



100 Men of Dane County
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Quarterly Giving Makes an Impact in Dane County Kids Programs

2023 started off on a high note with \$93,000 raised by a group of men throughout the community to donate to an organization working hard to bring happiness and goodwill for children and families in Dane County. On Thursday, February 18th Extended Hands Pantry was the grant recipient of this donation from 100 Men of Dane County's quarterly grant giving.

Members of 100 Men joined the team from Extended Hands Pantry during a social networking and award presentation at Buck & Honey's in Monona. During the event members heard from Extended Hands Pantry founders, Jenny and Andy Czerkas and board member, Pat Wongkit. Passion filled the room with stories shared of the incredible impact Extended Hands Pantry is making for children and families with after school tutoring and thought out meals. They specialize in literacy, helping build confidence in reading and math skills, and do their research to provide meals for the many different cultures in the community. As Jenny Czerkas noted during the presentation, "People will have the dignity of choosing the foods that they want. No more of the mystery box, mystery bag."

The pantry has two locations, at the Lighthouse Church & School on Mondays and Fridays and the Casa de Fe Church 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month. Jenny shares, "We had been discussing the possibility of a food pantry at Lighthouse School in 2019. This bi-lingual school has a free and reduced lunch rate of 90%. It is a perfect place for a food pantry, except they had no space for it. Burdens of the pandemic put 50% of the school's families suddenly without any income. So we started the mobile food pantry in the parking lot in April 2020. Fast forward to today – Lighthouse is building an addition for the food pantry and we now have a 2nd food pantry location on the east side." Funds from this grant will help with the completion of the Lighthouse building, where they'll be able to triple their pantry hours and store up to 10 times

the amount of food distributed now. Most importantly, they'll have a generous and consistent stock of culturally appropriate foods available.

Their small but mighty team consists of one part-time manager, 11 board members, and 30+ volunteers. Jenny and Andy are volunteers themselves. Jenny says, "We are volunteers, and we'll always be volunteers. We have no plans to retire and expect to continue this work as long as we are able. Our base layer of concern is educating children who live in low-income or poverty situations. But, before you can educate children, you have to make sure they are well-fed. Children can't learn if they don't know whether or not they will have a meal today."

Extended Hands Pantry is always looking for "extra hands" to help with the growing need. The response from families attests to the services being offered. Jenny humbly shares, "The families who come to the food pantry show a lot of gratitude. They see us out there in all kinds of weather and they are very thankful. People will actually flag us down in the parking lot to thank us for providing nourishment for their children after school. Some of these parents are working more than 1 job which makes it difficult to have food ready for their children after school. If you're interested in helping you can get involved by volunteering or donating. Visit www.extendedhandspantry.org.

For the past 5 years 100 Men of Dane County has brought together a group of men in the community with one goal in mind, supporting children in Dane County. Currently the group has 93 members with ambitions to reach 100+ members. The group is able to donate \$1,000 from each member each quarter, and overall has donated \$1,803,248 to organizations like Extended Hands Pantry.

The next grant will be awarded in May 2023. Applications for this grant are due April 1, 2023. You can see all the contributions, apply for grants, and look into ways of becoming involved at www.curelocal.com.

100 Men of Dane County would like to extend gratitude to all the members, community partners, and sponsors that make giving and award events like this possible. This quarters community partners include: ACE Insurance Group, Blue Plate Catering, Canopy Wealth Management, Paul Davis Restoration of South Central Wisconsin, SARA Investment Real Estate, and Tribe 9 Foods; event sponsor: Canopy Wealth Management; host sponsor: Buck & Honey's.

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