As a mother of three who struggles to provide all the necessities for her family, Stephanie Hanstad of Seymour is grateful for the community support from Dollars for Diapers.

She is a stay-at-home mom with two children in diapers, and for two years she has used the diaper bank at Community 2000, an outreach program for families in the Black Creek, Seymour and Shiocton communities.

"I use it with my younger children. It's helped out tremendously," Hanstad said. "It's helped my family and my children."

Even with a free monthly package from the diaper bank, Hanstad still spends at least $80 each month on diapers. Most families spend more than $100 a month per child, no matter the child's age.

Hanstad also uses the energy assistance, free clothing and other programs from Community 2000. She said the bank is essential for those who are not working or are working part time and have difficulty affording all necessities.

Juli Meulemans, the Community 2000 program coordinator, helped establish the program because she understood the need for families to have access to assistance in rural areas. The program helped 716 people last year, with nearly 20 percent of those using the diaper bank.

"We're able to get them the basic necessities here, so our families don't have to travel all the way into town," Meulemans said.

Meulemans said many families own cars that only get eight to 10 miles per gallon of gas, making it difficult to afford travel to places like Appleton.

Hanstad also said the rural location is key to assisting families who do not have access to a vehicle.

"It's nice to have it in Seymour. Some people have to walk because they don't drive," Hanstad said.

Meulemans said parents find themselves in cycles that do not allow their children to attend daycare while they work because they can't afford the costs of care or the necessary supplies for their children, such as diapers.

Hanstad knows because she's been through it herself.

"If I had to pay out of pocket for daycare, it wouldn't pay for me to work. Between gas and daycare, it would cost too much," Hanstad said.

Anne Bremer, 15-year volunteer at the St. Joseph's Food Program and a diaper bank helper, sees many of the same families each week. She said due to many child care provider regulations, families cannot send their children to daycare because they lack the diapers required for each child. In general, an infant uses 12 diapers each day, while a toddler uses eight.

"Many people work more than one job. I see a lot of hard-working, dedicated parents who are grateful for help," Bremer said. "I'm glad people know how crucial it is for families."

Bremer said each week she sees the same families and knows they look forward to coming and getting assistance.

"I don't know what families would do without us." Meulemans said. "The better they can help themselves, the faster they'll be able to get out of the situation."

— Grace Ebert; 920-993-1000 ext. 252, or gebert@postcrescent.com; on Twitter @_glouise_

Donate to Dollars for Diapers

Donations to Dollars for Diapers, presented by Kimberly-Clark Cares and Huggies, can be made at cffoxvalley.org (https://www.cffoxvalley.org/dollarsfordiapers) or by following the information on Dollars for Diapers ads. Checks to The Post-Crescent Community Fund should be made and mailed to The Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, 4455 W. Lawrence St., Appleton, WI 54914.
Packages of diapers, sealed or open, and supplies, should be dropped off in The Post-Crescent lobby at 306 W. Washington St. in Appleton. Other collection sites include Badger Globe, Evergreen, Fox Communities, Prospera and St. Elizabeth Employees credit unions.

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