

Stock the Shelves campaign launches this week

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Published 7:53 p.m. CT Oct. 19, 2017 | Updated 7:55 p.m. CT Oct. 19, 2017



(Photo: Danny Damiani/USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin)

APPLETON - USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin's annual Stock the Shelves campaign kicked off Thursday in Appleton with a mobile food pantry event.

Employees distributed more than 12,000 pounds of food, and about 40 families were helped in the first half hour of the mobile food pantry, said Megan Pirelli, grants manager with Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin.

"It's your neighbor next door that lost their job," Pirelli said of the families served on Thursday. "It's the single mom. It might not be very visible and we don't always see it, but no matter how wonderful you think your community is, there is still a need."

This year's Stock the Shelves campaign goal is to raise \$200,000 in the Fox Cities and \$527,000 statewide.

"The goal is to make sure no family is left behind with food in this area and in the greater Wisconsin area," said Chris Stegman, president and publisher of USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

The Stock the Shelves campaign started at The Post-Crescent in 1995 and expanded to all 10 USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin sites in 2010. So far, the campaign has raised \$4 million for local food pantries statewide.

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Although there is a statewide goal, the effort is local. Every dollar collected by the campaign is spent in the donor's community — no money is directed to pantries in other cities.

Stock the Shelves is being supported by organizations like J. J. Keller Foundation, U.S. Venture, the Greater Fox Cities Chapter of Credit Unions and Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin.

[A 2016 United Way report](#) found that 960,131 households in Wisconsin, about 42 percent of the state, are struggling to support themselves with basic needs like food. These are households that include both those below and above the federal poverty level, but do not make enough money to afford the cost of living.



Robert Zizzo, Stock the Shelves Mobile Food Pantry volunteer and news director for the Green Bay Press-Gazette, helps Mayra Duran load her car during the mobile pantry Thursday in Appleton. (Photo: Danny Damiani/USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin)