

The Problem

People are hungry – in Wisconsin 1 in 10 people and 1 in 6 children face hunger. When Noah Duckett and Wyatt Ehrhardt, seniors at Middleton High School, heard food insecurity was at a 30-year high, they wanted to do something to help.

The Solution

In summer 2024, Duckett and Ehrhardt founded Middleton Meals Matters, an organization hosting monthly food drives. They partnered with WayForward Resources, a local food pantry, to receive and distribute the food they gather.

“Our goals from the start were two-fold,” Duckett and Ehrhardt said. “We want to address hunger and food insecurity in our community, and we want to instill volunteerism in students of all ages – high school to elementary aged.”

Middleton Meals Matter in Action

Middleton Meals Matter collects food donations monthly at two area Metro Market locations. By 9 am on food drive days, the team is in place and a WayForward truck on site. Shoppers are offered a slip that lists needed items, they can purchase items while they shop, and donate them on their way out. Cash donations are also accepted. At the end of the drive, the food and cash are taken by WayForward to their pantry.

Shoppers’ responses have been heart-warming. “People are grateful to us and the other student volunteers for doing the food collection,” Duckett said. “One shopper even took me into the market, gave me a cart, and told me to fill it with whatever we needed.”

The team also did a ‘trick or treat for food’ drive on Halloween. One week before Halloween, they dropped off brown bags for food donations in a few Middleton neighborhoods, noting filled bags could be placed outside on Halloween and they would be picked up. “We had no idea what to expect for results,” Ehrhardt said. “We had volunteers drive the neighborhoods to pick up the bags on Halloween and were amazed by how many bags there were.”



Above: Middleton Meals Matter co-founders Noah Duckett (left) and Wyatt Ehrhardt (right) with advisor Brad Crandell (center).



Middleton Meals Matter volunteers with food gathered after a food drive (above) and loading donated food into a WayForward van (right).



Results

The results have far exceeded Duckett and Ehrhardt’s expectations. In their very first food collection, where they hoped for 200 lbs. of food, they received 1,700 lbs. and \$1,000 in cash donations. In the second month drive, they doubled the food collected to 2,400 lbs. and \$1,400 in cash. To date, the effort has collected 30,000 lbs. of food and \$20,000 in cash.

Their work benefits their school too. Middleton Meals Matter allocates a portion of the donated food and cash to Middleton High School’s in-school Caring Closet and Cardinal Nest, programs that provide clothing and food to high school students in need.