Every community in Perkins County can help feed families in their area. Remember to give locally to those in need this holiday season.

By Jan Rahn
Managing Editor

As the season of charitable giving approaches, this is a reminder that there is no greater need than right here in Perkins County.

According to Diana Pankonin, who has served as food pantry coordinator for over 15 years, the shelves have never been as bare as they are right now.

"We're down enough that it's hurting," she said. She praised the Boy Scouts and the schools for the food drives they've held to help out, but said the need is mushrooming.

"The giving has been super," said Pankonin. "But the need is growing in leaps and bounds.

She said the county's communities have always been very generous, but the demand is so great that it has become scary.

Pankonin said the freezer is practically empty. There is Hamburger Helper on the shelves but barely any hamburger to cook it with.

The Perkins County Ministerial Association heads the pantry—which is its first priority—and also helps families in need who have to meet expenses such as rent, utilities or medications.

According to Pankonin, who also serves as the community liaison to the ministerial association, $10,000 was distributed last year through the benevolent fund to families seeking help.

"The need is pretty tremendous," she said. "We encourage people to find other sources to help meet their needs, such as Health and Human Services, assistance through energy grants, etc.

Pankonin said there is a cap on what any one family can receive through the food pantry. Each family needing groceries is limited to one time each month. There is also a cap on rent, utilities or medicine.

"It's not for frequent use," she said.

There are little kids all over the county who don't get their needs met, said Pankonin.

"It's not that they aren't getting the certain brand of cereal they want—they aren't getting any cereal."

She acknowledged that there are other resources within the county that try to help needy families, such as the coat drive at the schools and the snow boot drive through the hospital.

"Who would have thought 15 years ago we could give away a used coat in Perkins County—now we can't get enough to give away," said Pankonin.

Those who wish to give exclusively to the food pantry can put money on an account at Hatch's

Super Foods that will be used for groceries. Funds can also be given to any pastor in the county to help families with food and other living expenses.