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SPORTS, 1B

Stevens Point Journal

weekend

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How the SNAP halt could impact central Wisconsin



Operation Bootstrap held a food drive at the Stevens Point branch of the Portage County Library on Oct. 28. ERIK PFANTZ/USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

Find out where help is available

Erik Pfantz
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

As the Nov. 1 deadline nears for a halt of federally funded nutrition assistance programs many are concerned about the impact the pause in benefits will have on local families in need and local food pantries are saying it comes at a time they already are seeing record numbers.

“We’ve had double our people (coming in for help),” Roseann Willett DeBot, executive director of Operation Bootstrap in Stevens Point, told a USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin reporter. “In all the years we have been operating, I’ve never seen people so worried.”

Operation Bootstrap has been providing food and outreach services in Portage County for about 60 years. DeBot said they already are seeing a spike in both donations and people seeking assistance.

This increase in need comes amid the ongoing partial federal government shutdown, which started Oct. 1. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Presi-

“I don’t know how much longer we can continue with doing all that we do for people if this continues for a long time. We will sure try though.”

Roseann Willett DeBot
Executive director of Operation Bootstrap in Stevens Point

dent Donald Trump’s Administration, has stated that funds for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as SNAP, are depleted due to a continued inability of the U.S. Congress to pass a budget bill.

The USDA placed a message on its website Oct. 27 in regard to SNAP benefits that stated, “the well has run dry” and “there will be no benefits issued November 01.”

In Wisconsin, SNAP is administered by the Department of Health Services through a program called FoodShare. Nearly 700,000 Wisconsinites are members of the nutrition assistance

program, including one in four children in the state below the age of 5.

A message on the DHS website alerts FoodShare members to an anticipated delay in benefits for the month of November by stating, “FoodShare benefits are 100 percent funded by the federal government and the shutdown will need to end before members can start getting benefits again.”

Many central Wisconsin organizations already partner to offer free meals and food to take home for local residents in need including community outreach organizations, churches, schools, colleges and universities, business organizations, foundations and more.

DeBot said Operation Bootstrap has a need for volunteers and both food and monetary donations. The organization provides up to two weeks of nutritious food to people seeking assistance, DeBot said.

“I don’t know how much longer we can continue with doing all that we do for people if this continues for a long time,” DeBot said of the spike in people seeking assistance. “We will sure try though.”

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Renewable energy offers windfall to rural areas

Sophie Hartley and Elizabeth Weise
Indianapolis Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

RANDOLPH COUNTY, IN – When more than 650 kids descended on a local 4-H fair this summer to show livestock and exhibit projects, the grounds looked a little grander than in years past.

Children wearing cowboy boots and oversized belt buckles led heifers and steers around a shiny, new show area. Families scooped past neighbors, friends and cows to find accessible, air-conditioned bathrooms.

Teens dished out nachos and sugary elephant ears to hungry fairgoers in a brand-new kitchen, even as the 65-year-old milkshake machine still rumbled against a far wall.

Residents of this county on Indiana’s eastern border have been showing swine, sheep and cattle on this site since the 1950s. But the fairgrounds had wilted under the weight of so many feet and hooves. Now, it has a new life, thanks to a \$2.8 million renovation largely funded by a renewable energy company that operates wind and solar farms across the country.

Renewable energy money has changed more than just the fairgrounds; it has transformed the economically stalled county from corner to corner.

This same story of economic reinvigoration is playing out across the country in dozens of rural counties that have embraced renewable energy projects, delighting taxpayers, enriching county coffers and making previously unaffordable public works projects possible.

Despite deep-red voting records and conservative dispositions, many of these counties have few regrets

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