



## Couleecap's Weatherization Program Provides Tranquility, Safety, and Comfort

A home should be a sanctuary, a place for peace and quiet. A place to unwind after a long day. But sometimes there are aspects of one's home that take away from the tranquility, safety, and comfort. When that is the case, Couleecap's home weatherization and home rehabilitation program maybe able to help. [Read Sarah's story.](#)



**"When it was done, I felt empowered. I thought 'Wow! I pulled this together and I found people I could trust.'"  
-Sarah**

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# the collective on main



## Growing a Business New Retail Incubator Offers Space and Training for 6 New Creatives

In Wisconsin, small businesses are the backbone of the economy. In fact, according to the U.S. Census Bureau small businesses make up 99.4 percent of all the businesses in the state. Many place their dreams of a better future on the prospects of a small business. However, getting a foot in the door in the world of business can be a challenge. Entrepreneurs and small businesses, especially in rural Wisconsin require solutions that are customized to their unique needs. In 2022, Couleecap launched a new business incubator in La Crosse and offered rural business planning, technical assistance, and entrepreneurship business startup opportunities in small towns across Crawford, Monroe, and Vernon counties. And now Couleecap is excited to add the new Downtown La Crosse Small Business Incubator to its ever-expanding portfolio. The business incubator, known as The Collective on Main offers a safe, low risk way for business owners to test their idea and get back to making downtown a thriving shopping district as well.

Recently, on Thursday, December 15, The Collective on Main celebrated their grand opening and featured a host of local politicians, community leaders and members, Couleecap board and staff members as well as the entrepreneurs who took the leap into this venture with Couleecap. The incubator, located at 320 Main Street in La Crosse currently hosts six different businesses and hopes to continue to expand.

“This has been my biggest dream for as long as I can remember,” shared Chris Bouquet, owner of Trendcessory, a Black owned business featuring clothing and accessories that Chris, along with the help of his girlfriend, curate, and design for his shop. [Learn more.](#)



**“This has been my biggest dream for as long as I can remember,” shared Chris Bouquet, owner of Trendcessory.**

## Driving Away Hunger! Couleecap Purchases New Van for Food Deliveries in Monroe County

Couleecap has recently purchased a new refrigerated van to deliver food to households throughout Monroe County. The van will also allow Couleecap to pick up food donations from various food pantry supporters in our area to ensure their food pantry is stocked with food resources for those in need.

“Accessible, healthy food options are fundamental to creating thriving children, families, and communities,” said Theresa Rogalla, Couleecap Food Programs Coordinator. “By removing barriers to healthy food for all residents, we make our community stronger and a better place to live.”

Grant funds from the Otto Bremer Trust, WI Department of Health Services’ TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program), and WI Department of Children and Families’ Community Services Block Grant made the purchase of this van possible. “Adequate food and housing are essential for helping people achieve stability and self-sufficiency,” said Charlotte Johnson, co-CEO and trustee, Otto Bremer Trust. “Couleecap has been an important provider of programs to people of low income in western Wisconsin.”

The van will allow Couleecap to expand its capacity to serve more people through their emergency food program and reach those who live in communities surrounding Sparta, such as Norwalk, Leon, Melvina, and Angelo.

Couleecap utilizes TEFAP funds along with donations of food and other personal/household items from many local supporters, including Century Foods, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Hansen’s IGA, Walmart, Cow 97, 1st Community Credit Union, Morrow Home, Theisen’s, Mayo Clinic Health System, Kiwanis Club, Shifty’s Shack, St. John’s Lutheran Church in Sparta, Sparta EMS, and Immanuel Lutheran Church in Viroqua to keep the food pantry stocked. Couleecap will use the van to deliver food pantry items, such as fresh produce, dairy products, eggs and meat, and canned goods, to households unable to get to our food pantry in Sparta.

“Immanuel Lutheran Church-Viroqua is excited to partner with Couleecap and other area food banks to provide fresh produce to area residents. We are very excited about Couleecap’s van that allows outreach to areas that are under-served such as Norwalk, Wisconsin. Since the start of our garden in 2014, we have averaged 6,000 pounds of fresh produce that has been distributed to three area pantries. Providing fresh produce to the Norwalk area is a new outreach and we appreciate that the van will assist in getting the produce to area residents,” said Michele Engh, Pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Viroqua.

In November, to celebrate the purchase of this van, Couleecap took the van on the road to thank many local food pantry supporters and picked up food and/or personal hygiene items through drives that were initiated by some of the supporters as well.



# Couleecap Addresses Energy Poverty in Wisconsin

## Pilot Project gets State and National Attention

Couleecap has announced a new pilot project to integrate advanced energy conservation technologies, such as solar and air source heat pumps, into existing weatherization programs to further reduce energy costs for low-income households in Wisconsin. A Couleecap-owned rental property on 8th Street South in La Crosse is one of two pilot sites. The second pilot site is being identified in partnership with the Monroe County Housing Authority.

The project is funded by the Wisconsin Department of Administration Division of Energy, Housing, and Community Resources, Renew Wisconsin Solar for Good, Focus on Energy, Ethos Green Power Cooperative, and a Friend of Couleecap. Results from the pilot project will be used to inform state Weatherization Assistance Program plans.

“Households with the lowest incomes are paying significant amounts of their income on energy bills,” says Hetti Brown, Couleecap Executive Director. “Yet you rarely hear that energy poverty is an urgent need to be addressed. We have the tools to tackle this issue – weatherization programs, when paired with low-cost and highly efficient energy sources, can make a large difference to households across the state.”

Governor Tony Evers has made initiatives to address poverty and energy sustainability a priority for his administration. “Energy efficiency is key to lowering costs for Wisconsinites and their families, especially as folks are feeling the squeeze with rising costs today due to national inflation. The Couleecap initiative is a great example of how we can invest in clean, made-in Wisconsin energy to lower energy bills while creating good-paying job opportunities in innovative industries,” said Gov. Evers. “As we continue working to support new paths toward clean energy that also reduce energy bills in Wisconsin, I’m glad to be supporting this pilot project that will help lower costs for working families across our state so they can make ends meet and rest a little easier.” [Learn more.](#)



Couleecap Executive Director Hetti Brown recognizes partners and funders of this exciting project.



Air source heat pump technology will reduce energy costs for low-income households in Wisconsin.



[Check out our Solar Project video!](#)





# WHEN YOU OPEN YOUR HEART YOU CREATE POSSIBILITIES

## Make a Matching Gift Today!

“Programs like this give opportunities to families and we are excited to make La Crosse our home.”

- Jesus David Gonzales



## TOGETHER WE CAN CREATE MORE POSSIBILITIES



When you make a gift to Couleecap you make an investment in your community. That's because 100% of your donation stays local to serve your neighbors through innovative and impactful programs.

**In 2023 more than 20,000 of our neighbors will come to Couleecap for help with:**

- going back to school
- starting a business
- securing affordable housing
- feeding their family
- making home repairs
- buying a car to get to work

Through the end of the year your gift is **DOUBLED!**  
Make a matching gift today!



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A United Way member agency



**STEP 1: OPEN THE AMAZON SMILE APP AND FIND "SETTINGS" IN THE MAIN MENU**

**STEP 2: TAP ON AMAZON SMILE APP AND SELECT COULEECAP AS YOUR CHARITY.**

**STEP 3: MAKE SURE AMAZON SMILE IS TURNED ON.**

*Donate Food & Supplies*  
*from our*  
**amazon** *wishlist*

Thanks for supporting Couleecap programs  
like our food pantries