



County Of Dane
Office Of The County Executive

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Dane County, Badger Prairie Needs Network Announce Opening of Expanded Cold Storage Unit to Help Meet COVID-19 Emergency Food Needs

Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi joined Badger Prairie Needs Network (BPNN) in announcing the opening of its expanded cold storage unit to help meet COVID-19 emergency food needs. The \$765,000 expansion at BPNN includes 1,000 square feet of additional cold storage, a loading dock for contact-free receiving from food banks, and an outdoor canopy to protect volunteers and guests from harsh winter weather and ensure continuity of emergency food distribution operations. The entire project is in direct response to challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This investment allows our community’s food distribution system to better serve those struggling with food insecurity during this unprecedented time,” said County Executive Parisi. “We thank BPNN for their partnership. Taking these steps will keep local supply chains strong—ensuring our community members continue to have access to healthy, nutritious meals.”

The expanded need for food during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed inadequacies with storing refrigerated and frozen foods in the community’s distribution network. Earlier this year, Dane County retained four cold storage semi-trailers to help Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin store more meat, dairy, and fresh produce. To further fill this storage gap, Dane County put \$320,887 toward BPNN’s cold storage unit expansion, which will help BPNN serve as both a short- and long-term perishable food storage hub—critical for the region’s food pantry system. The expansion will bolster food delivery and food storage capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hunger in Dane County is at an all-time high. Compared to 2019, BPNN and other large food pantries have seen a 63% increase in requests for food assistance. BPNN has served more than 5,450 households and 19,700 individuals so far this year. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, so too will the demand on the community’s emergency food network.

“BPNN’s new loading dock increases our safety by permitting contact-free deliveries from our food bank partners, and the outdoor canopy will reduce weather-related disruptions to curbside food distribution by protecting volunteers and guests from lightning strikes, hail, and snow drifts that would otherwise close us down,” said Marcia Kasieta, Executive Director of BPNN.

The new cooler storage will increase BPNN’s capacity to serve as a drop-point for perishable foods that smaller west-side pantries need on hand, but have no space to store. With a local drop-point approach, food banks will make fewer trips, saving time and money, and smaller pantries on the west side will be able to restock

without time consuming trips to food banks located on Madison's eastside. A westside drop site like this increases the efficiency and responsiveness of the entire emergency food system. The added cooler space will also allow BPNN to permanently expand its service area to include all Dane County households struggling with food insecurity.

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