

Source: Door Countys Peninsula Pulse

Filling the Fridge For Less

by Jennifer DuPont

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Once a month, Ellison Bay resident Don Heeringa drives to Sturgeon Bay to pick up the groceries, but they aren't for him. Heeringa picks them up and delivers them to Sister Bay for distribution to the Northern Door families who have ordered them through the Self Help and Resource Exchange, better known as SHARE.

"Don uses his own vehicle and gas to make the deliveries," says Sandi Ball, the local program administrator and volunteer. "He does it because he cares about his community and wants to give back."

Ball says volunteers like Heeringa are one reason why she loves her work with the service.

"I am inspired by the dedication and spirit of the volunteer community here," she says. "Through SHARE, we meet people from all walks of life. Everyone is so friendly, it's a lot of fun – a lot of work – but also a lot of fun."

It's all part of the community-strengthening mission of the organization, a nonprofit food-buying club founded in San Diego in 1983 to help people who did not want to rely on public assistance for food, but needed to stretch their family's grocery dollars and still provide quality, nutritious food for their families.

The organization buys food in bulk and works directly with wholesalers to save its members money and charges no fees to join. National purchasing power, coupled with a community-based, volunteer-staffed distribution system, has been a proven model for the organization and the communities in which it serves.

Ben LeFort, communication and public information manager, says SHARE is not a food bank or a pantry.

"The food is of supermarket quality, we just purchase it in bulk and have fewer distribution costs with our volunteer workforce," he says.

SHARE Wisconsin is based in Butler, just outside Milwaukee, where its staff of 12 coordinates a network of volunteers in their home communities. They currently serve the local communities of about 8,000 families in four states. The Door County branch began in 2002, and now serves 40 – 50 families a month who are able to stretch their buying power by stocking up on family food staples and saving their family 30 – 50 percent compared to supermarket prices.

The food is sold both a la carte, or in popular money-saving packages or mini packages. The items in the package change each month, but a typical mini package will offer five meats, like lemon herb salmon, chicken breasts or brats, plus a fresh produce assortment for \$15.

To check it out, I ordered from SHARE last month and I was pleased with the quality of the food in relation to the price. The food looks and tastes at least as good as what I normally get at the market, and the quality of the organic produce package I tried was excellent. In my \$15 mini package, I received chicken legs and breasts, ground turkey, pork chops, precooked sliced chicken breasts, sausage, meatballs and a produce assortment of potatoes, onions, carrots, pears and citrus fruit.

To learn more about SHARE or to place an order, visit www.sharewi.org or call 800.548.2124. To place an order in person, or if you're using a Wisconsin Quest card or personal check, visit Prince of Peace Lutheran Church at 1756 Michigan Street in Sturgeon Bay.

SHARE Offers \$25 Holiday Meal Packages

This year SHARE celebrated its 25th anniversary, and in addition to its monthly food packages, the organization is offering holiday meals for \$25. The Christmas package includes a six-pound boneless honey ham, canned pineapple, corn soufflé, an apple pie, and a produce assortment.

Christmas orders must be received by November 30 for pick up on December 18. All Door County orders are picked up at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 1756 Michigan Street in Sturgeon Bay and can be ordered in person, online, or over the phone at www.sharewi.com or 800.548.2124.

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