

## Diaper bank in Wisconsin keeps babies covered

### Community effort helps low-income households

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**APPLETON, WIS.** When a 2010 basic needs study showed that one in three families in this Midwestern community struggled to provide diapers for babies, the local United Way found a solution in its own backyard.

United Way turned to Kimberly-Clark, the maker of Huggies diapers. The company, founded in northeast Wisconsin, agreed to discount or donate pallet loads to a newly created diaper bank for low-income households.

The Fox Cities Diaper Bank then collects, repackages, stores and distributes them to families in a well-tuned operation, said Rhonda Hannemann, community development director at the Fox Cities United Way.

“Our goal is 300,000 diapers per year,” Hannemann said. “We’ve heard the stories of parents having to use T-shirts or not changing diapers frequently enough when they get into a pinch, and that doesn’t need to happen.”

United Way enlists a local warehouse to store the 6-foot-tall pallets of boxed diapers until needed and volunteers from local companies to wrap the diapers into packs of 25.

In November, 200 **Thrivent** Financial employees in Appleton spent three days packing 135,000 diapers.

“We know parents can spend at least \$100 per month on diapers and assistance programs often don’t cover that expense. It’s sometimes a tough call between rent, food and diapers” said Jenni Eickelberg, Thrivent’s community relations specialist.

Each month, about 600 children in impoverished homes in northeast Wisconsin are given diapers. Since 2011, more than 900 volunteers have given time to the cause.

For many, the diapers provide temporary aid in times of financial strife, said Pat Leigl, social services

director for the local Salvation Army.

“One mother from last summer in particular sticks out. She was recently divorced and had three children, all in diapers and worked for a school district so was off during the summer,” Leigl said. “The diapers really helped in that time frame during a challenging situation.”

**Penzenstadler also reports for The (Appleton, Wis.) Post-Crescent**

