



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **FORK Pantry to Open in Northwoods Children's Museum**

The Northwoods Children's Museum (NCM) and Feed Our Rural Kids (FORK) have finalized plans to open a FORK Pantry location in the museum on July 1<sup>st</sup>. "It's an honor to work with an organization like the Northwoods Children's Museum, but more than that, it's an opportunity to continue pushing back against childhood food insecurity which affects so many of our area children", announced FORK President Perry Pokrandt. NCM's Executive Director, Danielle Larsen, said that partnering with FORK just makes sense. "Community partnerships are important, and it's even more sensational when our goals already align with each other. For more than 25 years the Northwoods Children's Museum has stayed true to its mission to enrich lives, support families, and encourage a love of learning through interactive play. We value the work that FORK is doing, and, like FORK, we are here to serve families and support the needs of our community with a focus on healthy and happy children."

"On behalf of the Museum, we're excited for this collaboration to support the *whole* child," said Sharon Nielsen, President of the Northwoods Children's Museum Board of Directors. "From the museum's perspective, play is as much a part of healthy development as is a child's reliable access to sufficient, affordable, and nutritious food. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, play stimulates healthy brain development which children use to learn, solve problems, follow directions, and pay attention", Nielsen continued. "Childhood hunger can impact everything from a child's physical and mental well-being to their academic experiences. The bottom line is that food insecurity impacts a child's ability to play", Pokrandt agreed.

According to Pokrandt, the FORK Pantry program is not a replacement for our area food pantries, but simply an enhancement to the support our community pantries already provide. There are currently 10 FORK Pantries which provide food and snack items as a nutritional resource to area children and their families struggling with food insecurity located within the Northland Pines, Three Lakes, and Phelps School districts. The 11th FORK Pantry at the Northwoods Children's Museum will be open during regular museum hours - Monday through Friday from 10 AM to 5 PM and Saturdays from 10 AM to 3 PM - to expand families' access to food during times when our local food pantries and schools aren't open.

"FORK Invites families to take what they need so as to best support their kids", added Jean Arndt, FORK Pantry Chairperson. "We also invite the community to give what they can in support of all FORK Pantry locations. A collection bin for kid-friendly food donations is located under each pantry." Individuals who would like to learn more about the FORK Pantries can go online to [FeedOurRuralKids.org/FORK-Pantry](http://FeedOurRuralKids.org/FORK-Pantry) or contact Jean Arndt at 309-647-0474.

The Northwoods Children's Museum is located behind the Kwik Trip at 346 W Division St. in Eagle River. The use of this FORK Pantry does not require paid admission to the museum as it is located just inside the front door. To learn more about the Northwoods Children's Museum and their educational opportunities, visit their website at [NorthwoodsChildrensMuseum.com](http://NorthwoodsChildrensMuseum.com).

The Northwoods Children's Museum and Feed Our Rural Kids are 501c3 nonprofit organizations.