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Angels in black jackets: Car enthusiasts support Q-C charities

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By **Lindsay Hocker**, lhocker@qconline.com

She calls them angels in black jackets.

"I don't know if the pantry could go on without them," said Hazel Sletten, director of the Colona Township Food Pantry. "What they do is just out of this world."

Since 2003, the Rock River Rodders have donated about \$28,500 to the food pantry. The \$4,000 they recently donated is enough to buy more than 20,000 pounds of food for people in need, Ms. Sletten said.

Ivan Walters formed the Rock River Rodders in the mid-1990s and now is club treasurer. The group of car enthusiasts sponsors the Colona Freedom Celebration car show every summer, using the proceeds for Colona's Fourth of July fireworks display.

The club currently has eight members. It's simple to join; you just have to be a car enthusiast and be willing to do charity work.

"You just have to be willing to do good," said Bob King, the group's recording secretary.

Mr. Walters said the group donates to charities because they help so many people. "We just try to help out and do our part, too."

Ms. Sletten started the food pantry 29 years ago, after a man with two children showed up on her doorstep.

"He wanted to know, with tears in his eyes, if I could feed his children," she said.

She made them a meal. "I made him eat, too."

Ms. Sletten doesn't remember the man's name, but she remembers his face. She thinks he came to her house because she is known for lending a helping hand.

"She's spent her entire life helping others," Rodders member Bill McDaniel said, adding that what the club does "is just a drop in the bucket."



[More photos from this shoot](#)

Photo: Lindsay Hocker

Rock River Rodders (from left to right) Ivan Walters, Bob King, Leroy Woolley, and Dennis Martin are among the car club's members that have raised about \$28,500 for the Colona Township Food Pantry. Group requirements are simple: you must be a car enthusiast, and you must be willing to give back to the community.

The volunteer-run food pantry has helped more than 90 families this month, Ms. Sletten said. Her reward is knowing those people won't go hungry.

The pantry, which serves Colona Township and surrounding areas, needs monetary donations and non-perishable food items and paper products. For more information, call (309) 792-1221.

The RockRiver Rodders recently donated \$750 to the WaterTown Food Pantry and have a history of helping other organizations and families in need. The group raises money by raffling items and selling T-shirts.

Other community contributions include donations to the New Kingdom Trail Riders, Alzheimer's Association, animal shelters and baseball teams. They also donate items for benefits, Mr. Walters said.

"If we can do it, we do it."

On the Internet

For more information on the Rock River Rodders, visit www.rockriverrodders.com.