

Merrill Foto News Article
March, 2016

With St. Patrick's Day and Easter upon us, we are reminded how we like to enjoy the holidays and the festive foods that come with each of them. In our world, however, we are also reminded that not everyone has the basic needs of food and people struggling to make ends meet often visit the Community Food Pantry to help subsidize their food allotments to put food on the table for their families. The Merrill Community Food Pantry is one of the 19 United Way funded community impact agencies that help meet the basic needs of people in need. The Community Food Pantry is located in the Menard Center at 503 South Center Avenue. In 2015 the Community Food Pantry served 2,561 households an increase of 20%. These households represented 6,480 people; an increase of 17% more people served. It is hard to imagine that the needs in the Merrill area are at this level, but in reality they are. Fortunately, with a great campaign, United Way increased the Food Pantry allocation with an additional 50% increase in funding. In addition, there are two other church sponsored Food Pantries through Trinity Lutheran Church and The New Testament Church.

Last May the community supported the first *Community Kolor Run* that benefited United Way with an \$8,000 boost to help support the 19 agencies we help fund. All proceeds went directly to help people obtain food, get shelter, pay utility bills, get medical support services for those with Alzheimer's or Epilepsy, or help families in crisis as well as parenting skills. These are just some of the things United Way dollars are used for. While United Way is not a direct service provider, we are a lifeline to those that deal with client services.

United Way is looking forward to spring and the upcoming *Community Kolor Run*. Once again Riverside Athletic Club is preparing for the 8th annual run/walk event to benefit United Way. The Community Kolor Run is now incorporating a long stretch through the Wisconsin River Bend Trail, with its pristine, scenic overlook of the Wisconsin River. Last year almost 900 participants took to the course and were peppered with beautiful colors only to return to the finish line where they enjoyed treat, great music, dancing in the streets and the ultimate explosion of color. Now is the time for people to get on board to help sponsor the event, register to volunteer and of, course register to participate in the run or walk, doing the 5k or 10k. This is a really great family event, but be reminded that children should have sun glasses on to protect their eyes. And, it's a good idea to wear older clothes. Come out and support United Way and have a great time doing it. Bring family, friends, children, seniors out to enjoy the morning on Saturday, May 7th. Information and registration are available online at www.riversideathletic.com.

United Way is working to improve the lives of people in the Merrill area. For more information about the Merrill Area United Way, contact us at P. O. Box 813, Merrill; or email united813@frontier.com; or visit www.merrillareunitedway.org.