By Shawn Shinneman

Each month, the Low UGC food pantry at Kirksville’s Church of the Nazarene hosts a large food distribution at 5 p.m. on a Friday that draws between 200 and 300 hungry Kirksville residents shown up to take their turn in line. By 4:30 p.m. on the first of February, and by noon, there are almost 100 people waiting in the cold.

In all, more than 230 needy families will come to get their share of food. The distribution, started one year ago, has seen its share of challenges, including a change of leadership that has pushed nearly one in four Adair County residents below the poverty line.

“I don’t know how anyone can survive,” Youngblood said. “It’s just being on your own, and the food pantry is a hidden problem.”

Youngblood explained that if you have cancer or your house burned down or you have a natural disaster everything goes to hell. “People feel helpless.”

To support others, Youngblood organized the Love I.N.C., a community help center that has helped feed the hungry in Kirksville, and the center can be a lifeline. He said he has witnessed people who have to turn to the help of others to acquire or maintain a job.

The unemployment rate measures people who recently lost their jobs and who are available for work. People who have given up looking for work are no longer counted as part of the labor force. In February, there were 696,000 unemployed people, which is a seasonally adjusted increase of 62,000 compared with January.

To this day, Youngblood said the center has been used by families that have been helped.

People are classified as unemployed if they do not have a job but are actively seeking work. If they have a job and are not actively seeking work, they are classified as not in the labor force.

Youngblood said the economy has affected hiring and dramatically affected unemployment.

“There has been a huge drop in the number of people looking for work, and that may be the key to why we have unemployment rates as low as we are,” Youngblood said. "People may not be looking for work, but there are still plenty of jobs available in the area.”

Unemployment rates are not seasonally adjusted.

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