C-3 Center aids low-income people in Dunn County

By Pamela Powers
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MENOMONIE — During its first year at a permanent location, United Way of Dunn County’s C-3 Center has provided household necessities to more than twice the number of families than originally planned.

Since Jan. 1, the center at 1620 Stout Road on Menomonie’s southeast side has made available furniture, appliances, home improvement materials, household items and clothing to 690 low-income households, far above the agency's goal of 300. People in need use vouchers to receive the items.

Before moving to the permanent site in September 2011, C-3 — which stands for community, compassion and caring — was located in semitrailers for two years.

Diane Simon, United Way of Dunn County's executive director, said she was surprised by the number of households her agency was able to help this year. She credited the generosity of community members.

"I was dumbfounded that in the month of August we had over 12,565 items we distributed," Simon said. "We think a lot of people were getting clothes for school."

Simon said the clothing and household items are welcome gifts to families in need, who are using the money saved from not having to purchase those items to buy gasoline and food and pay the rent.

To shop at the C-3 center, people must receive vouchers from social services agencies such as the Dunn County Human Services Department or Stepping Stones, which operates a food pantry. Vouchers also are available through local schools and UW-Stout, Simon said.

C-3 is staffed by volunteers and people needing to fulfill community service hours, which reduces the cost of operating the center. "This is a clear example of what can be done if a community works together to create change," Simon said. "It's been one of the most rewarding things we've done as a United Way."

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