



UNITED WAY
Northeastern
Minnesota

Youth United
CONTEST

2025-2026

Do you know someone that has a hard time providing food for their family? This is a big challenge that our community is facing right now. My personal connection comes from joining Youth In Action. The food shelf became a project that I really cared about. The past four years I have become aware of how many people use the food shelf every day.

With the rising cost of groceries, families are unable to consistently put food on their table. They are forced to choose between paying other necessary bills such as heat, lights, or water for their apartment or house. They might have to pay rent or a mortgage. Vehicle payments, insurance, and gasoline can also cause hardships. Having to choose between eating or having a roof over your head, for example, should not be a decision anyone has to make. Food instability causes many families extreme stress, especially on the children in the family.

My mom is an elementary teacher in the Rock Ridge school district. She says that some students rely on the school breakfast and lunch as their only meals in their day. Thankfully, The United Way provides bags of food for students that need meals on weekends. However, that doesn't provide for the rest of the family and it doesn't provide for meals needed daily in the evening.

There are several ways that I believe the United Way or other organizations like the United Way can meet this need. One way would be to run more social media campaigns to first raise awareness that food pantries need help. Next, consistently run seasonal food drives partnering with larger companies, local churches, and schools. Lastly, start up a mobile food pantry and start up a delivery system for rural families that cannot get to the food shelf. An outreach program for those that can't get to the food pantries is imperative in our community.

In conclusion, food insecurity is a serious issue that affects far too many families right here in our community, and it is not something that we can ignore. No child should have to worry about where their next meal will come from, and no family should have to choose between food and necessities. Organizations like the United Way play a critical role in addressing our local community's needs, but through continued awareness, support, and collaboration we can make a lasting change. By working together through outreach and partnerships, we can help ensure that every family has access to the food they need to live healthy and stable lives.

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