

Fox Cities Diaper Bank Helps Families with Urgent But Often Unseen Need



By BONNIE PETRIE • NOV 28, 2016



Volunteers at the Fox Cities Diaper Bank prepare donated diapers for distribution to various organizations that give diapers to families in need in central Wisconsin. CREDIT UNITED WAY FOX CITIES

In Wisconsin, thousands of families struggle to pay their bills and put food on the table. One need some of them have – that you might not consider - is diapers.

Many families can't always afford to keep their babies clean, dry, comfortable and healthy.

People living on the edge in Seymour, Wisconsin, have long been coming to the group [Community 2000](#) for help.

Program Coordinator Julie Meulemans says the families served - on average - consist of four members and have an average gross income of \$13,000 a year.

She says they frequently come in for food, personal care items, clothing, bedding or help with paying the bills, but says, over the years, she noticed another issue.



Distributing diapers at the Fox Cities Diaper Bank. CREDIT UNITED WAY FOX CITIES

"When you get talking to them and you see that baby's diaper is so wet and saturated, they haven't changed it in four hours or longer because they didn't have the money to change it," Meulemans says. "We have people who were going without food because they can't afford the diapers."

[Diaper need](#) is not uncommon, according to Aric Melzl. He's the marketing director for Huggies diapers in Neenah, Wisconsin. He says [one in three families in the United States](#) is unable to buy enough diapers. When the company, which is owned by Kimberly-Clark, realized there were families all around that couldn't afford diapers, it reached out to [United Way Fox Cities](#) and asked if it would consider starting a diaper bank.

In 2011, it did.

[The Fox Cities Diaper Bank](#) now collects donated diapers, then distributes them to organizations all around the Fox Cities, including Community 2000 in Seymour, and the [St. Joseph's Food Program](#) in Menasha.

St. Joe's provides diapers to about 300 families a month, including Ana Sierra Vera's.

She says she was skipping meals to buy diapers, but now has at least some of what she needs for her baby Zully. Sierra Vera says, "It's really good for my family to get diapers because now I can change more often her diaper and she always is healthy."

Diaper need can effectively trap a family in poverty, because most child care centers won't take a baby if you don't bring along a box of disposable diapers.

Without diapers, a parent might not be able to work.

But neither the state nor federal governments consider diapers a basic need, so there's no assistance to help parents pay for them.



CREDIT ST. JOSEPH'S FOOD PROGRAM

Donations and diaper banks must make up the difference. And Ana, Zully's mom, is grateful. "I don't know how to say thank you to this bank."

That's also a common response from clients in Seymour, according to Julie Meulemans at Community 2000. She says, "It's just a diaper, but it's so much more. It gives them that little bit of hope that they can keep going. That somebody gets it, you know?"

On average, the Fox Cities Diaper Bank serves 900 babies and toddlers a month. That's more than 400,000 clean, dry diapers every year.

<http://wuum.com/post/fox-cities-diaper-bank-helps-families-urgent-often-unseen-need#stream/0>