



# OPERATION

# HELP

## **Helping Families In Difficult Times**

Operation HELP provides residents of St. Croix County with financial assistance, a place for personal support, and connections to community resources to alleviate short-term economic crises.

**2015 Annual Report**

## **A Letter From The Board**

Greetings from the board at Operation HELP. We are pleased to share with you our 2015 Annual Report.

Operation HELP served more families in St. Croix County than ever before but the number of families who needed our help was even greater. As a result Operation HELP made the difficult decision to limit the amount of support provided each month and during the Fall turned away over 70 families who needed our help which represented another 20% of the families we did serve.

We serve St. Croix County, generally considered an affluent region, and yet the number of families living in poverty is on the rise. At Operation HELP we see this in the increased number of calls and visits from residents who need our help. At the same time, there are fewer organizations in St. Croix county providing the kind of emergency financial assistance that is our mission. These converging trends have made our work essential - keeping families in their homes with heat and light or keeping their car in good repair allowing them to stay employed.

Our efforts this year were focused on serving clients through our primary programs and services and addressing the goals in our strategic plan, adopted in 2014. The strategic plan sets the stage for Operation HELP to remain a viable, relevant organization for another 30 years. Our board and our volunteers worked tirelessly to keep us involved, informed and responsive to the needs of our neighbors. We have worked to reach more residents, address their needs, and enhance our organization structure and outreach efforts.

As we look forward to 2016 we will review and refresh our strategic plan and extend our reach into the communities across St. Croix County.

Whether you are a financial supporter, a partner organization or a volunteer of Operation HELP we thank you for helping us help those in our community retain their independence and dignity. We look forward to your continued support in the years to come.

***Operation HELP Board of Directors***

**[www.OperationHelpStCroix.org](http://www.OperationHelpStCroix.org)**

### **2015 Operation HELP Board of Directors**

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**Operation HELP**  
**(715) 386-0881**  
**P.O. Box 1134**  
**Hudson, WI 54016**

**Resource Center**  
**(715) 386-1300**

*"Thank you so much for helping me with my rent. Your financial help has prevented me and my family from facing homelessness. Your contribution was an answer to my prayer..."*

*"You were so wonderful with me, so helpful - without your help I would have been in the street. I had no one to even ask for any help- Thank You!"*

*"I was relieved to get help. Losing my job in January has really put me behind in my bills."*

## **Our History**

Nearly 35 years ago, Operation HELP was founded by Bob and Mary Nasvik along with a group of concerned citizens. Their initial goal was to provide a Christmas experience for children and families in the Hudson area. The Nasviks recognized that families in need or in crisis must cut corners to provide the essentials for survival, and the special delights of Christmas were forgotten. The organization evolved, and identifying other needs in the community, started providing emergency financial assistance for rent, utility or car repair bills. In 2011, Operation HELP joined hands with a new organization, the SOURCE. This merger allowed clients to interact with Operation HELP volunteers in a safe and respectful place; a place they receive support, encouragement, vouchers for gas, food, clothing and laundry and referrals to other agencies able to meet their needs. Today, clients can access our programs by visiting or calling our resource center.

## **Our Programs**

**Emergency assistance** - Operation HELP is a leader in providing emergency financial assistance to residents of St. Croix County. This assistance supports clients who need help with rent, utilities or minor car repairs. Our goal is to be a temporary bridge for our clients so we limit assistance to one time in a 12 month period. Our clients must have a source of income and we expect them to contribute as much as possible toward the amount(s) due.

**Resource Center and Voucher Program** – At the resource center clients meet with trained volunteers to identify housing, financial, transportation and health resources as well as receive employment search assistance. Clients are invited to use one of two computers as needed; faxing and free phone use are also available. We also offer vouchers for gas, laundry and farmers market purchases and we offer our clients emergency supplies of undergarments, toiletries and food.

**Christmas Campaign for Kids** - Through this program families are able to experience the joy of Christmas gifts for their children who may otherwise go without. In addition to children's gifts, our generous sponsors allow us to provide families with blankets, laundry supplies, paper products and a grocery store voucher.

**Warm for Winter** – Coats and other winter apparel are available to both children and adults.

## Our Strategic Goals

This strategic plan was adopted by the board in early 2014. These goals were designed to ensure that Operation HELP remains a viable, relevant service to the area. Below is a recap of the strategic goals and accomplishments in 2015.

<b>Goal</b>	<b>2015 Accomplishments</b>
Serve 2,800 individuals/families with emergency assistance, personal support and referrals in 2015	In 2015 we served just over 2,800 individuals and families with emergency financial assistance, referrals, vouchers and on site emergency supplies.
Raise operating expenses of \$180,000 for 2015.	In 2015 we raised \$199,248 in funds.
Develop an organizational structure that details responsibilities for Board members, creates a committee structure that ensures communications and plan the expansion of the role of paid staff and volunteers	We succeeded in refining committee structure and board and committee recruitment.
Develop an annual marketing plan and implement plan for the organization	Board decided to delay formal marketing plan and focus on community engagement.
Strengthen the relationships with local churches and in at least three other communities; strengthen relationships with school counselors and other social service agencies	Board members met with counselors from two school districts; 3 presentations in local churches and active involvement county subcommittee on transportation.
Increase the number of active volunteers by 20% and increase their abilities to provide services through a formalized training program which includes initial training and regularly scheduled training	Provided initial training for all new volunteers; hosted two volunteer appreciation events with time for updates and discussion of emerging issues. Recruited and trained six new volunteers.
Provide impetus to solving the issues of limited public transportation in St. Croix County during the next two years	Operation HELP attends the County transportation subcommittee looking for a regional transportation solution and is a partner with the local Y, providing transportation for youth in crisis.

Individuals living in poverty in St. Croix County has increased significantly (State of the Valley-UWRF)

Children eligible for free reduced lunches has more than doubled since 2000 (Wisconsin OPI)

*A working single mom trying to make ends meet was lucky to have her mother provide childcare. When her mother, and child care provider died unexpectedly she was unable to pay the utility bill and faced utility shutoff. Operation HELP was able to pay the utility bill so this family continued to have a warm home during a difficult time.*

## Clients Served

Operation HELP provided more emergency financial support to more individuals and families than ever. In addition to the clients we assisted there were another 73 families who requested financial assistance but were turned away because Operation HELP lacked the funds to support them. This was despite a record year for fundraising and highlights the increasing poverty and limited services in our area.

At our resource center we assisted over 1,000 families impacting over 1,800 individuals with vouchers and referrals. The clients we serve with modest vouchers, emergency supplies and referrals to other agencies are those most in need. Most are below the poverty level; over 60% of these clients have incomes below \$900 per month; many are parents and over 60% are women.



The chart below reflects the number of families assisted through our various programs.

Emergency Assistance for Rent, Utility and Car Repair	364 families
Christmas Campaign for Kids	309 children
Warm in Winter	14
Gas Vouchers	378
Laundry Vouchers	176
Famers Market vouchers	134
Clothing, socks, underwear	168
Emergency Food	105
Toiletries	257
Referrals to other agencies	916

## Volunteer Support

Volunteers are the lifeblood of this organization. Operation HELP is able to dedicate over 95% of all funds received to



client support because it is a volunteer led and operated organization. In 2015, volunteers donated nearly 3,000 hours to staffing our office and phones, working on committees and fundraisers and other technical roles. Our volunteers are

committed to serving those less fortunate. The volunteer quotes below explain why they continue to give so much of their time to Operation HELP.

“Sometimes we donate to a charity so we can keep our hands clean and have others do the actual work. I’ve discovered many blessings while getting my hands dirty, volunteering for Operation Help.”

“I believe we are defined by our actions. That’s why it’s important for me to get out of my comfort zone and try to make life a little better for those reaching out for help. Operation Help gives me that opportunity right here in our community. Not only is volunteering a meaningful use of my time, but it gives me a much broader perspective of people and life in general beyond my cushy upper middle-class existence.”

## Les Berg Memorial 5K Run/Walk



In May 2015 Operation HELP hosted the Fourth Annual Les Berg Memorial 5K Run/Walk event. This event is our premier public fundraiser.

In addition to raising money for our programs this event honors the leadership of long-time volunteer and board member Les Berg. The event also introduces Operation HELP and our programs to members of the community who may not be familiar with the work we do. In 2015, year the race generated over \$5,000, a record amount.

Operation HELP  
is a volunteer  
led and operated  
organization

## Our Financial Picture

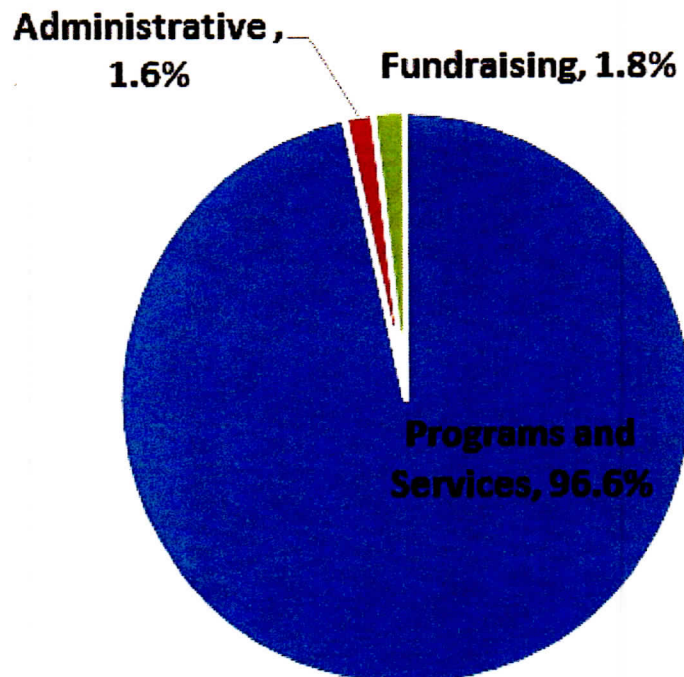
Financially, 2015 was a good year for Operation HELP. We raised a record amount in gifts from individuals, foundations, businesses, churches and other area organizations. As a result we were able to provide financial support to even more families than planned. The additional funds raised also required us to use slightly less reserves in 2015 than budgeted.

With our volunteers doing most of the work for the organization we were able to dedicate more than 95% of all gifts to the programs that directly serve our clients.

Operation HELP raised 110% of the budgeted funds in 2015...

...73 families were turned away when funds ran out.

## Operation HELP - 2015 Spending



<b>INCOME</b>	<b>2015 ACTUAL</b>
Businesses	\$7,395
Churches	\$15,721
Clubs & Organizations	\$12,871
Foundations	\$81,500
Individuals	\$42,557
Race	\$5,371
Miscellaneous	\$2,112
United Way	\$31,873
Subtotal Income	\$199,400
From Reserves	\$4,608
Total Funds Available	\$204,008
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Programs & Services	\$197,164
Administrative	\$3,259
Fundraising	\$3,585
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	\$204,008

Operation HELP is grateful for the financial support received from the communities we serve. Our ability to serve those in need would not be possible without the continued generosity of the many individuals, businesses and organizations who contribute to our work including the following major supporters:

United Way St. Croix Valley  
 Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation  
 Phipps Foundation  
 Hugh J. Andersen Foundation  
 Andersen Corporate Foundation

Nearly 25% of funds received come from individuals

More than 95% of funds received go directly to the programs that serve our clients