



Full Plate PRESS

THE NEWSLETTER OF



Many Hands

Feeding America West Michigan Summer Fundraising Luncheon

June 10, 2014

Against Hunger



Winter was coming on, and the bills were already piling up. Hannah was trying to get through college while caring for her newborn, and her husband's wage wasn't cutting it.

She didn't know where to turn.

That's when she heard about the Mobile Food Pantry. The food she received helped her make it through another week and gave her a little more strength to press on.

Thanks to you, Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank is able to help hundreds of people like Hannah every day. Help us do more. Join us at the **Many Hands Against Hunger Summer Fundraising Luncheon** this June.

With a keynote speech from Judge Sara Smolenski and true stories of hunger and hope from people who've been there, the luncheon is your chance to further the fight against hunger.

Many Hands Against Hunger is June 10, 2014, from 12 to 1:15 p.m. at The Goei Center in Grand Rapids. The cost to attend is \$25 per person. Reserve your seat at FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org/Luncheon.

See you there!



Wear Your Heart on Your Sleeve

Show your heart for the hungry by purchasing Food Bank apparel from Live. Love. Michigan.

This spring Live. Love. Michigan. debuted a line of clothes for Feeding America West Michigan. The company is donating a quarter of the proceeds from every sale to the Food Bank, so each t-shirt, sweatshirt, tank top, pullover and messenger bag will help us send 25 meals to families in need. Check out the full line at HoldOnToHope.org.

Board of Directors:

President: Kelly Crosse

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Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank is a non-profit surplus food warehouse distributing about 2 million pounds of food monthly in cooperation with over 1,200 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. Our food reaches 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 United Way, and The Food Bank Council of Michigan.



You can feed West Michigan

To give online please visit us at www.feedingamericawestmichigan.org

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From Ken's Keyboard:

On March 18, 2014, Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank distributed its 400 millionth pound of food. The story of how we got from our first pound more than three decades ago to 400 million is a story of compassion and tenacity. It's the story of thousands of volunteers, donors and advocates who saw us through three moves, four recessions, hundreds of truck repairs and an expansion from one county into 40. But most importantly, it's the story of all those children who were able to grow up and live out their dreams because hunger didn't hold them back.

I'd like to look back at our history and recognize just a few of the dreamers who got us here. West Michigan Gleaners, Inc. was incorporated on April 23, 1981, under the direction of Betty Jane Alkema. At that time, the Food Bank was operating in 5,000 square feet of rented space on Logan Street in southwest Grand Rapids and distributing about 8,000 pounds of food per month. But it didn't take long for the idea of food banking to take off.

"We had that big warehouse just across the river from downtown Grand Rapids," said former executive director Gretchen Bouwsma, who oversaw the move to the Jefferson location, "and someone gave us a whole truck full of onions. And the only thing wrong with them [was] they had a little black you had to wipe off."

When another farmer dropped off a truckload of carrots soon after, the then-revolutionary idea of reclaiming surplus food took root in West Michigan.

The Food Bank distributed its 1 millionth pound of food under Gretchen's leadership in November 1983, and the following year, our Food Bank tapped in to the national food system by joining the fledgling Second Harvest network.

1989 saw the beginning of John Arnold's tenure as executive director. In the succeeding decades the Food Bank grew and changed, stretching into the Upper Peninsula and pioneering new ideas like client choice and Mobile Food Pantries that would become hallmarks of American food banking.

Since I had the daunting task of stepping into John, Gretchen and Betty Jane's shoes, Feeding America West Michigan has dedicated more resources to sourcing healthy foods, brought Mobile Food Pantries to the UP for the first time, forged new partnerships with local schools and added Food Rescue of Northwest Michigan to our network of warehouses.

But for as much as the Food Bank has changed over the years, our mission has remained the same: to get good food to our neighbors in need. For as long as hunger threatens people in our communities, Feeding America West Michigan will be there to lend a hand. We hope you'll be there too.


Ken Estelle, CEO



Full Plates Forever Society Welcomes New Members

Earlier this year, we told you about the Full Plates Forever Society, the new legacy group for donors who have made a commitment to including Feeding America West Michigan in their will or estate plans.

Since then, six new members have officially joined the society while dozens more have given planned gifts. We applaud these new members for their commitment to providing for their neighbors in need.

New Members:

Steven Handlovits
 Patricia Nevala
 Ethan Ray
 Mary C. Payne
 Thomas and Meghan Nelis



Full Plates Forever Society members Meghan and Thomas Nelis and Patricia Nevala with Food Bank CEO Ken Estelle

To join the Full Plates Forever Society, you only need to inform us of your decision to include the Food Bank in your estate plans. Start the conversation by calling Linda Vanderbaan at 616-389-6356 or by checking the box on the attached envelope that says, "I have included Feeding America West Michigan in my will or estate plans."



Food Bank Farm Enters Second Year

Last year, volunteers like you harvested 17,000 pounds of sweet corn at the Food Bank Farm. Not bad for a pilot project. This year, we're growing a second crop of corn at the West Michigan Agricultural Education Center in Eastmanville.

Dr. Adam Kantrovich, WMAEC board member, says this winter's heavy snowfall has delayed planting, but it also added necessary moisture to the ground. Planting should begin in early June.

Head to FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org/Farm to find out how you can get involved.



FOOD BANK SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2013

Did you know that what's good for the hungry is also good for the environment?

Last year, 74% of the product we took in was surplus food — more than 20 million pounds. Without the Food Bank, most of this food would have been sent to the landfill, wasting the energy used to produce it and contributing to methane pollution.

But for as much food as we save each year, there's a small percentage that can't be saved. The Food Bank is committed to putting as much of that waste product to use as possible. Here's how we did it.

Total Waste in 2013: 1,412,703 pounds

Where it went:

- Landfill: 729,381 pounds
- Plastic Recycling: 3,433 pounds
- Cardboard/Paper Recycling: 332,318 pounds
- Farmers: 120,171 pounds
- Fremont Community Digester: 227,400 pounds
 - Electricity Generated: Approximately 20,000 kilowatt hours, enough to power the average American home for nearly two years, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.
- Sustainability Score*: 48.3/100



Operations Manager Chad DeVries stands with Tim DeYoung of Clean Planet Recycling. In March, Clean Planet gave us 300 Gaylords to use during the Letter Carrier Food Drive.

*The sustainability score is the percentage of waste product that was recycled, given to farmers, sent to a digester, or reused in another way.

Hunger in Uniform: JROTC Cadets Overcome Food Insecurity

A hard rain was falling as the Mobile Food Pantry pulled up to Innovation Central High School on a Thursday evening in February. Sergeant James Peterson stood in the weather for a few minutes before deciding to move the food inside.

Half a dozen students, all members of Central's Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, started hauling skids of bread and boxes of lettuce off the truck and into the school. Cadets are required to do some volunteer work, but Peterson said Mobile Pantries are more than just a box to check.

"It's not just the promotion," Peterson said, "it's to see the smiles of the families as they come through. They actually see their contributions to the community."

One of the cadets helping that night was Clarence, an 11th-grade varsity football player who hopes to go to college through the Corps.

The food Clarence and his fellow cadets distributed that night was enough to provide half a week's worth of food for more than 100 households. The school has hosted five Mobile Pantries so far, and Clarence has volunteered at all but one. "He's always willing to help," Peterson said. Many of the cadets in Peterson's corps are in need of the same food assistance they're working to provide, but he didn't count Clarence among them.

Clarence himself told a different story. "I am that person that would come to get food," he said.

When school lets out for the summer — a time when many families struggle with food insecurity — Clarence and his mom will sometimes collect food at Feeding America West Michigan's Mobile Pantries. "That's why I want to do this... to make sure a family could eat at night, to make sure they have food."

“ That’s why I want to do this, ... to make sure a family could eat at night, to make sure they have food. ”



With 86 percent of its students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals, Grand Rapids Public Schools joined a federal pilot program in 2012 to provide

breakfast and lunch to all students. Principal Mark Frost said that the Mobile Pantry program ensures that his students have access to nutritious food at home as well as at school.

"For me, it's as simple as that," he said. "They're not getting fast food. They're getting fruits and vegetables. They're getting nutritious food to the whole family."

Teen Celebrates Birthday by Volunteering

It's Valentine's Day, and Rachel Rounds of Evart, Michigan, is celebrating her 18th birthday. "I just got back from a mission trip to Africa, and I was thinking about different things to do for my birthday, maybe going to see a movie or something like that," she says. Inspired by her time in Kenya and Uganda, Rachel decided to do something a little more meaningful.

She got a dozen of her friends to don hairnets and neoprene gloves and hit the Food Bank, where they spent the morning digging through bins of potatoes.

In Osceola County, where Rachel lives, hunger affects 15 percent of people, including more than a quarter of all children. In just a few hours, Rachel and her friends had sorted 23,000 meals worth of potatoes for families in Osceola and throughout West Michigan.

In the coming years, Rachel hopes to provide counseling and job training for refugees. But in the immediate future, she says, she would be taking her friends out for ice cream — "Something a little more birthday-related."



Rachel Rounds, center, and friends from Crossroads Community Church in Evart sorted about 30,000 pounds of potatoes on Feb. 14, the equivalent of 23,000 meals.

Walmart Grant Replenishes Aging Fleet

In March, Walmart presented Feeding America West Michigan with \$100,000 to replace semi- and straight trucks in its aging fleet.

The gift from the Walmart State Giving Program puts the Food Bank almost a quarter of the way to its three-year, \$1.33 million goal.

In addition to financial support, Walmart has also held the number-one spot on our food donor list for many years, contributing 3.1 million pounds of food in 2013 alone.



Food Bank CEO Ken Estelle addresses Walmart employees while store manager Erick Sutton presents the check.