten Honor Flight, established in Nov 2009 and an affiliate of the Honor Flight Network, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing Veterans with closure, gratitude, and respect. They serve veterans in 13 Counties in Northern Wisconsin, including Wood County, and fly our Veterans to Washington D.C. to visit the Memorials that stand in their honor. Our local veterans fly out of the Central Wisconsin Airport in Mosinee.

At this time, veterans that served in the United States Military, in any capacity or branch of service, and received an honorable/general discharge before May 7, 1975 are eligible to apply for the Honor Flight. Priority is given to terminally ill veterans. Each veteran flies on a first come first served basis, based upon their date of application. Veteran applicants don't need to provide their own guardian. Currently, there are more than 700 guardian applications on file. The trip is completely free for the veterans. Guardians are required to pay \$500 for the cost of the trip and must attend a mandatory guardian training session.

The Never Forgotten Honor Flight does not receive any government funding. They rely on the generosity of donors to support the organization and fly our veterans. A contribution of \$500 fully funds one veteran to go on their Honor Flight. Donations are not accepted from Veterans until after they have taken an Honor Flight.

As of April 5<sup>th</sup>, the number of local veterans on the waiting list for the Honor Flight are as follows: Wisconsin Rapids-55, Nekoosa-16, Port Edwards-4, Rudolph-1, Vesper-2, and Pittsville-6. Learn more at [www.neverforgottenhonorflight.com](http://www.neverforgottenhonorflight.com).



## Wood County 4-H

The Wood County 4-H Leaders Association is a subordinate organization of the University of Wisconsin's Division of Extension. 4-H, a research-based youth development program, is designed to help youth thrive through hands-on learning programs and opportunities which focus on four essential elements of positive youth development: Belonging, Independence, Generosity and Mastery.

Wood County 4-H has been helping young people develop life skills for over 100 years. During that time, the organization has grown and adapted from a farm and home focus to much more. They remain very proud of their heritage and aren't afraid to change in order to meet today's needs.

One important aspect of 4-H programming is a summer camp in Rhinelander, WI. There, 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade youth develop leadership, teamwork and social skills, build resiliency and resourcefulness, and gain a deeper understanding of service like caring for others and becoming a good citizen. Camp is open to all youth, not just 4-H members. The cost per camper is \$160; this includes food, lodging, a camp t-shirt, and educational supplies. The cost of a school bus to transport campers is an additional \$1,400; nearly double from two years ago. Being able to provide free transportation to and from camp means that they won't have to pass the bus cost onto the campers. This will help make camp more affordable for families, particularly for those having multiple campers and those with limited incomes. Wood County 4-H Leaders Association offers camp scholarships to help offset fees for those with a financial need as well. In addition to donations toward bus transportation, donations for camperships are accepted and appreciated as well. Learn more at <https://wood.extension.wisc.edu/4-h/>.



## Big Brothers Big Sisters. **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Wisconsin**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Wisconsin (BBBSCW) believes that every child is born with incredible potential and that every child needs positive influences in their life to help empower, inspire, and support them. Previously serving the Stevens Point and Marshfield areas, last spring, BBBSCW expanded their programming to include the Wisconsin Rapids area. Their goal in 2023 is to provide 250 matches between Marshfield, Stevens Point, and Wisconsin Rapids. Ultimately, they'd like to match every child that needs a mentor, with a positive influence they can connect with and look up to.

BBBSCW's initial intent in the Wis. Rapids (WR) area was to focus primarily on Community-Based matches. However, after reaching out to elementary school counselors for referrals, Howe Elementary School quickly expressed an interest in partnering with and serving as a Site-Based location. Having both Community-Based and Site-Based programs provides an opportunity for volunteers to determine if their availability aligns better during the school day or on evenings and weekends. Given that the program expansion in WR is relatively new, BBBS set a goal to serve a minimum of 13 local matches (8 Site-Based and 5 Community-Based) by the end of 2023. Currently, there are already 3 Site-Based matches and 2 pending Community-Based matches.

*Site-Based mentoring* allows a volunteer "Big" and child "Little" to meet weekly during the school day for 30-60 minutes each week. During their time together, matches might play board or card games, do arts and crafts, work on homework, talk, play outside or share a meal in the lunchroom with each other. Volunteers are supported by BBBS staff and school staff. In *Community-Based mentoring*, Bigs and Littles meet every week for about 1-2 hours in the evenings and/or on weekends. Low-cost/no-cost opportunities are highly encouraged such as playing in parks, going to libraries, participating in local events, and going for walks or bike rides. Volunteers work closely with BBBS staff and the Little's parent.

Children ages 6-16 are served by BBBS. Children may need a mentor for a variety of reasons including increasing their self-confidence, academics, peer relationships, decision making skills, or providing them opportunities they wouldn't have otherwise. Regardless of the reason, all these areas can be improved through the guidance of a caring role model. When matched with a Big, Littles are able to increase their confidence, improve how he/she performs in school and how they feel about school in general. It can be easy for children to be swayed by what their peers are doing, but by having a caring adult by their side, Littles are often more likely to make good decisions and avoid risky behaviors. Learn more at [www.bigimpact.com](http://www.bigimpact.com).

### Wisconsin Rapids Area Community Choir



The mission of the Wisconsin Rapids Area Community Choir is to provide a creative outlet for people to come together to sing quality choral music for the enjoyment of its members and the community. All area singers are welcome to sing with the choir; no audition is necessary. Rehearsals are held on Tuesday evenings from 7:00-8:30 p.m. at the First Congregational Church in Wisconsin Rapids. The choir is under the direction of Cyd Cooper, conductor. Mary Englert is the accompanist.

The Community Choir typically provides two concerts for the community, one in the spring and another during the Christmas holiday season. This spring's concert, "Songs of Inspiration and Hope", will be held on May 7, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. at the First Congregational Church. All are welcome to attend. There is no admission fee; however, free-will donations are accepted. Donations support choir folders and music, costs associated with printing concert programs and advertising.

## Help Build Newly Established Memorial Scholarship Funds

The families of Larry Jorgenson and Merlin David are seeking support to help build endowed scholarship funds established at Incourage in their loved one's memory.



**Larry Jorgenson** passed away December 24, 2020, at the age of 80 years old. He began his 38-year teaching career in the Wisconsin Rapids school district following his college graduation from UW-LaCrosse in 1962. After Larry retired, he substitute taught for 15 years. Larry served on the Wisconsin Rapids City Council from 1980-2001 and was president for two years. He also served on the Wood County Board of Supervisors.

The Larry Jorgenson Memorial Scholarship Fund has been established to support scholarships for graduating public high school seniors from Lincoln, John Edwards or Nekoosa High Schools attending a 2-year technical or vocational college or a 4-year college or university full-time. Eligible candidates must have a demonstrated passion for community and/or civic engagement and a desire to continue in the future. Financial need may be a consideration.



**Merlin David** passed away October 15, 2022, at 80 years old. He moved to Nekoosa, WI when he was 7 years old and attended schools in Nekoosa until his high school graduation in 1960. He was employed by Domtar Paper Company, retiring 44 years to the day as an oiler in the maintenance department. Merlin was a superior athlete during his high school career. He utilized his athletic ability and shared his love of sports by coaching and mentoring Nekoosa student athletes in a variety of sports (softball, baseball, track, wrestling, basketball) for over 40 years of his life.

The Merlin David Memorial Sports Scholarship Fund has been established to support scholarships for graduating seniors from Nekoosa High School attending a 2-year technical or vocational college or a 4-year college or university full-time. Eligible candidates must have been involved in at least one high school athletic program (players, managers and aids eligible) with a demonstrated leadership in high school sports. Preference will be given to students who have mentored fellow and/or younger student athletes. Contact Incourage to learn more about these and other scholarship funds supporting our community.



## Port Edwards Schools Orchestra Program

The sound of orchestra strings can be heard throughout the halls of the Ed Heuer Port Edwards Elementary School and at John Edwards Middle School. This is thanks to an idea from elementary music teacher/middle school teacher, Jeff Erdman, with start up funding to purchase a couple of school owned string instruments provided by the Port Edwards Education Foundation (PEEF).

The orchestra program began during summer 2021 for interested elementary students entering 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the fall. They began by learning to “play” on an egg carton during summer school, advancing to either the violin or viola during the school year. Meeting after school for orchestral instruction, there are currently 10 students between 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade. As the children age, additional grade levels will be added. This fall, students will be 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> graders. Program interest continues to grow. In fact, 22 students are interested in joining the orchestra during summer 2023 for the 2023-24 school year, and the district is considering adding orchestra as a co-curricular.

Mr. Erdman would like every family to feel that their child can be a part of the orchestra program. Instrument rental fees can be cost-prohibitive for some families. Currently, the school owns 2 violins, 2 violas and 2 cellos for student use. Five additional violin fittings will be purchased with remaining PEEF grant funds. He would like to add a school-owned bass (\$1,900) and another cello (\$850) for students to borrow.



### LHS Class Reunion Zero

In 1991, Lincoln High School parents of graduating seniors created Class Reunion Zero (CRZ), a graduation party held in a well-chaperoned, substance-free environment as a way for seniors to celebrate and make some final memories together as a graduating class. The event, now in its 32<sup>nd</sup> year, will be held the evening of May 26, 2023 at LHS.

CRZ organizers are currently requesting donations to support entertainment, food and prizes for graduating LHS seniors in attendance.



### Forest Hill Cemetery and Mausoleum

The Forest Hill Cemetery Association takes great pride in Forest Hill Cemetery and Mausoleum, with generations of families served and future generations yet to serve.

The City of Wisconsin Rapids funds a significant portion of Forest Hill's operating budget; however, this funding doesn't cover all of the annual expenses. Since Forest Hill operates on a lean budget, they are seeking support for two major projects that they are unable to fund under the constraints of their limited operating budget. The combined cost for the following projects is \$90,200 for the following repairs:

- Main entrance stone walls and arches. The arches were erected when the cemetery was first built in 1874. The stones are separating away from the mortar and many stones are missing. Not only does it look in disarray, but it is not safe nor stable. This project will replace missing stones, tuckpoint mortar joints and rebuild the arches.
- Asphalt on roads and driveways. There are approximately 14 areas within Forest Hill where asphalt is greatly in need of repair. Some of this stems from damage that occurred when irrigation was put in years ago, while other areas are from wear and tear from passenger vehicles and large equipment over the years. This project will repair about 3,500 square feet of asphalt.



### Unrestricted Funds

Incourage's vision has been and continues to be a community that works well for all. By working with you to meet the ever-changing needs of the south Wood County area one day at a time, we strive to create a better community for generations to come. We fund creative resident-led community-building ideas, and encourage connections and collaboration among residents and

organizations. When you make contributions that can be used at the discretion of Incourage, often called unrestricted, we are then able to support community-building suggestions brought to our attention by people like you. Contact us to learn more at [www.incouragecf.org](http://www.incouragecf.org).

We value you and appreciate your partnership and support. Thank you for donations of any size.



**Contact Incourage to discuss these opportunities or make additional contributions:  
715.423.3863 or [hello@incouragecf.org](mailto:hello@incouragecf.org).**