

**furnishing homes** with a little help from our friends!

**HOURS**  
Tuesdays & Thursdays  
1:30-4:00pm  
Occasional hours by appointment

**theExchange**  
LA CROSSE AREA FURNITURE BANK

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## theExchange Newsletter

November  
2020

### ★ **IMPACT DATA:** **October (Year to Date)**

Total Recipients: 30 (378)  
Donor Drop-Offs: 54 (490)  
Donation Pickups: 19 (207)  
Deliveries: 12 (153)

### **MOST NEEDED ITEMS:**

- Pillows
- Hand towels
- Facecloths
- Shower curtains
- Shower rings

### ★ **QUOTES....**

"The ones who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do."

*Winston Churchill*

"...one household at a time."

*Jim Bagniewski,*

## What's New at theExchange?

It is remarkable the good that comes from combining dedicated, hardworking volunteers, hundreds of household donations, and the financial support of community backers and private citizens. Since our humble beginnings in a garage in 2016, theExchange has assisted more than 1300 households!

We are realizing our dream of growing theExchange into a responsive, reliable and compassionate La Crosse community resource. Change is an inevitable part of growth. Volunteers and advocates alike are excited about the electronic Client Form (kudos to Linda Schwartz who spent hours tweaking the form). We are implementing an electronic appointment system – this too should help us function more efficiently. We hope to see a large sink, washer and dryer installed before the end of year.

Adapting our leadership model to program demands is also important to our future. Our board will launch a part-time Executive Director search this fall. This represents a huge vote of confidence in our mission and our efforts– yay team! While adding a paid director marks a substantial step, **volunteers will always be the heart and soul of theExchange**. If you have candidate suggestions, let us know.

As the holidays approach and a difficult year comes to an end, we reflect on our blessings. We are lucky to know each and everyone of you – you brighten our world! Sending contactless hugs and virtual holiday good wishes to all!

Sheila, Cindy, Mary & Joan

## Volunteer Appreciation Chili Dinner



Over 55 meals of delicious chili and amazing homemade sourdough bread were prepared by chef Kyle Sahlstrom, topped off with gourmet brownies by Sheila Riley—all individually bagged and handed out as we drove through theExchange parking lot.... Amazing! On behalf of all the volunteers, we THANK YOU Sheila, Cindy, Joan, and Mary....and chef Kyle Sahlstrom who is in FL now but watch for his return this spring.

**DID YOU HEAR?....**  
*Comments Around Town*

"I wanted to share the report I received from a client. He was so impressed with the kindness and helpfulness of everyone that delivered the furniture. It is good to hear about how grateful people are. Thank you for all you do!" (advocate)



**SAFETY AT  
theExchange**

**Hours:**

Tues & Thur 1:30 - 4:00  
with 2-3 volunteers on duty.  
Appointments only.

**Volunteer Sign Up:**  
[https://signup.com/go/  
PzbQKUK](https://signup.com/go/PzbQKUK)

## NEW: Spotlight on Volunteers

We are introducing a new feature in our newsletter to help volunteers become better acquainted and celebrate the great work being done by the entire volunteer crew at theExchange. This month we feature Jim Bagniewski who was technically one of our very first volunteers.

In the spring of 2016, Sister Karen Neuser and Sister Rochelle Potaracke had their pulse on who in the community needed help to furnish their homes. They knew of Jim as a hard worker and would call on him to pick up donations with his truck and in turn deliver to those they identified in need. As theExchange Furniture Bank began to evolve, Jim was willing to help!

Coordinator Joan Waniger says: "What I find particularly amazing about Jim is not only his unfailing weekly commitment to theExchange, but his ability to make connections with everyone he meets. His authentic warmth, wisdom, and guidance for fellow volunteers young and old, our clients and donors - is one of those special ingredients money cannot buy."

## Meet Jim Bagniewski

You may know Jim now as a key to theExchange moving crew. That's since 2016 after he retired from his long career in K-12 education, raised four children along with his wife, Carolyn, and volunteered in numerous ways in the community.



Jim grew up on a farm in the Cochrane-Fountain City area, received his BS and MS degrees from UW-L and spent most of his career in the La Crosse Public School district, before teaching at UW-L and Viterbo.

Jim is currently active in several civic organizations including: FSPA Justice and Peace Committee, Bluffside Neighborhood Association, Mayor's Neighborhood Revitalization Commission, La Crosse Neighborhood Coalition, Homeless Coalition Initiative, Mobile Meals Board, & Parish Council for Roncalli Newman Catholic Church. In the past Jim has served on the Board of Directors for: Boys and Girls Club, Parenting Place, and La Crosse Public Education Foundation.

According to Jim, "The four ladies (Sheila, Cindy, Joan and Mary) leading theExchange are the most gracious people I have ever worked with. We should thank THEM as much or more than they thank US."

Thanks, Jim, for all you do for theExchange and our community. Did we mention celebrating Jim's 70th last year?

## Supporting At-Home Learning

Requests for desks, chairs, lamps, and bunk beds/platform beds for elementary through teen-aged kids increased this fall as at-home learning was put in place due to the pandemic. We saw families in need of urgent housing so that they might have both internet access and basic space for "school at home". At theExchange, we were pleased to be part of their preparation for the school year and hope that very soon, all children can go back to a normal experience having both a Home and a "Homeroom" at school!



## Surprise Find!

True Story: A month or two ago, here at theExchange we found an expired U.S. passport in a sofa we were cleaning...it expired in 1976!

The woman had been born in Finland and it eased my heart to know that she had a Finnish stamp in her passport—she had thus been able to visit her relatives!

*Mary Mueller, coordinator*

## THANK YOU

Our friends at Mary Mother of the Church recently held a drive for much needed Cleaning Supplies! Thanks to Sister Kathy for pioneering this effort!



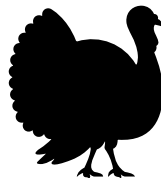
**F**all inspires us to bring in the harvest, button things up, and take some time to be thankful for our many blessings. Given the nature of a very trying 2020, we are beyond grateful for our ability to not only continue our mission, but also to accept the generous donations of time, commitment, gifts, and the necessary dollars it takes to keep our program running.

Our income this year was buoyed by a generous grant bequest from the La Crosse Community Foundation, among several others:

- ◆ \$30,000 La Crosse Community Foundation
- ◆ \$15,000 Altra Credit Union/FHLBC
- ◆ \$10,000 Shari & Woody Godbold
- ◆ \$5,000 Marck Family Foundation
- ◆ \$1,000-\$5,000 Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration  
Green Bay Packer Foundation  
Women's Fund  
Blahnik/Naugler Fund  
English Lutheran Church  
Maureen McDowell  
Rebecca Naugler  
Nancy Gerrard
- ◆ \$250 - \$1,000 Tom Schlesinger  
S. MaryAnn Gschwind, FSPA  
Mary Ann Gerrard  
S. Rochelle Potaracke, FSPA  
Isaac Hoffman  
Diane & David Schumacher
- ◆ \$25 - \$250 Friends and Volunteers of theExchange

Some of you have honored your loved ones with a gift to theExchange, some have given items that we have been able to resell, and additionally we receive donation gifts for our Pick Up service of large items. In all, we have exceeded our budget projection of \$70,000 for our fiscal year 2020!

Time for a little Thanksgiving.



## Send Ideas or Feedback

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Kathie Tyser  
volunteer editor