FOOD 12/07/2016 T. SCHNEIDER

According to United Way data, both St. Croix and Pierce counties have unemployment rates below the state average. Poverty rates in the two counties also are relatively low. Candice Anderson of the River Falls Community Food Pantry and Katie Bartko (BART-ko) of the Pierce County Hunger Prevention Council say that despite these numbers food insecurity affects more people in River Falls than the public sees.

MP3 R/T 1:06 O/C: STD.

TORI SCHNEIDER: THE RIVER FALLS COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY SERVES ONE THOUSAND PEOPLE IN THE RIVER FALLS SCHOOL DISTRICT EACH YEAR. IN 2016, 798 PEOPLE USED THE FOOD PANTRY. CANDICE ANDERSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WANTS THE PUBLIC TO KNOW WHO IS REALLY USING THE PANTRY.

CANDICE ANDERSON: SOME PEOPLE ASSUME, OH THEY’RE LAZY, OR THIS OR THAT, BUT I JUST KNOW COMING IN THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE ARE EITHER SINGLE, WORKING, THEY JUST CAN’T -- DO I PUT GAS IN MY CAR AND GO TO WORK OR DO I GO BUY FOOD? AND THEN A LOT OF YOUNGER FAMILIES WITH YOUNGER CHILDREN THAT JUST CAN’T QUITE MAKE ENDS MEET.

TORI SCHNEIDER: BRITTANY ROBERTS, 23, IS AN EMPLOYEE AT FAMILY FRESH IN RIVER FALLS. SHE HAS BEEN COMING TO THE PANTRY ON AND OFF SINCE SHE WAS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL. SHE DOESN’T CARE ABOUT THE STIGMA THAT MAY COME FROM USING THE RESOURCE.

BRITTANY ROBERTS: I CAN’T ALWAYS GET FOOD SO I HAVE TO COME HERE AND THAT’S FINE. I MEAN, PEOPLE THINK I’M POOR. SO WHAT?

TORI SCHNEIDER: FIFTY PERCENT OF THE FOOD IN THE PANTRY IS DONATED AND THE OTHER 50 PERCENT IS PURCHASED WITH DONATIONS OR GRANT MONEY. CLIENTS CAN CHOOSE TO SHOP ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH, BUT GET THE SAME AMOUNT OF FOOD EITHER WAY. A FAMILY OF TWO AVERAGES ABOUT 65 POUNDS. FOR THE FALCON NEWS SERVICE, I’M TORI SCHNEIDER.

The pantry is open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and some Saturdays. Hours vary.

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