

# Incenting Action: Ways to Give in our Community

A Semi-Annual Report of Community Programs & Services Needing Support



*A beautiful fall day reflection at Ripple Creek, Port Edwards, WI.  
Photo by Tim Habeck*

## WAYS TO GIVE:

### FOR DONOR ADVISED FUND ADVISORS:

- 1) Suggest grants through your donor advised fund for specific or unrestricted needs.
- 2) Provide additional contributions to support specific needs.
- 3) Provide additional unrestricted contributions for community needs as they arise.

For privacy, you may choose to give anonymously to any of the following programs. By giving through Incenture, the number of organizations soliciting you directly may be reduced.

### FOR ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS:

- 1) Give an unrestricted contribution to Incenture to support needs such as these as they arise.
- 2) Give to an Incenture designated fund to support a specific organization or purpose.
- 3) Give to create a fund that aligns with your philanthropic goals.

### Don't know what a donor advised fund is?

A lot of people don't! Learn more by visiting our website: [incenturecf.org](http://incenturecf.org) or give us a call at 715-423-3863.

**Please consider supporting one of the community opportunities on the following pages:**

## Community Opportunities You Can Support:



### Friends of Incourage

**Request:** Contributions of any amount

**Purpose:** Help build your community foundation for future generations

As we near the end of our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, we continue to reflect on the dream our founder, Virginia Brazeau, had. Virginia dreamed of creating a community foundation for the benefit of the people of the greater south Wood County area and to meet the changing needs of our community. We are sure she would be thrilled by the countless lives and community organizations that Incourage has supported and continues to positively impact. *We all have a collective responsibility to care for each other and this community.* Incourage has been focused on strengthening our community and has facilitated positive change for over 30 years. With your help, we will continue to do our community-building work, positively impacting our community and its residents for years to come.

It is truly an honor and a privilege for all of us here at Incourage to carry on Virginia's vision. Thank you for believing in this community and supporting our work.

To donate a gift of any size to carry on this good work, send a check to Incourage or give online:

<https://incouragecf.org/give/give-now/>. Learn more at [www.incouragecf.org](http://www.incouragecf.org).



**Did you know** Incourage Community Foundation manages over 400 funds, and ~300 of those funds are specifically designated to provide grants each and every year to many nonprofit organizations within our community. You can help to grow these funds through your donation. You can remain anonymous and through one Incourage donation, support multiple organizations. It is simple to do; give today or contact us to learn more.



### Families Helping Families Program

**Request:** Contributions of any amount

**Purpose:** Low Income families with unexpected or basic needs

The Families Helping Families Program (FHF) supports the needs of students with parents or guardians that do not have the financial resources to do so. FHF is intended to provide low income parents with one-time monetary support for unanticipated expenses such as eyeglasses, dental care or prescription medication for their children. The program also provides financial assistance for temporary shelter and other basic necessities for students in need when all other sources of funding have been exhausted. The schools continue to adapt as student needs continue to rise. For example, support has expanded to include birth certificates, course fees, athletic fees, shoes, jackets, transportation, etc. Requests often occur when a student's family is in between eligibility for other programs. Donations are always appreciated as larger unanticipated expenses can occur at any time.



## FOCUS Collaborative Programs

**Request:** Contributions of any amount

**Purpose:** Close the gap in food insecurities and basic needs

Serving South Wood County area residents in need, FOCUS works to address food insecurity in our community, specifically with three programs: 1) FOCUS Food Pantry provides food, hygiene products and educational services; 2) FOCUS Neighborhood Meals provides a free community meal every Thursday; 3) FOCUS Family Backpacks provides a backpack filled with food items to area students in need.

**Pantry:** The number of clients utilizing the Food Pantry continues to rise, as does the number of those accessing the pantry weekly rather than monthly. Pantry shelves are emptied during the day and need to be stocked mid-shift instead of restocking after hours. Although they receive a good number of donations, they run out. Pasta, peanut butter, jelly, and soup are always on the “shopping list”. They are also in need of volunteers to help stock the shelves.

A homeless section of non-perishable foods has been created to serve residents that have been displaced, some of whom are living in campers and hotels. “Pop top” food that doesn’t need to be cooked is needed.

The personal essentials section is running very low and in need of donations, including travel-size for the homeless population. Clients used to receive two items/household during a visit; however, with the limited supply, only one item/household is currently distributed.

**Neighborhood Meals:** Sponsoring organizations donate \$300/meal which covers the rental fee, food, beverages and supplies. The fee also supports a part-time employee from ODC to clean the space the following day. The number of residents enjoying a meal currently averages 100. They’d appreciate the opportunity to serve more residents every week. Thanks to all the generous sponsors, the meal program is doing well financially; however, they need volunteers. FOCUS is also currently seeking a volunteer(s) to assist with program coordination.

**Family Backpacks:** This program provides backpacks of food to children and families in need and is in demand. The number of school-aged children participating continues to rise. Two years ago, 99 backpacks were sent home each week. Last year, that number rose to 165/week and this school year (4 weeks into the program year), there are already 193 backpacks being sent home with students each week. They are in need of non-perishable fruit for the backpacks, and funding to serve more school age students in need.

**Holiday basket program:** FOCUS plans to distribute 500 holiday baskets on December 14 this year. Each basket includes a complete meal of ham or turkey, plus all the fixings. The meat, ham or turkey, is usually donated; however, the sides are purchased. If FOCUS needs to purchase everything, the basket will cost ~\$30-50 depending on the family size. If all the meat is donated and an anticipated donation of \$2,000 comes to fruition, this year’s holiday basket program may still incur a cost up to \$10,000.

Learn more at [www.focusofswc.org](http://www.focusofswc.org). You can also donate to grow the FOCUS endowed fund at Incurage to support ongoing annual support for years to come.



### Community Thanksgiving Meals to Go

**Request:** Contributions of any amount

**Purpose:** Thanksgiving meal for residents in need

**St. Paul’s Lutheran Church “To-Go” Meal:** In the November 2021-2023 editions of *Incurring Action*, we shared information around the Community Thanksgiving Meal program and its transition from St. Luke’s Lutheran Church who served our community for about 20 years, to St. Paul’s Lutheran Church who assumed the program in 2020. Now in its fifth year, the St. Paul’s Committee continues working diligently to secure business partners and individual donors to provide a healthy and safe community Thanksgiving meal for our residents in need. Prices of food and “to go” containers have continued to rise. Even with food and gift card donations, raising funds for a meal that serves ~500 residents each Thanksgiving is challenging. The Committee’s initial goal was to raise funds to not only serve a meal for the current year, but to maintain ~\$3,000-\$5,000 in a special account at the church to help offset any shortages in funding and sustain the program for years to come.

To date in 2024, \$500 has been raised through *Incurring* donor-advised funds. Additional funding requests made to area businesses are pending. The estimated cost needed to serve 500-550 meals this year is ~\$5,000. This estimate includes the cost of food and ‘to go’ containers. With limited volunteer capacity, St. Paul’s will continue to offer pre-packaged meals for pick up or delivery on Thanksgiving Day.



### Community Thanksgiving Meals Onsite

**Request:** Contributions of any amount to raise \$500; volunteers needed

**Purpose:** Thanksgiving meal for residents in need

**Wisconsin Rapids Elks Club #693 Meal:** Our local Elks Club is offering a community Thanksgiving meal on Monday, November 25, 2024. Tom Derrie, Exalted Ruler, is a chef and has access to food vendors the Elks Club uses for other meals they offer. The Club hopes to feed 150 people onsite; carry-out meals will not be available. The estimated cost is ~\$1,000. To date, ~\$400 has been raised and food donation inquiries are pending. They are also seeking volunteers to help set up, serve the meal, and clean up. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the Elks Club on or before Monday, November 18<sup>th</sup>. The Elks Club plans to make this an annual event and may consider expanding in the future.

It is possible that after this initial year, the two Community Thanksgiving Meal programs may be able to collaborate in the future.



### United Way

**Request:** Contributions of any amount

**Purpose:** Follow up to campaign – community needs

Just wrapping up their annual campaign, the United Way of South Wood & Adams Counties helps support 30 programs, 6 coalitions, and several community initiatives. Whether you are helped directly or indirectly, their programs try to better our community as a whole every day. Change doesn’t happen alone. United Way is requesting your help to make it happen.

Learn more at [www.uwswac.org](http://www.uwswac.org). You can also donate to grow the United Way endowed fund at *Incurring* to support ongoing annual support for years to come.



### Local public school “Caring Closets”

**Request:** Donations and contributions of any amount

**Purpose:** Provide clothing, personal essentials, and supplies to students in need

**Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools** – Wisconsin Rapids public school staff can access clothing, shoes, coats, personal essentials, school supplies, etc. at the Caring Closet, located near the WRPS administrative office, in a room off of the

former East Junior High School cafeteria. WRPS students in grades 4K-12 simply reach out to a school staff member for assistance. As winter nears, there is an increased need for appropriate outdoor wear, particularly boys’, men’s and women’s coats, waterproof gloves, boots and snowpants. Donations are always welcome.

**Port Edwards Public Schools:** Each building in the district maintains its own Caring Closet. The elementary school counselor oversees the K-5 Closet, providing an inventory of essentials to school staff regularly. The middle/high school counselor oversees the 6-12 Closet in collaboration with the MS/HS health office. In addition to clothing, undergarments, shoes and coats, the Closet houses personal essentials and school supplies. Donations are always welcome.

**Nekoosa Public Schools:** The district social worker manages needs for the elementary, middle, and high schools. There are separate Closets for each building. Like Port Edwards, the elementary school keeps extra clothing and school supplies on hand for needs as they arise, and the middle school also stocks personal items. There are multiple Closets at the high school, including one that may be accessed 24/7 so students can access it outside of school hours. Donations are always welcome.



### WRPS Families in Transition Program

**Request:** Contributions of any amount

**Purpose:** Homeless students & families in need of personalized assistance

The Families in Transition Program began during the fall 2023. The WRPS Family Resource Center, located inside the former East Jr. High building, offers a place

where students and district families experiencing homelessness can meet with school counselors and social workers to receive compassionate personalized assistance.

School homeless programs, including the Families in Transition program, are governed by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Students and their families qualify if they don’t have fixed, regular and adequate housing. In September-October 2024 alone, eight families have been referred to the Program and 94 students have qualified for assistance. This number is anticipated to increase as campgrounds close and winter nears.

Scenario: A family is homeless and doesn’t know where to turn. A staff member works one-on-one with the parent/guardian/family to help identify specific resources available and understand how they can access the resources; they may even receive help to complete any necessary forms. During the visit, the parent/guardian needs to bring younger children along who are able to play with child-safe, appropriate toys while the adults meet. The baby needs a diaper change. No need to use a blanket on the floor, a diaper changing table is available. Perhaps they bring their laundry along to the meeting since they don’t have access to laundry facilities. While they wait for the washer and dryer to finish their cycle, they are able to have a cup of coffee and rest a bit in the Center.

November is National Homeless Awareness Month. Financial donations are appreciated year round as unanticipated needs can occur at any time.



## The Family Center

**Request:** Contributions of any amount

**Purpose:** Grant funding drastically cut – seeking operational support

Every1 Knows Some1. The Family Center is requesting your support to provide services and support to domestic violence victims and their family members.

In the November 2023 edition of *Incouraging Action*, we shared information about the drastic funding cuts the Family Center has experienced and continues to face. Record high domestic homicide rates, rising costs for providing stays, and increasingly complex client needs are occurring at the same time as significant federal funding cuts and state funding reductions, leaving Wisconsin's local domestic violence programs struggling to meet the needs of survivors.

The Family Center is continuously finding it necessary to seek alternative funding as they cannot rely on increasingly unstable federal and state funding sources. For example, Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding was cut 70%, which is a ~\$290,000 cut to the Family Center's budget. This is a devastating cut for the Family Center and programs across the state who rely upon VOCA to provide core operating funds to fund shelter, advocacy, legal assistance, economic support, housing, culturally specific services, and prevention. In addition to this funding cut, a larger volunteer match of direct service volunteer hours is required to access the funding that is available. Service volunteers may assist with the crisis line, moving clients in and out, providing maintenance, and more. Seeking alternative grant opportunities has been challenging as programs that receive any federal funds, albeit shrinking funds, are often not eligible for funding from other grant sources. The Family Center continues to seek ways to not rely on federal funding while not diminishing services.

The Family Center continues to operate at, and over, capacity, providing services to victims and their family members. Services include providing emergency shelter, access 24 hours a day to a trained advocate, resource referral, and personal, medical, housing and legal advocacy. Services also include support groups for victims and their children, a 24-hour crisis-line supporting victims making the dangerous move to leave an abusive situation and for support after leaving shelter, and a visitation and exchange center for providing safe visits and exchanges as well as education opportunities. All services remain free to victims.

Learn more about The Family Center at [www.familyctr.org](http://www.familyctr.org). You can also donate to grow the Family Center endowed fund at *Incourage* to support ongoing future annual support.



## Wisconsin Rapids Habitat for Humanity

**Request:** Contributions of any amount to raise \$5,000

**Purpose:** Affordable housing – support increased building costs

The Wis. Rapids Habitat for Humanity was established in 1992. They work in partnership with families in need of decent and affordable housing. Working alongside community members and volunteers, the families help to build their home. Habitat homes are sold to the families at no profit and are financed with affordable, no interest loans paid back through a monthly mortgage.

Costs have skyrocketed in all aspects of building a home in the past few years. Even with planning for increases, local Habitat for Humanity's board members are often searching for additional funding sources to help keep costs within the budget, which helps keep the final mortgage cost reasonable and within the approved estimated payback range for the future homeowner. The final cost of the home impacts whether the loan payback is successful or not. Our local Habitat for Humanity is currently seeking financial assistance to help offset cost increases for cabinets and flooring with their current build.

Learn more about our local Habitat for Humanity at <http://wrahfh.org>.



## Giving Back, Inc.

**Request:** Contributions of any amount

**Purpose:** Fill the Plane – support Veterans’ Honor Flight

With a focus on supporting our local law enforcement, EMS, fire and military, Giving Back, Inc. was established in 2023 by local business owners Brandon and Cori Abbott. Brandon also worked for the Wood County Sheriff’s office and currently serves with the Port Edwards Police Department. Recently, Giving Back coordinated local Hurricane Helene relief efforts, where three semi trailers delivered donations to Asheville, NC.

The “Fill the Plane” campaign supports veterans on their Honor Flight to Washington DC. Giving Back has been fundraising to support an Honor Flight for several years, even prior to becoming incorporated, and have raised almost enough to fill half of a plane. Their goal is to fill the remaining half of the next plane; the balance of funds needed are ~\$30,000-\$35,000.

Working closely with the Never Forgotten Honor Flight, based in Wausau, WI, they anticipate four more flights are needed for WWII era, Korean era, and Vietnam era Veterans. According to the Honor Flight’s website, as of August 30, 2024, there are 455 veterans on the waiting list, of which 39 are from the south Wood County area (Wisconsin Rapids, Nekoosa, Port Edwards, Rudolph, Vesper or Pittsville mailing address). Priority is given to terminally ill veterans and then veterans who served before May 7, 1975. Veterans selected for the April Honor Flight will be notified beginning in January. Given the April flight timeline, Giving Back plans to distribute all funds raised to the Never Forgotten Honor Flight at year end. All veterans fly for free.

Learn more about Giving Back, Inc. on their Facebook page. Learn more about the Honor Flight at <https://neverforgottenhonorflight.com/>.



## Badger Boys State via American Legion Post 9

**Request:** Contributions in increments of \$400

**Purpose:** Local junior high school boys to attend BBBS

Badger Boys State (BBBS) is a civic leadership program of the Wisconsin American Legion. It is an intensive hands-on and transformative experience in citizenship. Each citizen serves as a respected and valuable member of their city and county. They learn how local governments work, form their own governments and run for elected city, county, and state level office, learn about parliamentary procedure and making laws, develop their critical and interpersonal skills, and more.

The 82<sup>nd</sup> session of Badger Boys State will be held at UW-Eau Claire June 8-14, 2025. American Legion Post 9 facilitates participation for students who will have completed their junior year before the summer from Lincoln, Nekoosa and John Edwards (Port Edwards) High Schools. Incentive manages a fund that supports one to two boys from LHS, NHS or JEHS to attend BBBS each year. There tends to be more interest than financial support allows. To determine the number of local students that will be able to participate, funding needs to be known in January. The registration fee for each delegate (student) is \$400; the student needs a sponsor to cover the registration fee to attend. Please note, the Knights of Columbus supports participation for Assumption High School students and we understand that participation for Assumption is fully covered.

Learn more about Badger Boys at <https://badgerboysstate.org/>.



## Woodland Lutheran Church

**Request:** Contributions of any amount to raise \$14,000

**Purpose:** Strategic planning to identify and implement outreach efforts

A committee comprised of Town of Rome residents led efforts to organize a mission church in 1982 with services held at the Rome Town Hall during the summer months. In October 1984, its first year-round part-time pastor was called. The church was named Woodland Lutheran Church the following March, and by mid-April 1985, they had an organized congregation. In September 1989, Woodland Lutheran Church's newly constructed building was dedicated and then expanded in 2001. Although Woodland's number of active members has grown over the years, like other churches, they have felt and continue to feel the impact from Covid.

The Town of Rome is growing, more than seasonally. Homes and lots are selling, and houses are being built. Yet, there are underserved community members residing in Rome year-round. Outreach efforts currently include distributing school and health kits, serving community meals and helping stock the Adams County Food Pantry. The Woodland staff and congregation understand there is much work to be done and would appreciate the opportunity to reach out and serve others in the community and beyond.

To discern and identify opportunities and the scope of work needed, Woodland Lutheran Church is planning to undergo a strategic planning process during the spring of 2025. A consultant, who specializes in working with charitable groups and congregations, will lead the strategic planning process which will include in-depth interviews with 12-20 congregation members, demographic analysis of the Town of Rome, south Wood and northern Adam Counties, and a day-long retreat. The resulting strategic plan will be created with input from all, not just the pastor and leadership team. It will include two to three very specific ministries that will engage the community whether they are residing in or out of town. It will also include a year of coaching to assist with implementation.

Learn more about Woodland Lutheran Church at <https://www.woodlandlutheranrome.org/>.



## Lincoln High School – German Club

**Request:** Contributions of any amount to raise \$5,000

**Purpose:** Experiential learning trip for German students

Annually, students involved in Lincoln High School's German club have the opportunity to participate in an experiential learning trip to Germany. The club is led by the Head of WRPS German Department who is also the 8-12 grades German teacher. Per the teacher's funding request, approximately 50% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch at LHS. To reduce this barrier to participation, the teacher is seeking financial assistance to help offset the trip cost. At the time of this mailing, there are two students in need of assistance for a combined total of \$5,000.

Although donor advised (DA) funds may not be used to support scholarships or support a specific individual, DA grant recommendations may be made to support charitable programs and activities, such as programs and activities of the Club, not one specific club member. If you are interested in specifically supporting either of these students you may provide a separate contribution designated to this need. Please reach out to Incourage for additional information.





## ACF Middle Wisconsin Chefs Association

**Request:** Contributions of any amount

**Purpose:** Experiential learning and competition opportunities for LHS culinary students

ACF MWCA is a 100% volunteer nonprofit organization that supports Family and Consumer Sciences programs in the central Wisconsin area. Over the past 12 years, they have raised and contributed \$30,000 to the the Lincoln High School and Wisconsin Rapids Area Middle School Family, Career and Community Leadership of American (FCCLA) and ProStart (culinary arts) programs.

Both ProStart and FCCLA programs focus on career exploration, leadership skills, and competitive events. The equipment needed for the students to compete is above and beyond what is provided in the classroom. There are also fees associated with the competitions that are not covered by the district budget.

Learn more about ProStart at <https://chooseresaurants.org/programs/prostart/>. Learn more about FCCLA at <https://fcclainc.org/>.



## Unrestricted

**Request:** Contributions of any amount

**Purpose:** Support efforts to address the community's changing needs

Contributions that are not designated for a specific purpose, often called unrestricted, can be used at the discretion of Incurage to allow the support of community-building suggestions brought to our attention by people like you.

Incurage's vision has been and continues to be a community that works well for all. We work with you to meet the ever-changing needs of the south Wood County area to create a better community for generations to come. By funding creative resident-led community-building ideas, and encouraging connections and collaboration among residents and organizations, we help you bring philanthropic wishes to life. 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 your donations of any size.

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

Please note: While this report may not include all of the needs that currently exist in our community, this edition is a compilation of recent requests we have received, conversations we've had, and proactive research we've done.