

Full Plate Press

Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank

Spring 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, St. Joseph.

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300 MILLION POUNDS – AND COUNTING

Milestones to come more rapidly as demand, capacity grow.

On February 12, Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank sent out its 300 millionth pound of reclaimed food.

That's 300 million pounds of high-quality food donated by farmers, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and individuals. It's 300 million pounds inspected, processed, repacked and shipped from Food Bank warehouses to 1,300 food pantries and other local charities.

Perhaps most impressively, it's more than 300 million meals for Michigan's most desperate families.

What else weighs so much?

It's hard for the human mind to conceive of a quantity with eight zeroes. So we dug up some comparisons. 300 million pounds is:

- more than six times the weight of the Space Shuttle,
- the approximate weight of 30,000 elephants – or 1,000 blue whales – and
- more than twice the weight of all the steel in the Mackinac Bridge.

It's also 10,000 full tractor-trailer loads of food.

Yearly progress.

Year after year, the Food Bank sets new records for the amount of food it reclaims and distributes. In 2009, we reclaimed 24.5 million pounds – not only more than 10 percent more than the year before, but also the largest one-year increase yet.

That puts us in the top 10% of the 203 food banks in the Feeding America network, among food banks in New York and other major metropolitan areas.

That's partly because we cover a large geographic area (30,000 square miles), and partly because our area has been hit especially hard by recent economic woes.

But there are also good reasons for our ever-expanding size: our efficiency in reclaiming food, our much-imitated Mobile Pantry program (which just passed its own milestone of 60 million pounds), our tireless volunteers and, of course, our more-than-generous food and fund donors.

Looking ahead.

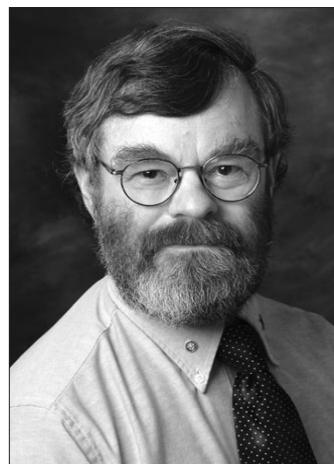
It took almost 29 years to reach the 300-million-pound milestone. Yet, according to Executive Director John Arnold, the Food Bank expects to hit 400 million pounds within the next four years.

But can we keep up with ever-growing demand? If recent figures from Newaygo and Emmet counties are any indication, we can. Last year, food distributed in those two counties met the estimated need – effectively wiping out hunger there, according to available data.

If we can whip hunger there, we can do it in the 38 other West Michigan counties we serve. There's more than enough food to go around. All we need is your help in getting it where it's needed.



FROM THE DESK OF JOHN ARNOLD



On Friday, February 12, the Food Bank distributed its 300 millionth pound of product since the first pound was distributed in April, 1981. It took us 17 years and 8 months to distribute our first hundred million pounds, 6 years and 4 months to do the second one, and only 4 years and 7 months to do the third one. Do you sense a trend there?! With a little luck we'll do our fourth hundred million in less than 4 years.

Also, sometime during the week of February 22, our mobile food pantry trucks distributed their 60 millionth pound of goods. That program continues to grow as fast as we can add trucks to the fleet.

In the midst of all of that, we wrapped up 2009, with a record 24,540,622 pounds of aid distributed out to a record 1,306 food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, etc. That is a 2.5 million pound increase over what we did in 2008, and is the largest single-year increase ever for us.

Thank you everyone who contributed in any way, shape or form to our achieving what we have. We are so entirely focused on getting hunger in West Michigan adequately addressed that sometimes we may not say "Thank you!" as often as we should. It is not for lack of appreciation! We are just always immediately focused on how to translate any support into further gains against hunger.

The amount of food aid distributed to the needy in Newaygo County rose to the level of meeting the estimated need in late 2006/early 2007 and has stayed there ever since. In 2009, Emmet County joined them, and Antrim County looks likely to follow suit

in 2010. That's three down and 37 more to go! As more and more counties get themselves to that level, our dream is that more and more counties will ask themselves, "If they can do it, why can't we?" and will copy what has proven key to the hunger-free counties' success: Gathering funds instead of food, making optimal use of the Food Bank, and serving needy people the way we would all want to be treated if we were in need. The "Charity Food Programs That Can End Hunger In America" manual posted on the "Resources" page of our web site www.FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org remains the blueprint for ending hunger in America.

Thank you also everyone who has contributed to the Food Bank's Endowment Fund at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. We started it just 18 months ago, and already it is up to about \$400,000. Our goal is \$10 million, which is a lot, but it will perform miracles ever after by generating enough interest income for the Food Bank as to keep us from ever having to shift our focus from food-handling to fund-raising. That will help keep our operating costs low enough to make adequately addressing West Michigan's hunger problem possible by keeping it affordable. If you have any questions about the Endowment, please contact either Linda Vanderbaan or me (John Arnold) here at the Food Bank (616-784-3250) or the Grand Rapids Community Foundation (616-454-1751).

On a personal note, in the fall my cancer stopped responding to the medicines that have been controlling it for the past year or so, so I'm headed off into a slightly more difficult period with it in which we'll be trying a number of things that can work in controlling the illness, but which aren't as consistently effective as the medicines I've been on. Essentially, the adventure just got a little more adventurous! Your prayers and support as I deal with this are very much appreciated.

Once again, Panera Bread makes our dough rise.

Panera Bread Company's Alpine Avenue store in Grand Rapids raised \$2,200 for Feeding America West Michigan, its "Operation Dough-Nation®" recipient, this year. The store raises the money through countertop donation boxes.

The Alpine store also donates its unsold bread daily to the Comstock Park warehouse.

"Bread is an important part of our culture. It brings people together," said Brian Campbell, the company's marketing director. "Panera is dedicated to giving back to the people who have welcomed us into their neighborhoods."



200-plus Gala guests find love.

"Food is Love" was the theme of this year's Full Plates Forever Gala, held February 5 in support of the Food Bank's John Arnold Endowment Fund. (For more information on the fund and its purpose, see "An Endowment Q&A with John Arnold," page 4.)

The food itself was entertainment, as chefs at the Amway Grand Plaza hotel, where the event was held, showcased dishes that expressed love. Some were

underwriters have included Richard and Ruth Postma; the Steve and Cindy Van Andel Foundation; the Amos Foundation; Spartan Stores; Amway; Berends, Hendricks & Stuit; Blackmer; BISSELL, Inc.; Country Fresh; George and Jenny Jackoboice; Rita and Jack Kirkwood; Bob and Ronni Moyer; Star Truck Rentals; George and Kerstin Trowbridge and Warner, Norcross & Judd, LLP.



Keynote speaker Alan Hartline from Spartan Stores.



Amway Grand Plaza chefs based the menu on "romance-enhancing" ingredients.

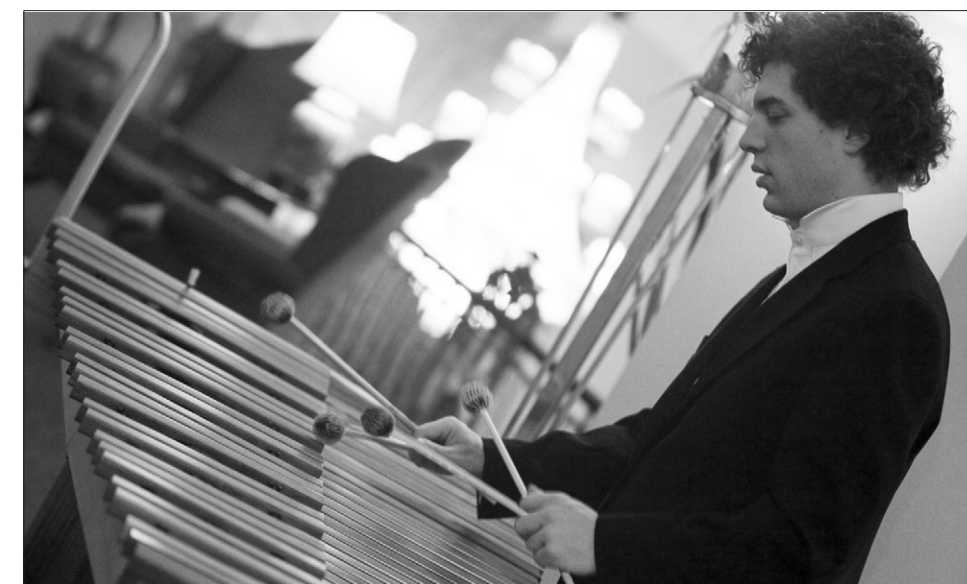


Vintage valentines with food themes inspired the graphics.

new takes on old family favorites, such as gourmet deviled eggs. Others were based on "romance-enhancing" ingredients, including asparagus, eel, other seafood, strawberries and chocolate.

Other entertainment included classical Marimba music by Martin Gabert, and what may be the Grand Plaza's first gala rap performance, by "Cash Man" Jeff Sobel in superhero cape and tights.

This was the second Full Plates Forever Gala in support of the John Arnold Endowment. Major



Classical marimbist Martin Gabert set a lovely mood.

Endowment Q&A with John Arnold

Q: In 2008 the Food Bank Board decided to create an endowment fund and name it after you. Why did they do that?

A: The Board (and staff) of the Food Bank have heard me for years expressing misgivings as a lot of food banks around the country have begun doing more and more fund-raising. That can easily distract them from their primary mission and drive their operating expenses beyond the possibility of adequately addressing their service area's food aid need. We've avoided that trap during my 20+ years here, but I guess I got a little more strident about it when I was diagnosed with cancer a few years ago. The Endowment was created to keep the dream of a hunger-free West Michigan affordable after I'm no longer here.

Q: Can you relate how this all works to dollars and cents?

A: When agencies draw products from the Food Bank they pay us a handling fee that averages (averaged in 2009) about 11.4 cents per pound. Our total operating expenses average 15.2 cents per pound. So what we need to cover from other sources is that 3.8 cents per pound gap. In 2009 that totaled about \$921,000. If we had

a \$10 million Endowment that generated about 5% interest income for us per year, over half our "funds from other sources" needs would be covered, leaving us with an additional need small enough to be covered fairly easily by donations our wonderful supporters send us as a result of receiving our newsletter, hearing about us in the news, etc.

Q: How does that contrast with the Food Bank's doing a lot of fundraising events?

A: Organizing, promoting and running fund-raising events can be so expensive and so distracting that it isn't at all difficult to find food banks around the country with operating expenses two, three, four and even five times larger than ours. If we were to go that route we could (would!) end up costing West Michigan millions of dollars more per year than we do. A one-time \$10 million Endowment will save West Michigan more than \$10 million every three or four years for as long as the Food Bank exists.

Q: And it is housed at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation?

A: Correct. Managing an Endowment is a specialized skill that they have and we don't.

They know how and where to invest the funds, and how to account for them so there will never be any question about how they are used or what ever happened to them. One nice side benefit of having the Endowment there is how donors can claim a State tax credit for donating to the Endowment via the Food Bank and via the Community Foundation. For a couple filing jointly, that totals a \$400 credit for two \$400 gifts.

Q: If people have further questions about the Endowment, who should they contact?

A: Either Linda Vanderbaan or myself (John Arnold) at the Food Bank (616-784-3250) or any of the Donor Services staff at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation (616-454-1751).

Q: Anything else?

A: Only that I hope our supporters take advantage of this last best hope we have of ever getting hunger adequately addressed, and donate to the Endowment to get it up to that \$10 million level as quickly as possible. It is one of the best investments there is!

HUNGER STUDY REVEALS EYE-OPENING DATA.

Medical and utility bills are major factors in food insecurity in West Michigan, and local hunger relief agencies rely heavily on Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank, according to the Hunger in America 2010 study.

Every four years, Feeding America (formerly America's Second Harvest) conducts the nationwide study: an extensive analysis of who needs emergency food aid and their circumstances. Final results of this year's study were published in February of 2010.

Here in West Michigan, 574 agencies and 398 clients participated in the survey. Here are some key West Michigan findings:

- Among pantries, kitchens and shelters that existed in 2006 (when the last study was conducted), a majority reported an increase in clients needing food aid.
- 73% of households served by Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank have incomes below the federal poverty level. More than 50% had monthly incomes lower than \$1,000.
- 40% of the members of households served are children under 18.
- 55% of client households receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (SNAP or food stamps) which, on

average, last 2.8 weeks.

- 31% had at least one household member in poor health. More than 20% had no insurance.
- 58.7% had unpaid medical or hospital bills.
- 30% had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.
- 46% report having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities or heating fuel.
- Feeding American West Michigan Food Bank is by far the most important source of food for West Michigan agencies, providing 67% of the food distributed by pantries, 41% of the food distributed by soup kitchens, and 31% of the food distributed by shelters.

Nancy Ullrey, Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank's agency relations manager, says, "We would like to thank the hundreds of clients and agencies who participated in the study.

"Data from the 2010 Hunger in America study will be used to help food charities develop more effective programs, and to provide accurate information for public policy decisions."

PAULA DEEN SEEN AT FOOD BANK, Y'ALL!

No one got hit by a flying ham. But the witticisms flew – and a few tears flowed – when the sassy queen of Southern cuisine showed up at the Food Bank on January 21.

Ms. Deen, who is a spokesperson for Smithfield Food Company, was here to present 40,000 pounds of donated Smithfield meats.

Accompanied by her husband Michael Groover, representatives from Smithfield, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) and Meijer, she helped pass donated hams into the Food Bank's newly upgraded, refrigerated meat preparation area.

Meijer donated \$5,000 to the Food Bank and the UFCW donated \$500.



Southern cuisine queen Paula Deen, center, with the Smithfield team at the Food Bank.



Paula "took a shine to" Fred and Lena Meijer.



Joyce Miller, Andrew Bowen and Jennifer May pose with Paula.



John Arnold, Michael Groover, Paula Deen and Dennis Pittman passed hams safely hand-to-hand.

She also provided lots of laughs, loaning one of her hair extensions to Meijer patriarch Fred Meijer, and kissing guest Andrew Bowen, Assistant Food and Beverage Director of the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, on his forehead. Pointing to the bright lip print, Andrew said "I'll never wash this spot again!"



Even in January, Paula's Southern charm warmed up the warehouse for the Food Bank staff.

Board member on “boards.”

Mike DeVriendt leads ski patrol and hunger fight.

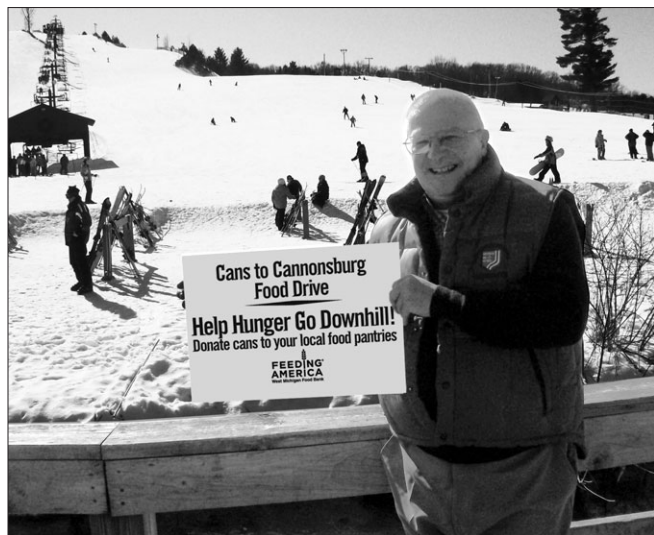
Boards, slats, sticks or just plain skis: Whatever you call ‘em, Food Bank board member Mike DeVriendt has a pair strapped on almost every winter day.

As director of the Ski Patrol program at Cannonsburg ski area, Mike coordinates a 156-member group of volunteer “first responders” with outdoor safety certification. Under his direction, eight-member patrol teams criss-cross Cannonsburg slopes during operating hours, helping guests with “everything from broken thumbs to broken heads,” he says.

“The most common injury is concussion,” he says. “It’s the snowboarders showing off, especially when the Olympics are on. They all think they’re Shaun White!”

However, as a winter sports enthusiast, Mike is quick to point out that skiing poses no more danger than other fast sports. “Everyone from little kids to grandparents can have a lot of fun doing it,” he reports.

A grandfather himself, Mike has worked at Cannonsburg for 40 years, leading the Ski Patrol (as a volunteer) for 34. For many of



those years, he has also been fighting hunger.

In 1984, he founded the Kent County Senior Meals on Wheels program, which he directed for 15 years. The program delivers balanced meals to 2,400 homebound seniors. It also offers free health assessments and operates its own network of food pantries.

These days, he continues his anti-hunger activism not just in our board meetings, but also on the slopes. For 15 years, he has led the “Cans to Cannonsburg” program, which offers skiers half-price lift tickets, lessons and equipment rentals with donations of non-perishable food. The program

brings our Food Bank, on average, about three tons of food per year.

“We’re proud to keep the cans coming from Cannonsburg to shelves throughout West Michigan” he says. “The Food Bank is an integral part of making sure our neighbors have access to food with dignity, and they can shop without strings attached even in these hard times.”

He added, “I love Michigan winters! You can have fun skiing while you’re helping feed folks all season long.”

Awareness Home Funding gives thousands.

For the past two Decembers, Grandville-based Awareness Home Funding has encouraged its employees to wear blue jeans. For the privilege, they contribute \$20 to a charity fund. This year, the fund gave \$1,500 to Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank and \$2,500 to Buist Food Pantry, an agency the Food Bank serves.

“Everybody here does it,” says Awareness spokesperson Gary Gunnett. “It’s inexpensive and it’s fun. It was our owner who said ‘Lots of folks are having a hard time feeding their families right now, so that’s where the money should go.’”

Year-round the company, which also operates in Florida, Indiana and Kansas, makes a \$250 donation to each customer’s favorite charity whenever – and wherever – it closes a home loan.

“It’s not just for new home loans, either,” Gary says. “It’s for refinancing, too. And you can name any charity, anywhere. If we write a loan in Florida, and they want the \$250 to go to the Food Bank in West Michigan, that’s where it goes.”



MACY’S MAKES OUT A \$7,000 CHECK.

Last fall, Macy’s “Come Together” campaign encouraged customers to donate to Feeding America online and in stores, and to host small dinner parties for fund-raising.

The company matched customer donations dollar-for-dollar, resulting in funds for more than 10 million meals, according to

Vicki Escarra, Feeding America CEO.

Based on donations received from this region, Macy’s will present Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank with a \$7,154.36 check in March.

“This innovative awareness and fundraising campaign helped us in many

ways,” said Ms. Escarra.

“‘Come Together’ raised awareness of the pervasiveness of domestic hunger (and) provided easy ways for Americans to help their neighbors ... at a time of record-breaking demand.”

Aunt Millie’s brings on the holiday bread.

Aunt Millie’s Bakeries donated nearly 60,000 loaves of bread to food banks throughout the Midwest this past holiday season.

Some 3,600 loaves of freshly baked Butter Top Wheat bread – retail value \$11,484 – were delivered to our Grand Rapids warehouse on December 22.

Aunt Millie’s Bakeries is a family-owned company headquartered in Fort Wayne, Indiana since 1901. The company produces Aunt Millie’s bread and bakery products and other brands, which are distributed throughout the Midwest.



West Michigan Shared Services employees share \$3,700.

Employees of West Michigan Shared Services, which handles accounting, payroll, customer service and financial records for Trinity Health System hospitals, raised \$3,727.92 for the Food Bank this past holiday season.

The company’s fund-raising commit-

tee organized dress-down days, a pot luck lunch, twice-weekly boxed lunches and a snack cart to raise the money.

Employees also contributed 590 pounds of non-perishable food.

“This is one of the most creative, committed fund-raising efforts we’ve ever

seen,” says Linda Vanderbaan, the Food Bank’s donor relations manager.

“Certainly, we appreciate every gift, but we’re especially moved to see a group come together with so much energy and flair. West Michigan Finance Shared Services made our day!”

SPEAKING OF BOARDS ...

As a nonprofit corporation, the Food Bank is governed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors: individuals who give their time and talents to make sure West Michigan has the best food banking services possible.

In December we said farewell to two long-serving members: Marinus DeBruine of Grand Valley State University and Reverend Arthur Bailey of Abundant Life Ministries, whose terms ended.

Earlier in the fall, our then-President, Jim Siewertsen of Alticor/Amway’s Access Business Group, was transferred out of state.

But also we added four new members in the fall and a fifth in February, setting the stage for an exciting new decade winning the war against hunger.

See the complete 2010 Board membership list, including the new members, below.

Jeffrey S. Battershall
(Board President)
Partner
Warner, Norcross & Judd, LLP

Kevin Begin
(Board Vice President)
General Manager
Country Fresh Dairies/Dean Foods

Patrick L. Repins, CPA
(Board Treasurer)
Crowe Horwath, LLP

Thomas L. Bylenga
(Board Secretary)
President
Star Truck Rentals, Inc.

F.C. “Buzz” Baker*
Senior Consultant
Francis Marketing, Inc.

Steve Borders, PhD, MSHP*
Associate Professor
School of Public and Nonprofit Administration
Grand Valley State University

Mike DeVriendt
Retired Director
Senior Meals on Wheels

Joan Garety
Retired Executive
Meijer, Inc.

Richard Haslinger*
President West MI Region
Chase

Harold Hitchcock*
Director
Senior Meals on Wheels Messiah Pantry

Rev. Bruce A. McCoy
Bibleway Outreach Ministries
Church of God in Christ

Kevin Mahoney
Vice President of Marketing
Sysco Food Services of Grand Rapids

Ed Nieuwenhuis
Retired Executive
Meijer, Inc.

Jeanne Norcross*
Vice President of Corporate Affairs
Spartan Stores

Robert R. Stark
President and Portfolio Manager
Calder Investment Advisors

Linda Winks
Controller
Ross and Associates

*Indicates new member.



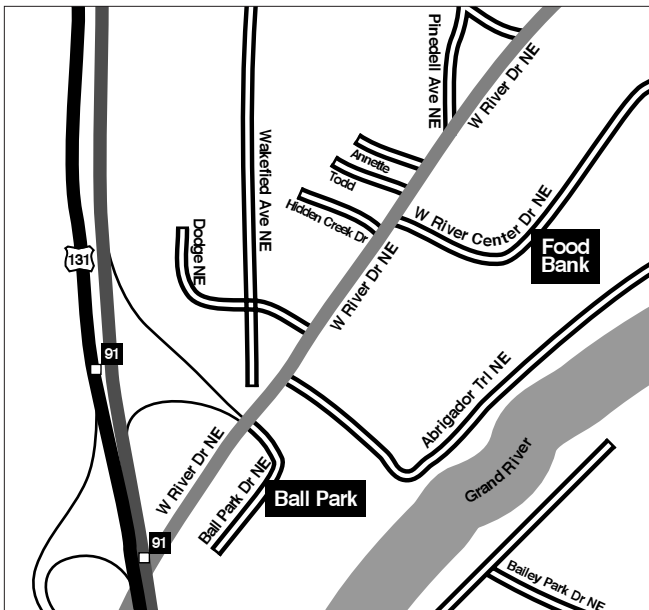
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**VISITING THE FOOD BANK?
We're easy to find.**

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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