

Steele County Food Shelf  
 155 Oakdale Street, Suite A  
 Owatonna, MN 55060

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## *Steele County Human Services Agencies Prepare for Reduction in County Grants*

More than 1,500 of the 200,000+ unemployed workers living in Minnesota call Steele County home. Our current 7.6 percent unemployment rate is a far cry from the 3.6 percent rate we experienced in 2007. With many area companies still recovering from the economic slump and recent floodwaters devastating local homes and businesses, our community is relying on its human services agencies now more than ever before. Despite the current conditions, state budget shortfalls continue impact funding for the Food Shelf and other area non-profit organizations—and a projected 50 percent reduction in state money allocated to Steele County’s human services agencies in 2011 puts added pressure on these groups and the citizens they serve.

funds to the agencies that rely on these county grants to make up some to nearly all of their yearly budgets.

Bracing for the 50 percent reduction in county grants, the impact of decisions made in Saint Paul are beginning to hit home as Steele County’s human services organizations are forced to find ways to continue providing needed support with significantly smaller budgets. As these agencies suffer so does the community and the thousands of community members—children, teenagers, families, the disabled, the aging, the unemployed—who rely on the Food Shelf and other non-profit groups for food, housing, clothing, and financial assistance.

Every year a group of community members known as the CCSA Committee review applications for state-funded county grants submitted on behalf of local human services organizations. CCSA stands for Children and Community Services Act, which was the piece of legislature mandating that counties form review committees to evaluate requests for state-funded grant money. The primary focus of the CCSA committee is to make grant recommendations to the Steele County Board of Commissioners concerning organizations serving children and families, the elderly and aging, and basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. While the county Board of Commissioners ultimately decides which agencies receive money and how much money they receive, CCSA Committee recommendations are an important tool in their decision making process.

For example, people eligible for food assistance through the government’s EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) program, commonly known as food stamps, cannot receive this benefit until they have lived in the county for 30 days. The Food Shelf steps in to fill that 30-day gap, providing food as needed both before EBT assistance begins and after.

Just as local food shelves fill the gap left by the EBT program, so must local citizens band together to fill the gap left by state funding cuts to our human services agencies. The need for local fundraising, donation, and volunteerism will be greater in 2011 than ever before. Each of us has a stake in the quality of our community and the level of service we’re able to provide individuals facing hunger, homelessness, unemployment, and countless other barriers preventing them from becoming contributing members of our county. As Minnesota continues to struggle with its budget shortfall, we must anticipate fewer and fewer state dollars coming into our hometowns and instead strive to find local solutions that will enable us to rise to the challenge of growing needs and shrinking budgets.

This year the CCSA Committee is faced with the tough task of evaluating the grant applications of organizations that provide invaluable life-lines to the community during this difficult economic time knowing that the county only has roughly half the state financial support it had in previous years. The Board of Commissioners must then allocate the

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### SCFS Staff and Board Members

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Stormy Trom . . . . . Director	Dave Barajas . . . . . Owatonna	Jerry Roberts . . . . . Medford
Alonso Hernandez . . . . . Manager	Ali Egal . . . . . Owatonna	Donna Wheeler . . . . . Owatonna
<b>Board Members</b>		
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Judith Peterson . . . . . Secretary, Owatonna	John Lestock . . . . . Owatonna	
Carla Brady . . . . . Treasurer, Medford	Judith Peterson . . . . . Owatonna	

**155 Oakdale Street, Suite A  
 Owatonna, MN 55060**  
**Phone: (507) 455-2991 Fax: (507) 455-4063**  
**Web Site: [www.steelecountyfoodshelf.org](http://www.steelecountyfoodshelf.org)**  
**Email: [foodshelf@charterinternet.com](mailto:foodshelf@charterinternet.com)**

**Office Hours**

**Monday, Wednesday  
 9:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.**

**Tuesday, Thursday, Friday  
 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.**

**Saturday  
 8:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.**



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## Detention Center Garden Project Benefits Food Shelf

When Steele County Detention Center Administrator Dan Schember noted that a large area of land surrounding jail facility wasn't being used back in 2006, Detention Center employees decided to capitalize on the space by launching an inmate gardening program and donating portions of the plot's produce to the Food Shelf.

"We grow a variety of vegetables, pumpkins, and this year we had several raspberry bushes," program coordinator Jen Pfeifer said. "The inmates really take ownership of the garden and enjoy working in it."

Only sentenced inmates with work-release privileges are allowed to join the garden crew that spends eight hours a day planting, harvesting, watering, and weeding the football field-size plot of plants. These inmates are taught gardening techniques by master gardeners the Detention Center brings in to help with the plant care.

"We donate products from the garden to the Food Shelf throughout the season," Jen said. "We also give more than 400 pumpkins to the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization each year."

The inmate garden project has not only been beneficial for local non-profits groups, it's also helped inmates earn money and learn skills. The program received special recognition in 2007 when it won the Kay Siebrass Award, which is annually given to the most outstanding jail program in Minnesota as decided by industry peers.

## Scouting for Food

The Boy Scout Troops of Steele County will be holding their Annual Food Drive on November 13th. They will be placing a hanger on the doors of the houses throughout the community on November 6th to announce the food pick-up on the following Saturday. Anyone may participate by putting non-perishable food items by their front door. If your home did not get an announcement hanger on November 6th, but you would like to donate to the Food Drive, call the Boy Scouts District Office at 1-800-524-3907. They will arrange for a pick-up at your home. The Food Shelf appreciates the efforts by the scouts for these donations.

## OHS Powder Puff Game Benefits Food Shelf

On Monday, September 20th, the Owatonna High School Student Council hosted the annual Powder Puff Football game as part of their Homecoming Festivities. It is their tradition to request a non-perishable food item to be donated as part of the admission fee. The 626 pounds of food donated were then delivered by the Student Council to the Food Shelf. Thank you to the community for their participation and to the Owatonna High School for their generous and much appreciated donations.

## Volunteer Appreciation Dinner



Food Shelf volunteers enjoy an appreciation dinner

The Steele County Food Shelf staff and Board of Directors hosted an appreciation dinner for volunteers on Monday, September 27th, at the Owatonna Country Club. Eighty-two volunteers enjoyed a wonderful meal followed by entertainment with Spontaneous Productions, an improvisation comedy team. Hy-Vee and CashWise donated centerpieces which were later used as door prizes. The Staff and Board appreciates the many hours of help the volunteers contribute each year to the Food Shelf.

## "Boo for Food"

For several years, more than ten churches in the Owatonna Community have participated in the "Boo for Food" event. On Wednesday October 27th, the members of the youth programs 'Trick or Treated' for non-perishable food items and cash donations for the Steele County Food Shelf. The knocked on doors from 6:30-8:00 p.m. All the donations will be delivered by the volunteers to the Food Shelf Office on Oakdale Street. Nathan Holt, youth director at St. John Lutheran Church, said, "Some of the youth like to dress-up in costumes and all enjoy participating with their friends. Last year the event collected around 4,000 pounds of food and approximately \$100. This event not only raises much needed food and monetary donations, but also raises youth awareness of the needs of the community through our food shelf services."

## Night Owls Car Show

The Night Owls Car Club hosted a show at Daybreak Church on Saturday September 18th. The admission fee for the event raised funds and gathered food donations for the Steele County Food Shelf. This year, the show donated 229 pounds of food. The monetary donation will follow in March during Minnesota Food Share.



An OHS student delivers food donations from the Homecoming Powder Puff game.

## A Single Mother with an Ill Child Falls on Hard Times

Having a critically ill five-year old child is very stressful for an area single mother, who we'll call Mandy. After four days in an Intensive Care Unit at Mayo Clinic, Mandy brought her child home still gravely ill and had to miss three months of work to be a constant care giver.

When she was down to the last \$40 in her checking account, Mandy wondered, "What am I going to do?" She said she contacted several places for social services, but had a hard time qualifying. When she came to the Steele County Food Shelf, Mandy said she and her child weren't starving, but she felt "shell-shocked" and like they really needed help. "I felt taken care of and no one made me feel uncomfortable," she said. "Stormy showed us a lot of compassion."

Mandy made two visits to receive food when times were most desperate. She felt like the Food Shelf was clean and the food choices were good. Mandy expressed her gratitude in a note to Stormy: "Thank you for helping feed us these past few months. Your compassion was a balm for my frightened spirit."

## Plumb Proves Individuals Make a Difference

Life-long gardener and Steele County resident Charles Plumb has been making regular donations to the Food Shelf from his personal garden for years. "Gardening has always been a hobby of mine," the 83-year old said. "I'm still very active and do a lot of work in the garden. I'm like the kid who never grew up!"

Plumb lists potatoes, beets, squash, pickles, tomatoes, corn, rhubarb, onions, peppers, and beans as just a few of the many vegetables that made up the more than 1,500 pounds of food he donated this year. The Plumbs also have a small orchard on their five acre property. "I mostly donate beans and tomatoes," he said. "I felt there was a real need there and this was something I could do to help."

Charles has this advice to offer people thinking about donating their time or resources to a local cause, "You don't have to have a lot of money to help others. There's a real need for all different kinds of donations. Anyone with a hobby is able to help out."

## High School Lullaby Concert

Attendees of the Owatonna High School Lullaby Concert brought 36 pounds of food donations to the show, which was then delivered to the Food Shelf by the Owatonna High School orchestra.

## Proud To Be A Partner

The Food Shelf is once again honored to be named a Steele County United Way Partner Agency for 2011.

NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS OFFICERS NAMED

Congratulations to Food Shelf Board members John Henry and Carol Kasper who were appointed Board President and Vice President respectfully on Monday, September 20.

## 2010 Food Shelf Numbers

These are just a few of the numbers that reveal the impact the Food Shelf has on Steele County

**1069** number of households served since January 2010      The Food Shelf distributed 403,426 pounds of food in 2010

**52%** of Food Shelf patrons were unemployed in 2010      **454** children under age 5 have been served by the Food Shelf      The Food Shelf provided food assistance to **86** disabled residents

**11** number of family members in the largest household served by the Food Shelf

### Breakdown of 2010 Food Shelf Patrons by Age

