

Full Plate Press

Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank

Fall 2010

A quarterly publication of Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank which includes the Western Upper Peninsula Food Bank, Houghton; Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank, Ishpeming; Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank, Sault Ste. Marie; the Manna Project, Petoskey; Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank, Cadillac; Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank, Grand Rapids; and Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank, Benton Harbor.

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ALMOST READY TO RACK AND ROLL.

What Benton Harbor needs to take in, store and ship more.

Hard-hit by recession, Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties now need approximately 10.7 million pounds of food aid per year. Our old St. Joseph warehouse was able to meet only 16% of that need.

The new, 3.5-times-bigger, many-times-better Benton Harbor warehouse, which we'll occupy on October 1, could immediately increase distribution to 2.25 million pounds yearly – certainly better, but still far short of both need and potential.

What's better.

The new facility has an optimally-sized loading dock, a street-level overhead door (necessary to load mobile pantries) and three loading docks for agency pick-ups. These are vast improvements over the old warehouse, where we had no proper loading dock and only one overhead door, so food intake and distribution were cumbersome and labor-intensive.

What's needed.

As great as the new warehouse is now, we could increase distribution by even more – as much as another 33% percent. All we need is more industrial-strength pallet racks and bigger, more efficient refrigeration units.

This new equipment would expand our food offerings, make agency pick-ups more convenient, and allow more mobile pantries to be filled at the new warehouse – saving

fuel and man-hours compared to sending filled “mobiles” from Grand Rapids.

Rack up (by 300%).

The new warehouse has 22,000 square feet of storage space and 24-foot ceilings (compared to the old warehouse's 6,000 square feet and 16-foot ceilings).

With adequate pallet racks, we can triple our existing food storage space, vastly increasing distribution.

Chill out.

Still, we may have to move our old, too-small cooler and freezer – and get by with a small fraction of the storage racks we could use. New refrigeration units could boost cold storage by 500 percent – and boost our energy efficiency, too.

Step by step.

To reach its full potential, the new warehouse could use about \$250,000 worth of new refrigeration, racks and other storage equipment.

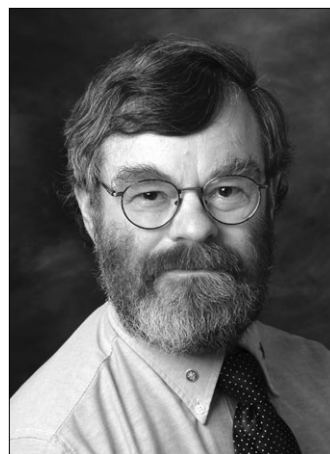
But just \$100 will fund about six cubic feet of refrigeration space. (That's enough to store 24 gallon jugs of donated milk safely – allowing us to distribute about 1,250 gallons a year.)

Even \$25 will add 50 new cubic feet of rack space.

With your help, this great new warehouse can step up to meet the fast-growing needs of this hard-hit area.



FROM THE DESK OF JOHN ARNOLD



It has been a long, hot summer, hasn't it? We would like to recognize and salute our staff and the staff and volunteers of the agencies we serve for persevering in getting food to needy families in the heat and humidity. In June we distributed the most food we ever have in a single month: 2.35 million pounds in and out in 30 days. July and so far August have been a little lighter than that, but we are still on track for our first-ever 25-million pound year.

In the midst of all of that, we recently became aware of an interesting statistic: If our mobile food pantry program were a free-standing food bank off on its own, it would be the 95th largest Feeding America food bank (of 203 nationwide)!

We were obviously delighted to have Kraft Foods give us our first brand new mobile pantry truck (see related article), and to have representatives of Kraft Foods join us and representatives from Spartan Stores in doing its inaugural distribution at the American Legion Post in Rockford.

And as a gold star for West Michigan, we are scheduled to receive and distribute 520,000 lbs. of USDA chicken this fall. There was another big offer of chicken a year or two ago but it was

bulk-packed and we struggled with it because we weren't licensed to do any sort of repacking it down to family-size portions. But in anticipation of future large meat offers, we applied for and received a total of about \$42,000 in grant funds from the Dick & Betsy DeVos Foundation and the Doug & Pamela DeVos Foundation to renovate our Reclamation Department so we can repack meat, and as a result, not only have we been able to accept our Food Bank's allocation of this new offer of chicken, but we were able to get an additional 180,000 lbs. of it that other Food Banks, who don't have meat repacking authorization, could not take. In the meantime, we've been able to repack large quantities of other meat products, but our being able to accept this half-million pounds of chicken is directly thanks to those two grants.

We are thrilled to be moving our Southwest Michigan branch into a building nearly four times larger than what they have been in. That will go a huge way toward letting us better address the food aid needs of Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties. We need help in getting the right size cooler and freezer installed in it. They are expensive, but as with our repack room project above, the payback in increased food reaching the needy is immediate and immense. Next up is our hopefully getting our Ishpeming Branch moved to Marquette, but again, finding the money to do that is a challenge.

My cancer is apparently holding still for the moment. Before it reactivates, I hope to make use of a huge new advance in cancer care that has been developed right here in Grand Rapids by the VanAndel Institute. Check out www.InterventionInsights.com for details.

Life is just a bowl of cherries (berries, carrots and parsnips, too).



July 29 was 80 degrees and sunny: a perfect day for gleaning. The 31 Food Bank volunteers who showed up to harvest 264 pounds of blueberries at Sandy Bottom farm in Rockford had ideal conditions – and their pick of the crop.

“Sandy Bottom had such a great harvest

this year, they invited us to pick during prime season, not just to get the leftovers,” says Volunteer Coordinator Dena Rogers. “I’m telling you, I’ve never seen such beautiful blueberries in my life.”

An April gleaning brought in 663 pounds of carrots and parsnips from Groundswell Farms in Zeeland (a Food Bank donor since 2005). “That was all from a patch that had gotten overlooked during regular harvest,” Dena notes. “It was rainy that day and MUDDY! But those veggies looked great after we rinsed them down.”

Cherries weren't quite as plentiful as last year, when there was a bumper crop. Still, an early July gleaning at Daly Orchard in Hart brought in 240 pounds. Owner Joe Hart is an enthusiastic Food Bank supporter who has also donated plums.

“You can't beat the

nutritional content of fresh produce grown nearby,” Dena says. “And you really can't beat the taste! Our thanks to growers and gleaning volunteers for helping us bring this delicious, nutritious gift to our area's pantries and families.”

If you know of a farm with surplus crops, Feeding America West Michigan may be able to harvest them to help feed 100,000 families in its service area. Contact Dena Rogers or Linda Vanderbaan at 616.784.3250.



June is biggest month ever. 2010 may be biggest year.

This past June, Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank distributed the most food ever in a single month: 2.35 million pounds. It looks like we're still on track for our first 25-million pound year.

Of course, that means demand is still growing. In fact, it increased about 10% last year. That's certainly cause for concern.

But it's good to know that, with your help, we're able to pull together as a community to meet the mounting challenge.



THE 5-YEAR-OLD PHILANTHROPIST

Last fall, Connor Geelhoed, then five years old, began determinedly cutting, scribbling and pasting “little love notes with cut-out hearts on them,” as his mother Melissa recalls.

He announced his intention to sell his creations to fund Christmas gifts for other children. “He said, I have grandparents (who) spoil me and I want to make sure other kids get what they want for Christmas, too,” Melissa says.

As any parent might be, Melissa was touched and amused. But unlike many of us, she knew exactly what to say. “I told him gently, Connor, I don't know if people will give you money for those – at least not enough to buy very many presents.”

So she asked Connor what he thought people would be likely to buy. Not surprisingly, “he suggested candy. So he and my husband went to Costco and bought chocolate bars to resell.”

Entrepreneurial aptitude.

The next day, Connor began selling door-to-door to his neighbors. “Connor is speech-impaired, so we helped him write a note to show people, in case he had trouble getting his thoughts out. But honestly, I thought he'd make just a few stops and get bored.”

Instead, Connor “just got started and never stopped. It was amazing. On Thursday, he told me he had a goal – to raise \$1,000.”

Inspired, Connor's parents and grandparents escorted him to new territories. “He went to my mother's building, where some people on fixed incomes lived. One man in a wheelchair gave him \$20 right away. Then after he heard Connor's whole story, he gave him another \$30 – and told him to keep the candy.”

“It's amazing, how people who have so little gave so much.”

Big returns.

Of course, Connor's family and teachers bought candy, too. By Christmas, Connor had raised \$1,072. “We ‘adopted’ two families suggested by the principal at Connor's school.” (Connor attends Jenison's Early Childhood Center.)

“We got lists of things the families needed and wanted most,



then we looked through newspaper ads to figure out what else we could give. Connor picked the things he thought the kids would like. We bought clothes, toys, movie gift cards and other things the families could use together – plus five bags of groceries for each family.”

Giving begets giving.

At first, Connor was shy about disclosing his efforts. “He wanted to remain anonymous,” Melissa recalls. “But his school principal convinced him he could inspire others, and nominated him for an award.”

Tender Ridge Angus adds \$1,000.

Connor was too young for the first award, but he ultimately won the “Acts of Tenderness” award, sponsored Tender Ridge Angus beef company, a division of Cargill, Inc. The award earned Connor \$1,000 for the charity of his choice.

While mulling over his options with his mother, Connor said, “I actually want to help feed more people,” Melissa says. “So we Googled food banks in West Michigan and found Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank.”

After a tour of the Food Bank's main warehouse in Grand Rapids, “We loved the vision of Feeding America,” Melissa says. “It's a fantastic, phenomenal organization.”

Divine inspiration?

Although Connor has always been “very motivated” with a “good understanding of money,” no one on earth knows what inspired his fund-raising drive. “We asked at school and at church, but there hadn't been any special lessons lately,” Melissa remembers.

“We decided the idea just came from God and then Connor made it his goal,” his mother says.

“We didn't coach Connor to start this. I just think there's greatness in him.”

Connor, Melissa, family and other supporters will sponsor a “Connor's Wish” initiative again this year. To contribute, contact Linda Vanderbaan at 616.784.3250.

New mobile pantry rolls out. Mobile program now big as a food bank.



Ray Carreathers, regional V.P. of Kraft Foods, addresses crowd.

On July 27, the Food Bank's latest new mobile pantry held its first distribution, providing 7,500 pounds of groceries to about 150 local families.

The distribution followed a dedication ceremony for the new, \$150,000 truck donated to Feeding America West Michigan by Kraft Foods.

Both events were hosted by the Rockford American Legion post, which also hosted a "patio party" with lunch for the officials and volunteers.

The new mobile pantry, which will be based at Feeding America West Michigan's new Benton Harbor warehouse, will primarily serve

Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties. It will distribute individual loads of 5,000 to 10,000 pounds of food – up to about 1 million pounds of food annually – directly to people in need.



FIFTH THIRD IS FIRST TO SPONSOR NEW MOBILE PANTRY RUNS.

Fifth Third Bank has allocated \$5,000 to sponsor distributions by our snazzy new mobile pantry, recently donated by Kraft Foods.

The new mobile pantry will serve our Southwest territory (Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties), which has not been served by Food Bank mobile pantries before.

Fifth Third will also collect funds for food relief in its 19 Berrien, Cass and Van Buren branches during October and November. Look for



the "Stuff a pound of food" collection boxes near teller windows.

"Fifth Third Bank strongly believes in and supports the mission of Feeding America," stated John H. Bultema III, president of Fifth Third Bank Western Michigan.

"There is a real need in West Michigan to help those who are less fortunate – and we are pleased that through our financial donation that we can provide over 70,000 pounds of fresh, healthy food to those in need."

Almost 68,000 pounds of fresh food picked (up) at DeVos Place.

"Who'da thunk" that a record crop of fresh groceries would come from downtown Grand Rapids? That's exactly what happened on August 25, at the close of "A Fresh Experience," Spartan Stores' annual showcase of its Fresh Selection brand goods.

Hundreds of grocers from throughout the Midwest attended the show, seeing and sampling from hundreds of fresh produce, dairy and meat displays.

Then it was our turn! 60 volunteers loaded up the luscious displays, transporting some 43,000 pounds of fresh groceries to the Food Bank, just a few minutes away.

This was the second year in a row that Spartan donated goods from the show.

"Spartan Foods is proud to donate this high-quality product to the Food Bank," says Spartan spokesperson Jeanne Norcross. "With its refrigerated trucks, expert staff and warehouses that meet or



exceed all food handling regulations, the Food Bank is uniquely equipped to get the food where it's needed most, quickly. That's why we have been confident in giving them more than 38 million pounds of food over the years."

A month earlier, the Food Bank had reaped 24,822 pounds of food from July's 2010 Grocery/Frozen/Dairy Merchandising Show, also at DeVos Place.

For the second year in a row, the fresh merchandise displayed – which added up to almost 68,000 pounds of products – was donated to Feeding America West Michigan food bank for local food bank programs. Donated food from both shows has been sent out via

mobile pantries and shipped to food relief agencies serving 100,000 families throughout the Food Bank's 40-county service area.



Volunteers gather tons of fresh food in farmers' markets.

For the second year, Nathan O'Connell is heading a team of volunteers who attend farmers' markets in Grand Rapids and Rockford. During market hours, they offer information about and accept donations for the Food Bank. At the end of the day, they collect surplus food for the Comstock Park warehouse.

So far this year, Nathan's team has brought in more than 4,000 pounds of some of Michigan's freshest, tastiest food. By the



end of the season, they anticipate collecting more than 7,500 pounds – about triple last year's intake.

But the group brings in much more than food and dollar donations. "They're really the face of the Food Bank," says Linda Vanderbaan, donor relations manager. "They're building relationships between the Food Bank and the community. I can't say enough about their dedication and impact."

The volunteers' presence inspires some market shoppers to buy food especially for the Food Bank.

This boosts farmers' sales and encourages them to donate their surplus goods instead of taking them away at market's end.

Nathan makes signing up and scheduling easy. Volunteers go online to see when help is needed and where. About 40 volunteers, including members of Rockford's Girl Scout Troop 2731, have helped so far this year. Another 20 have committed online.

"It's great to see people come together and realize they can really make a difference," Nathan says. For more information on volunteering with him, call 616-827-7374.



Trillium Haven Farms gives 500 organic vegetable plants.



When food pantries and other agencies sent “shoppers” to Grand Rapids for pick-ups in June, they found our Agency Shopping Area growing – quite literally.

Suddenly, they had their pick of hundreds of healthy organic tomato, pepper, lettuce, broccoli and other chemical-free vegetable plants – all courtesy of Trillium Haven Farms in Jenison.

Agencies snapped up the plants to offer their clients and to plant in community gardens for hunger relief – inspired by the “Plant a Row for the Hungry” initiative promoted by the Garden Writers Association of America.

Among other places, the organic plants are now growing at Grand Rapids’ Hillcrest Community Gardens, the Midtown Neighborhood Association and the Blandford Nature Center.

Plant donor and Trillium Haven founder Michael Vanderbrug plans to keep giving to the Food Bank. “I think Feeding America is a great cause, and we’ll give as much as we can depending on the surplus we have.”

His 50-acre farm in Jenison grows chemical-free vegetables that are sold at Fulton Street Farmers Market in Grand Rapids and made available to members of the farm’s Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) group. For more information on the farm’s products or joining CSA group, visit TrilliumHavenFarm.com.



Grainger Foundation gives generously.

The Grainger Foundation of Lake Forest, Illinois recently donated \$5,000 to Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank, based on the recommendation of David Kurti, Branch Manager of the W.W. Grainger Grand Rapids location.

“We are proud to support the Food Bank in the communities where our customers and employees live and work,” said Kurti. “We understand Feeding America West Michigan



Food Bank’s important role in helping needy families, the unemployed, senior citizens, at-risk children, domestic violence victims and others at risk of hunger in a difficult economy.”

W.W. Grainger, Inc., a leading broad-line supplier of business maintenance, repair, and operating products, has been part of the West Michigan business community for more than 36 years.

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR TO APPEAR SEPTEMBER 28.

David Baldacci will be “Feeding Body and Mind”



The author of 19 New York Times best-sellers, novelist David Baldacci has learned how to meet readers’ hunger for page-turners. Now, as part of the Feeding Body & Mind initiative, he’s helping fight hunger by fighting illiteracy.

As part of the initiative, co-sponsored by Feeding America, participating member food banks distribute donated books along with food.

On Tuesday evening, September 28 at 6:30, Baldacci will appear at the Forest Hills Fine Arts Center in

Grand Rapids to discuss and sign his books, including his latest title, *Deliver Us From Evil*. The event, titled “A Novel Experience,” is sponsored by the Kent District Library (KDL) to fund literacy programs for young children.

Tickets for the event are \$15 apiece and are available at www.kdl.org. Tickets for an earlier cocktail reception at the Watermark Country Club Grille are also available for \$60.

As Baldacci says, “I’ve traveled around the country, visiting schools, food banks and literacy organizations in the inner city, rural areas and suburbs. The need for literacy support is clear.

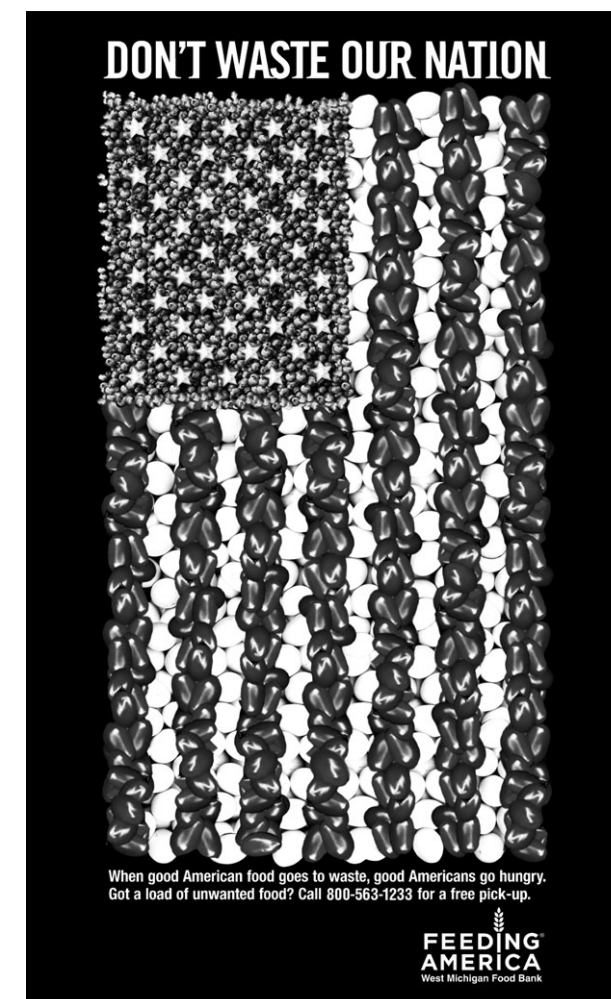
“While food can keep one alive, it cannot by itself lift one from poverty. However, increased literacy... can.”

WHAT’S HAPPENING FOR HUNGER ACTION MONTH

Throughout September, the Food Bank is joining hundreds of other Feeding America affiliates in supporting special activities for Hunger Action Month – a national effort to encourage local initiatives against hunger.

Some West Michigan activities include:

- A new campaign to encourage independent truck drivers to donate unwanted loads to the Food Bank. (See flag poster.)
- A statewide collection drive at Michigan Vanity stores, co-sponsored by musical group OneRepublic, September 7 through October 16, 2010. In-store sales of OneRepublic’s latest CD will benefit Feeding America.
- Author David Baldacci’s September 28 appearance at the Forest Hills Fine Arts center in Grand Rapids, sponsored by the Kent District Library. (See related story, p. 6.)
- Fifth Third Bank’s 19-branch fundraising and mobile pantry sponsorship. (See related story, p. 4.)
- Rolling out the new, Kraft-donated mobile pantry in high-need areas of Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties. (See related stories on p.4.)

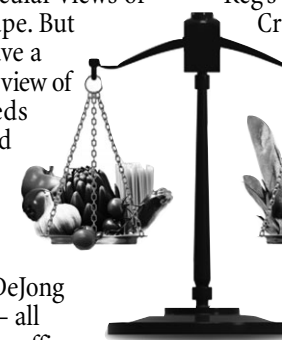


Color poster educates truck dispatchers on pick-ups of unwanted edible food.

Muskegon law firm office manager leads area hunger effort.

Warner, Norcross & Judd’s Muskegon office rises four stories above the Lake Michigan shoreline, framing spectacular views of both the lake and landscape. But people within the firm have a decidedly down-to-earth view of what their community needs most – starting with food for its hungry families.

Three years ago, the offices of Warner Norcross & Judd, Brickley DeLong Accountants and Hooker DeJong Architects and Engineers – all tenants of the Terrace Plaza office building – held a food drive challenge. The next year, they decided to focus on fundraising instead, and invite other tenants to join. In 2010 they dubbed themselves the “Terrace Plaza Feeding America Fundraiser Team,” which grew to include Merrill Lynch, Michigan Rehab Services, West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development



Cooperative, The Hinman Company (owners of the building), DAJ Engineering, Reg’s Barber Shop, the Law Offices of Craig Monette and Coastline Deli.

Warner, Norcross & Judd’s Muskegon Office Manager, Tammy James, has long been a part of this committee, which raises money to sponsor mobile pantry distributions at various locations. So far, the group has raised over \$11,000 and hosted three of its own mobile pantry distributions, with a fourth one scheduled this September.

“The mobile pantry is a wonderful thing and the fact that we have a bus station just across the street ... helps those who normally couldn’t get to a pantry due to not having transportation,” Tammy says.

The events also seem to benefit the

volunteers. Each year, some of the tenants and their family members, including children, participate at the distributions. “The children really walk away from the experience with a better appreciation for what they have,” Tammy noted.

She recalls her own eye-opening experience as a volunteer. “I walked an older man and his neighbor, a lady in a wheelchair, to the bus station with our office file cart loaded with their food. They were so appreciative and could not believe that we would do that for them. It was my pleasure, believe me!”

Tammy further recounted, “An elderly lady waiting at the bus station saw us and asked if she could get some food, too. I told her to come with me, and we headed back and signed her up!”

With an unemployment rate hovering near 15%, Muskegon’s hunger relief needs are great. But the spirit emanating from the Terrace Plaza may be even greater.



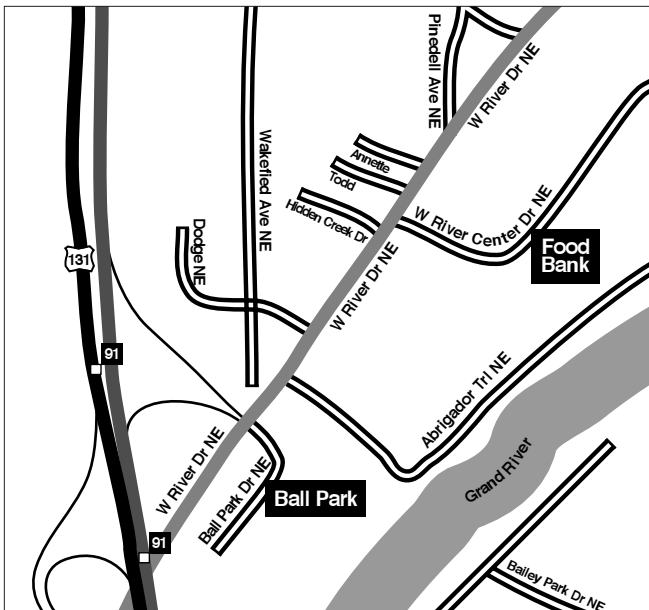
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We're easy to find.**

Take U.S. 131 to exit 91 (Comstock Park/West River Drive).
Turn left on West River Drive. Turn right at the stoplight at
West River Center Drive (Wendy's on corner). Our address is
864 West River Center Dr., Comstock Park, MI 49321-8955
Questions? Call us at 616.784.3250



Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank is a non-profit surplus food warehouse distributing about 2 million pounds of food monthly in cooperation with 1,300 charitable agencies. The food we handle helps needy families, the unemployed, senior citizens, at-risk children, pregnant teens, domestic violence victims, AIDS patients and others at risk of hunger in our difficult economy. Ultimately, our food aids an estimated 100,000 West Michigan and Upper Peninsula families annually. Call us at 616-784-3250 or learn more at www.FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org.

Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank is a member of Feeding America – The Nation's Food Bank Network, The United Way, and The Food Bank Council of Michigan.

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