

# Full Plate PRESS

THE NEWSLETTER OF **FEEDING AMERICA**  
West Michigan Food Bank



We recognize the members of the Full Plates Forever Society for their extraordinary commitment to hunger relief.

- ROBERT AND KATHLEEN BOUMAN
- ANNE COPPS
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- BRIAN AND VICKI TINGLEY
- IRENE WILSTED
- JIM AND DEB WISNESKI

For information on how planned giving can help you and the Food Bank, visit [FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org/Legacy](http://FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org/Legacy).

## Summer Fundraising Luncheon Will Highlight Stories of Changed Lives

Chronic illnesses like diabetes and heart disease claim millions of lives each year, and Food Bank client Michele Childs could have been one of them.

"I was very sick just three years ago. I was considered super, super morbid obese. It was deadly," she said. Basic activities like tying her shoes and getting into a booth at a restaurant became nearly impossible. That's when she found Streams of Hope, one of Feeding America West Michigan's agencies in Kentwood.



I got in there, there was no judgment. It's important to know that these food pantries are here for you."

Michele's story is just one you'll hear at Many Hands Against Hunger, Feeding America West Michigan's summer fundraising luncheon on June 9, 2015.

To register for Many Hands Against Hunger visit [FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org](http://FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org).

Help us change more lives like Michele's. Join us at the luncheon this June!

She joined the Nutritional Options for Wellness program, facilitated by Access of West Michigan, which provided her with fresh, healthy food. "They help each person pick out the right foods for their diet," she said.

Streams of Hope helped Michele get her health back; in the end, she lost 150 pounds. "They made me feel so welcome, and when

Many Hands Against Hunger

June 9, 2015  
See Page 2 for More Details

Watch Michele's story and access more exclusive content in our online newsletter. Check it out at [FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org](http://FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org)





# From Ken's Keyboard:



If you're a regular reader of the Full Plate Press, you know 2014 was a big year for the Food Bank — the biggest, in fact. Our food distribution grew by nearly 4 percent to 26.5 million pounds. That's the equivalent of 21 million meals going to families in need right here in West Michigan and the Upper Peninsula.

As demand for our services has grown, we haven't been content just to distribute more food. We want to distribute more of the right kinds of food. Today, fresh produce, most of it grown right here in Michigan, accounts for more than a quarter of all the food we distribute. And we're working hard to increase the volume of produce, dairy and protein available to our clients.

That's something that you, as a partner in our mission, can feel good about. Your support makes it possible. But we still need your help. Because as our food distribution has grown, so have our financial needs. If we're going to keep up we need the whole community to stand with us.

So we would ask two things of you. First, we'd ask that you continue to support the Food Bank. Your gifts of money and time are more critical than ever. Second — and this is just as important — we'd ask you to share our mission with your friends and family. Tell them why hunger relief matters to you and let them know that they can get involved. Invite your office, school or congregation to hold a fund drive or spend a few hours volunteering together at the Food Bank.

As demand for our services continues to increase, so does our need for your support. Thank you for doing your part. Together we can solve hunger.

Kenneth R. Estelle, CEO



Volunteers from Grand Rapids Christian High School sort Riveridge apples at the Food Bank earlier this year.

## New Apple Partnership Provides Fresh Produce, Extra Revenue for Food Bank

Each year, Michigan's 9.2 million apple trees produce 30 million bushels of apples, and 60 percent of those apples are grown on the Fruit Ridge right here in the Food Bank's backyard. So when we were looking to boost the amount of fresh produce at Feeding America West Michigan and in the wider Feeding America network, we didn't have to look far.

With help from Feeding America's Produce Capture Institute, we began a new partnership this winter with Sparta-based Riveridge Produce Marketing. Each month, we buy a truckload of apples from Riveridge at a low cost. The apples come in loose, our volunteers sort and pack them, and then, if we have more than we can use at our Food Bank, we sell them to a partner food bank.

That means every shipment of apples we sell not only increases the amount of produce available to food bank clients around the country but provides additional revenue to distribute more meals to people in need here in Michigan. To date, we've sold more than 168,000 pounds of apples and earned enough revenue to distribute an additional 20,000 meals in West Michigan and the UP.

This is just another way we're working with local growers and national partners to use homegrown fruits and vegetables to solve hunger in our community.

## Many Hands Against Hunger Summer Fundraising Luncheon

Tuesday, June 9, 2015

12-1:15 p.m.

Noto's Old World Italian Dining

6600 28th Street SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49546

\$30 per person

Sponsored by:

**meijer**

**National**  
food group



Featuring WZZM 13's  
Catherine Behrendt

[FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org/Luncheon](http://FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org/Luncheon)

Dana Knight found her own apartment in Byron Center this December.

## Grand Rapids Teacher Survives Homelessness

In August of last year, Dana Knight, a 50-year-old substitute teacher, was living with her elderly mother in a senior housing complex in Grand Rapids and serving as her full-time caregiver. When her mother died unexpectedly, Dana was given a month to move out.

From September to November, she bounced from motels to friends' couches to a recovery home on the northwest side of town, sleeping in her van when nothing else was available. She came to Degage Ministries on a freezing cold November night. They had one vacancy left.

"It's hard to express how happy I was to sleep on that mat. I mean, it was heaven," Dana said.

At Degage, Dana was given a place to sleep, shower, do laundry and eat three meals a day. Degage is one of the 1,100-plus hunger-relief agencies that Feeding America West Michigan supplies with food.

"Because we're able to get food from the Food Bank, we're able to stretch those dollars," said Degage's executive director Marge Palmerlee. "Our goal is to provide as much healthy food options as we can. Feeding America is doing a great job helping with that."

Though Dana speaks highly of Degage, she craved a return to normalcy and a space of her own.

"The humbling thing is I've always had compassion for homeless people, . . . and now I'm one of them," Dana said.

Despite her challenges, Dana didn't lose faith. In fact, she kept going to work even while living in the shelter. As Degage's Eileen Alexander put it, Dana's experience never threw her off track: "I think it made her positive. It made her go after what she wanted to do."

In December, Dana found an apartment in Byron Center that was in her price range. She moved in just before Christmas.

Each year, Feeding America West Michigan provides food to thousands of people like Dana who have struggled with housing problems.

Nearly a quarter have been evicted or foreclosed on in the last five years, and 58 percent reported having to choose between buying food and making rent or mortgage payments.

By supporting agencies like Degage, we can help neighbors like Dana get back on their feet.

*A version of this story originally appeared on the Huffington Post.*

Degage Ministries is located on Division Avenue in downtown Grand Rapids.



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## Hunger Hurts



72% of client households have to choose between food and utilities



65% have to choose between food and medical care



23% have to choose between food and education



73% buy inexpensive junk food to get by

## We Can Help

Last year, Feeding America West Michigan gave



26.5 million pounds of food



including 7 million pounds of produce



to 1,100+ agencies

Serving

58,200 seniors, 119,400 kids and 314,500 adults



in 40 Michigan counties





# FEEDING AMERICA

West Michigan Food Bank

864 West River Center Drive NE  
Comstock Park, MI 49321  
(616) 784-3250  
FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org

## Board of Directors:

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Feeding America West Michigan exists to ensure safe food is available to the hungry in our community. By working with over 1,100 hunger-relief agencies, we are able to serve an estimated 492,100 people in West Michigan and the Upper Peninsula each year.

Call us at 616.784.3250 or learn more at [FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org](http://FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org).



Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank is a member of Feeding America, The United Way, and The Food Bank Council of Michigan.



**You Can Feed West Michigan**  
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## 96-year-old WWII Veteran Volunteers Every Week

Every Tuesday morning, Don Brenner can be found at Feeding America West Michigan sorting food donations as a member of Golden K, a service group for retirees. At 96, he's the Food Bank's oldest volunteer.

"Well, I enjoy the fellowship, for one thing," Don said. Plus, "we are doing something for society."

After more than 15 years as a Food Bank volunteer, Don has racked up 834.5 hours of service and helped to distribute an estimated 125,000 meals to people in need.

A former Navy ensign who served in both World War II and Korea, Don received a degree in metallurgical engineering from Michigan Tech and had a long career at MichCon (now DTE Energy). After retiring, Don and his wife Jeanne, who passed away after 55 years of marriage, wintered in Florida where they liked to go bird-watching in the Everglades. Don and his second wife, Grace, have been married 14 years.

His fellow Golden K members speak highly of Don — both Dons.

"Understand that Don has a second persona," Dan Spetoskey said: "Ole, the Finnish wise man." Don's "Ole Stories," riffing on Finnish-American life in the Upper Peninsula, have become tradition at Golden K's weekly meetings.

"At 96, he has the best sense of humor of anyone I know," Ron LePage said.

Don plans to continue volunteering as long as he's able: "I'm lots more interested in sitting around now than I used to be, but I ride with (Golden K member) Bob Vos, and we get along very well, and we have a good time when we get here."

To Don and all our Food Bank volunteers, we want to say thank you. We couldn't do it without you.



Don Brenner, center, has been volunteering at the Food Bank for more than 15 years.