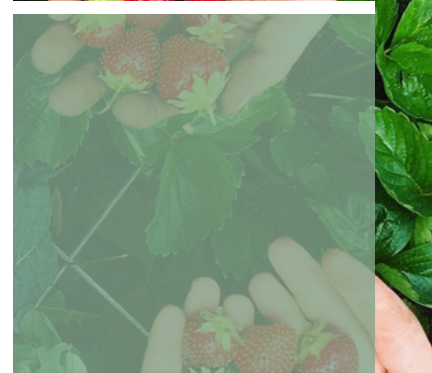


2025

# ANNUAL REPORT

We partner with our community to  
GROW food, FEED people, and HOUSE  
families. Hunger and poverty  
prevention is possible with Partnership.



**PARTNERS**  
**HP**



The **Partnership** in Central Wisconsin  
to Reduce **Hunger & Poverty**

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We partner with our community to GROW food, FEED people, and HOUSE families. Hunger and poverty prevention is possible with Partnership.



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PartnersHP is made up of four main project areas, all with a goal of partnering with our community to reduce barriers to economic stability and food security. Read the report for more information on each project area.

**Empty Bowls**  
raised nearly \$20,000 in 2025 and celebrated 25 years of raising funds to fight hunger & poverty in Portage County!



**Giving Gardens**  
welcomed Miranda Venturini-Gust in 2025 as the new Giving Gardens Manager & Food Access Coordinator with PartnersHP!

**RentReady**  
partnered with CAP services in 2025 to provide the Renters Education Workshops to participants.

**Mobile Pantry**  
saw an increase in referrals in 2025. Deliveries were made to 11 zip codes and served about 80 people each month.

Pictured above: The PartnersHP Board. Top row: Miranda Venturini-Gust, Collene Ottum, Jill Sanders, Michele Miller & Todd Lewis. Bottom Row: Kelly Hammond & Joanna Lickel

# HUNGER & POVERTY CLOSE TO HOME

## PORTAGE COUNTY & WI DATA



### FOODS WITH BIG PRICE HIKES IN 2025<sup>1</sup>

|         |     |
|---------|-----|
| Coffee  | 15% |
| Beef    | 14% |
| Bananas | 8%  |
| Lettuce | 21% |

**10.5%** 

OF PORTAGE COUNTY RESIDENTS LIVED BELOW THE  
FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL (FPL) IN 2025

 **43%**

OF PORTAGE COUNTY RENTERS ARE COST BURDENED,  
MEANING THEY SPEND MORE THAN 30% OF THEIR INCOME  
ON HOUSING.<sup>5</sup>

**7,870** 

TOTAL POPULATION IN PORTAGE COUNTY CONSIDERED  
FOOD INSECURE IN 2023. FOOD INSECURITY REFERS TO A  
LACK OF ACCESS, AT TIMES, TO ENOUGH FOOD FOR AN  
ACTIVE, HEALTHY LIFE.<sup>2</sup>

**1,940** 

TOTAL CHILDREN IN PORTAGE COUNTY CONSIDERED FOOD  
INSECURE IN 2023. OF THOSE, 31% WERE LIKELY  
INELIGIBLE FOR FEDERAL FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.<sup>2</sup>

**33%** 

PERCENTAGE OF INCOME TYPICALLY SPENT ON FOOD IN  
2024 AMONG HOUSEHOLDS IN THE LOWEST INCOME  
QUINTILE (THE BOTTOM 20% OF HOUSEHOLDS).<sup>3</sup>

“  
**Essential costs are  
increasing way faster than  
median household income  
and way faster than  
inflation overall...those are  
things that you can't just cut  
out of your budget...**<sup>4</sup>  
”

## ALICE DATA

### ASSET LIMITED INCOME CONSTRAINED EMPLOYED

The acronym ALICE refers to those individuals and households who earn more than the Federal Poverty Level but less than the basic cost of living for their county (ALICE Threshold). ALICE gives us a clearer picture of families in our community who are working and still struggling to make ends meet.

**33%**

Of Portage County households  
in 2023 were below the ALICE  
Threshold<sup>6</sup>

**45%**

Of households in the city of  
Stevens Point were below the  
ALICE Threshold in 2023  
(48% in Rosholt)<sup>6</sup>

\*The ALICE Threshold is calculated for each county in the U.S. and reflects the minimum income needed to cover the basic costs of living (housing, food, transportation, health care, child care, etc.)

|                                                  | Single Adult | Family of 4 |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| 2023 Federal Poverty Level <sup>7</sup>          | \$14,580     | \$30,000    |
| 2023 Portage County ALICE Threshold <sup>6</sup> | \$26,772     | \$66,540    |



1. Monthly Economic Update: December 2025, WI Dept of Revenue: <https://www.revenue.wi.gov/DORReports/2025-12-monthly-econ-update.pdf>

2. "Map the Meal Gap: Food Insecurity among the Overall Population in Portage County." Feeding America. 2023. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/overall/wisconsin/county/portage>

3. USDA: Food Spending as a Share of Income Declines as Income Rises, 04/30/2026, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/food-prices-and-spending>

4. Wisconsin Public Radio: Essential Household Costs are Driving Wisconsin's Affordability Challenge, Report Says, Feb 2026, <https://www.wpr.org/economy/essential-household-costs-wisconsin-affordability-forward-analytics>

5. Portage County, WI Comprehensive Plan 2024-2044, pg 38, <https://www.ncwrpc.org/wp-content/uploads/Portage-Co-Comp-Plan-Adopted-2024.pdf>

6. "ALICE in Portage County: 2023 Point-in-Time Data." United For ALICE. <https://www.unitedforalice.org/county-reports/wisconsin#10/44.4650/-89.5342>

7. 2023 Federal Poverty Level: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1c92a9207f3ed5915ca020d58fe77696/detailed-guidelines-2023.pdf>

8. Grocery Items with the Biggest Price Increases Since Covid-19, Jan 2026, <https://www.traceone.com/resources/plm-compliance-blog/grocery-store-items-that-have-increased-most-in-price>



# EMPTY BOWLS

This year we celebrated 25 years of Empty Bowls in Portage County! Over the years, the event has raised a combined total of more than \$200,000 to fight hunger and poverty in our community. Empty Bowls 2025 raised nearly \$20,000 to continue that legacy. Proceeds from the event are used to support PartnersHP programs like Mobile Pantry, Giving Gardens & RentReady. Funds are also used to support local hunger and poverty prevention activities in the form of community grants (see page 7 for a list of 2025 grant recipients).

Empty Bowls is truly a community effort. From the hundreds of bowls that are painted and glazed by community members, to the dozens of restaurants that donate soup, to our event sponsors and raffle donors, to the many volunteers that work the event.....we couldn't do it without you! Thank you for caring for our community and partnering with us to ensure that no one's bowl is empty!



Mayor Mike Wiza and musicians Tom Pease and Cassandra Lea entertain attendees at the Empty Bowls event.



## 2025 Event Sponsors & Soup Donors



Event  
Sponsors

30



Gallons of Soup  
Donated

135



Number of  
Attendees

500+



Funds  
Raised

\$19,464



Grants  
Funded

9



# MAKING HUNGER DISAPPEAR



## MAGIC SHOW

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, PartnersHP hosted a magic show featuring local magician James David! Over 200 people attended the event at the SPASH auditorium for an evening of laughter and mind-blowing magic. All proceeds benefited Empty Bowls and were used to help make hunger disappear in Portage County!



## Art in the Park

This year we celebrated local artistry at Art in the Park! It was a great opportunity to sell our hand-painted bowls and promote the Empty Bowls event. Some lucky folks even won tickets to the magic show. We look forward to returning next year!



## 2025 Hunger Prevention Award

The 2025 Hunger and Poverty Prevention Partnership Award was presented to D & D Automotive Services Inc. at the Empty Bowls event in recognition of their outstanding generosity and support of PartnersHP including the Empty Bowls event and Mobile Pantry through their time, energy, and resources. Dave said it so well, "Empty Bowls is about giving back to those in our community who need a helping hand without being judged. We can prevent hunger one bowl at a time."

# COMMUNITY GRANTS

Every year, PartnersHP awards grants to organizations in Portage County whose work actively combats hunger and poverty in our community. The following recipients were awarded funds during the 2025 grant cycle. To receive notification of grant opportunities please subscribe to our email list by emailing [partnershpteam@gmail.com](mailto:partnershpteam@gmail.com) with the subject line "email list".

- ★ **Boys & Girls Club of Portage County**  
Summer Meal Program
- ★ **Operation Bootstrap**  
Food Insecurity in Portage County
- ★ **Growing Collective**  
Income Qualified Memberships
- ★ **Partnering Together**  
Homeless Support
- ★ **Interfaith Food Pantry of Portage County**  
Milk Purchase Funds
- ★ **St. Joseph's Parish**  
Meal of Hope Ministry
- ★ **McKinley Center Elementary**  
Backpack Program
- ★ **Woodlands Church**  
Backpacks 4 Hope
- ★ **Stevens Point Community Outreach (SPCO)**  
Sunday Bag Lunches

**2025: \$8000**  
awarded in grants

## SCHOLARSHIPS

The PartnersHP Scholarship is awarded to graduating seniors in Portage County who exemplify community service and the values of PartnersHP. Congratulations to our 2025 scholarship winners!



*Addison Hicks*

**\$1000**



*Elizabeth Glazer*

**\$1000**

# GIVING GARDENS



## MEET MIRANDA



Miranda joined PartnersHP as the new Giving Farm Manager & Food Access Coordinator. Miranda grew up experiencing food insecurity firsthand. As a child, a visit to a friend's home with a garden became a turning point. She recognized in it something beyond vegetables: a pathway toward self-sufficiency and community resilience. From that moment, she committed herself to learning all she could about growing and sharing food.

Over the following 13 years, Miranda built a broad, hands-on foundation in sustainable agriculture. Her work spanned CSA vegetable production, small-scale dairy and artisan cheesemaking, draft horse farming, medicinal herbalism, beekeeping, food preservation, edible landscaping, and nature-based programming for children. She brings to this role a distinctive combination of practical expertise and academic training in behavioral neuroscience, psychology, nutrition, and herbalism. As a farmer, a mother, a lifelong learner, and someone who knew hunger as a child, Miranda understands this work from multiple angles.



In 2025, Giving Gardens launched a gleaning program at the Stevens Point Winter Farmers Market to recover and redirect produce to our community!

*This work belongs to the whole community and there is a place for you!*

 [Connect with Miranda](#)



[Find volunteer opportunities](#)



[Learn more](#)

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



Expand gleaning efforts to include on-site and B-grade produce for local meal programs



Launch a fully operational Giving Farm alongside nutrition and food systems education programming.



Develop scholarship and sponsorship opportunities to fund garden beds for food-insecure community members



Establish a Portage County Food Access Network with local partners

# MOBILE PANTRY



## Community Focused

We ended 2025 with both of our delivery routes at maximum capacity. In November and December, we saw an increase in requests for assistance from many families who were affected by the delay in SNAP benefits due to the federal shut-down. For families that lacked transportation, accessing food pantries was a struggle. We were able to add several families to our routes in a temporary capacity during that time. Our mission has always been to serve our community by bringing food directly to those who otherwise struggle to access food assistance.



Tommy's Express Car Wash hosted 2 food drives for Mobile Pantry in 2025!

## Community Supported

The Mobile Pantry is 100% supported by our community and we continue to be amazed by the generosity of individuals, businesses, churches, and community groups who partner with us to support our neighbors. In 2025, we received donations from 13 different food drives and numerous other individual gifts. Thank you!



Volunteers sort food donations from the Scouting for Food Drive in April.



A team of 12 volunteers work together to shop, sort, pack, and deliver food each month!



The Mobile Pantry van runs 2 routes each month delivering food to roughly 80 people.



In 2025, we delivered to 11 zip codes across Portage County.

| Food & Emergency Resources Directory                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FOOD PANTRIES                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                               | SHELTER                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Community Food Pantry</b><br>Tuesdays 10:00am-2:30pm<br>204 Rice St.<br>Stevens Point, WI 54481<br>715-344-7395                                                 | <b>Operation Bootstrap</b><br>Call or visit Emergency Services for a referral.<br>1224 Strong Ave.<br>Stevens Point, WI 54481<br>715-344-7438 | <b>Tomorrow River Area Community Kitchen (TRAC)</b><br>Serving Tomorrow River School District<br>Monday 8-10am<br>Thursday 5-7pm<br>293 Main St.<br>Amherst, WI 54406<br>715-424-6955 | <b>The Salvation Army</b><br>Basic need services are available Monday through Friday by appointment.<br>1600 Briggs St.<br>Stevens Point, WI 54481<br>715-340-2437 |
| <b>Interfaith Food Pantry</b><br>2nd & 4th Tuesday, 5-8pm<br>2350 Post Rd.<br>Plover, WI 54467<br>715-341-2659                                                     | <b>St. Joseph's Church</b><br>3rd Monday 5-6pm<br>1709 Wyatt Ave.<br>Stevens Point, WI 54481<br>715-341-8657                                  | <b>St. Paul's Food Pantry</b><br>Food assistance available once every 30 days<br>Tuesdays and Thursdays 10am-2pm<br>1999 River Ave.<br>Stevens Point, WI 54481<br>715-344-2664        | <b>The Warming Center</b><br>Open November 1-April 1, check in from 6:30-9pm, check out at 6:00am<br>1300 Main St.<br>Stevens Point, WI 54481<br>715-252-3770      |
| <b>Rodholt Food Pantry</b><br>1st and 3rd Monday, 3-5pm<br>247 Depot St.<br>Rodholt, WI 54473<br>715-570-3045 or 715-592-4570                                      | <b>New Hope Community Church</b><br>2nd and 4th Sunday, 12-2pm<br>87 W. 2nd St.<br>Junction City, WI 54433<br>715-451-3051                    | <b>Family Crisis Center</b><br>24/7 shelter available for female survivors of domestic violence and youth in crisis.<br>606 West River Dr.<br>Stevens Point, WI 54481<br>715-343-7125 |                                                                                                                                                                    |
| If you have trouble accessing or using community food resources, the Mobile Pantry of Portage County may be able to help. For more information, call 715-600-1202. |                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                    |
| MEALS                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>The Salvation Army</b><br>Bag meals served daily<br>Lunch 8:30am-12:30pm<br>Dinner 5-6pm<br>1600 Briggs St.<br>Stevens Point, WI 54481<br>715-340-2437          | <b>St. Joseph's Church</b><br>3rd Monday 5-6pm<br>1709 Wyatt Ave.<br>Stevens Point, WI 54481<br>715-341-8657                                  | <b>Franciscans Downtown</b><br>Mon-Fri, 12-3pm<br>1000 Main St.<br>Stevens Point, WI 54481<br>715-341-2790                                                                            | <b>The Place of Peace</b><br>Thursdays at 5pm<br>2151 Stanley St.<br>Stevens Point, WI 54481<br>715-252-3770                                                       |

## The Food & Emergency Resource Directory is Now Available in English and Spanish

PartnersHP continues to update the Food & Emergency Resources Directory on a yearly basis. The directory can be accessed at [www.partnershp.org](http://www.partnershp.org)

[English](#)

[Spanish](#)

# RENTREADY PROGRAM



Housing availability and affordability continues to be a growing concern in Portage County, and for prospective renters with adverse rental histories the challenges to obtaining adequate housing can sometimes feel insurmountable. Since 2020, the RentReady program, along with community partners, has worked to change that by supporting both landlords and prospective renters. RentReady does that by:

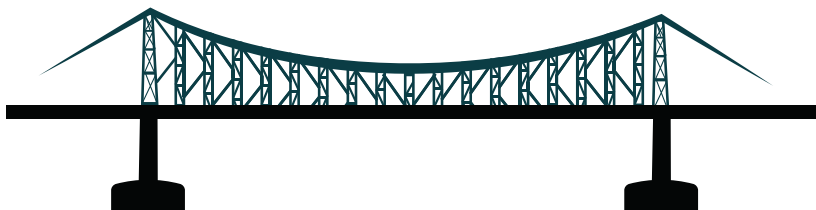


Providing Renter Education Workshops, financial coaching, and assistance completing the RentReady Portfolio for prospective renters



Providing rental assurance for landlords who are willing to rent to RentReady certified families and individuals

By supporting both landlords and prospective renters, RentReady hopes to create a sturdy bridge to secure housing for many in our community.



## RentReady Inquiries

2023: 75

2024: 175

2025: 160

## Connect With Us

More information about the RentReady program including a link to the application is available on our website.



[partnershp.org/rentready-2/](https://partnershp.org/rentready-2/)



[rentreadyhppppc@gmail.com](mailto:rentreadyhppppc@gmail.com)



715 600 1202

## SINCE 2020:



Classes  
Conducted

**35**



Program  
Completions

**65**



Individuals  
Approved

**55**



Individuals & Families  
Placed in Housing

**25**



Rent Defaults

**3**

# PARTNER WITH US



Partnership is literally in our name and it's the heartbeat of our work. We are thankful for our many community partners and look forward to growing new partnerships in the years to come. We truly believe that hunger and poverty prevention is possible.....with partnership! We invite you to partner with us.



**PartnersHP  
has Venmo!**



**venmo**

To give, simply open Venmo and scan the QR code above or search for Partners HP. If giving to a specific project area, please note that in the memo line. Thank you!

## PartnersHP



PO Box 570  
Stevens Point, WI 54481



Phone: 715-600-1202



Website:  
<https://partnershp.org/>



Email:  
partnershpteam@gmail.com



Empty Bowls email:  
emptybowlspc@gmail.com



Giving Gardens email:  
givinggardenswi@gmail.com



RentReady email:  
rentreadyhppppc@gmail.com

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334 followers



The Partnership in Central Wisconsin  
to Reduce Hunger & Poverty



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