

Thanks to you, babies get a healthy start

Nanci Micke, For Post-Crescent Media 1:44 p.m. CDT June 16, 2015



(Photo: Danny Damiani/Post-Crescent Media)

I think everyone has heard the saying "It takes a village to raise a child." Five years ago, United Way Fox Cities gathered community partners representing nonprofits, the faith community, businesses, health care and the media to launch the Fox Cities Diaper Bank. Our goal was to provide diapers for families that were struggling to provide basic needs.

We weren't sure exactly how the diaper bank would work, but we knew there was a need. On a national level, the Every Little Bottom Study done by Huggies showed that one in every three families in the United States struggles to provide diapers for their families. Our local food pantries told us that they couldn't keep up with the requests for diapers from their clients and, in fact, couldn't envision a day when they would ever have enough diapers.

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Our "village" stepped forward: St. Joseph Food Program and Salvation Army Fox Cities agreed to be the pilot organizations to distribute the diapers. They had systems in place that made sure the diapers were going to families that were truly in need. Valley Packaging Inc. offered to be our physical "bank" where the diapers would be stored. But that commitment means so much more, as they also inventory the stock and provide transportation. The Post-Crescent created a logo that gave the initiative an identity. Thrivent Financial stepped forward and ran our very first diaper drive, working with United Way staff to develop a template we could use for future drives.

As we grew, many companies conducted diaper drives. More than 2000 volunteers from throughout the community have donated thousands of hours repackaging the diapers so that we can standardize the number we distribute. Many local companies have done an amazing job of repacking thousands of diapers in a day, and have fun doing it.

In 2011, The Post-Crescent hosted the first Dollars for Diapers campaign. More than \$60,000 was raised that year, and those funds allowed the Fox Cities Diaper Bank to become a true bank. We were able to stock diapers in the sizes that the community needed. We could now provide enough diapers to ease the cost burden for our families in need.

Subsequent Dollars for Diapers campaigns have been vital to the growth of the Fox Cities Diaper Bank. The support from local organizations that have provided matching dollars needs to be recognized. We thank J.J. Keller Foundation Inc., Thrivent Financial, Kimberly-Clark Cares, U.S. Venture, and the following credit unions: Fox Communities, Capital, Prospera, Evergreen, Badger Globe, St. Elizabeth's, Unison, and Thrivent.

How has the diaper bank made a difference? Babies who once wore the same diaper all day long now are able to have adequate changes for their good health. Parents who use child care facilities are able to go to work, because they can provide the disposable diapers that are required to use those services. A parent's guilt of not being able to provide a basic need for their child has been eased.

The Fox Cities Diaper Bank is providing over 400,000 diapers on an annual basis. From our pilot years when two organizations distributed diapers, we have expanded to 10 agencies. It has certainly taken a village to make this happen.

This initiative, started by United Way five years ago, has grown beyond any of the dreams we had when we first met in 2010 to establish our framework. We are committed to the mission of keeping our babies healthy, but we are the first to say that the success of the Fox Cities Diaper Bank is because this community has stepped forward to help give our babies a healthy start in life.

Nanci Micke is the vice president of marketing and communications for United Way Fox Cities.

You can help babies by donating!

Donations to Dollars for Diapers, presented by Kimberly-Clark Cares and Huggies, can be made at cfoffoxvalley.org (<https://www.cfoffoxvalley.org/dollarsfordiapers>) or by following the information in Dollars for Diapers ads. Checks to The Post-Crescent Community Fund should be mailed to The Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, 4455 W. Lawrence St., Appleton, WI 54914.

Packages of diapers, sealed or open, and supplies, should be dropped off in The Post-Crescent lobby at 306 W. Washington St. in Appleton. Other collection sites include Badger Globe, Evergreen, Fox Communities, Prospera and St. Elizabeth Employees credit unions.

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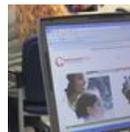


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