

Full Plate Press

Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank

Spring 2011

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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COWABUNGA! 30 YEARS HASSLING HUNGER

*It was, like, April 23, 1981 when some West Michigan honchos said, "Whoa! Hunger here is totally bogus! With all these gnarly farms, sweet stores, righteous restaurants and bodacious food companies, there's mega grindage to feed all our neighbors for sure!" They were so stoked, they started a fantabulous food bank that's still slammin' after 30 years.**

In its first 20 months, West Michigan Gleaners (as our Food Bank was then known) gathered 167,000 pounds of edible, high-quality food, much of which was slated to go waste due to over-ordering, bumper crops and distribution challenges.

By picking up, sorting, safely storing and shipping this good food, we were able to help stock dozens of food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and other relief groups serving hundreds of hungry families.

Today, the concept is much the same – just exponentially larger and more effective. Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank now reclaims and distributes about 25 million pounds of food per year, helping feed more than 100,000 families in 40 West Michigan counties – a 30,000-square-mile area. Today, Feeding America West Michigan ranks among the nation's largest food banks (ranked by tonnage of distributed food) – larger than those in Atlanta, Las Vegas and Philadelphia.

Many factors have fed our growth. Most important, of course, is West Michigan's incredibly generous spirit: It goes against our grain

to let our neighbors go hungry! Also, we're a thrifty bunch. Why throw good food in a landfill when hard-hit families can eat it?

Admittedly, tax incentives haven't hurt. Dollar donations are fully deductible on both state and federal tax returns. Also, as corporate food donors know, goods given to regional food banks like ours qualify for a deduction of cost plus up to 50 percent of normal profit. And thanks to U.S. and Michigan "Good Samaritan laws," food donors are protected from liability, which helps put worries about recalls to rest.

Obviously, we're excited about marking 30 years of working within this amazing community. And we're planning a year's worth of celebrations and new support opportunities to commemorate this milestone. (Learn more elsewhere in this issue.)

But, lest we sound too rah-rah, let's remember the real reason we've grown and must keep growing: Demand keeps growing, too. But with your continued support for feeding families and starving landfills, we know that West Michigan can keep kicking hunger to the curb. And won't that be totally tubular, Dude?

**On April 23, 1981, a group of West Michigan leaders said, "Hunger in our region is completely illogical. With our many prolific, public-spirited farms, stores, restaurants and food companies, surely there's abundant food to meet everyone's needs."*

So, with tremendous enthusiasm, they started an effective, respected food bank that continues to perform impressively after 30 years.



TERESA'S TAKE

Will Reagan's "best job creation program" end in Michigan?



Here at the Food Bank, we see it immediately when economic policies affect the working poor. Demand for food quickly goes up; forklifts run non-stop; shelves and bins empty fast. That's why recent proposals to end the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) in Michigan cause us concern.

The EITC concept, which provides refundable tax credits to working people, was originally championed by former President Ronald Reagan as "the best anti-poverty bill, the best pro-family measure and the best job creation program ever."

Michigan-born President Gerald Ford signed the first federal EITC, which every president since – including Reagan – has expanded. Michigan, among other states, began an EITC program for state taxpayers in 1999.

The EITC has a long history of bipartisan support, particularly here in Michigan. In a recent survey by EPIC/MRA (one of the nation's most respected research authorities) significant majorities of all Michigan voters – including Democrats, Republicans and self-described Tea Party supporters – were opposed to ending the EITC.*

Perhaps that's partly because the EITC is good for Michigan business. "It's the one credit we've got that goes 100 percent to Michigan residents, and 95 percent is spent with Michigan businesses," says state House Tax Policy Committee Chair Jud Gilbert. Overwhelmingly, families tend to spend the credits locally – and quickly – on home repairs, car repairs (so they can get to work), utility bills, medicine and other health care.

Ending the Michigan EITC will plunge an estimated 14,000 more Michigan children into poverty. Interestingly, childhood poverty is a problem that Governor Rick Snyder has placed high on his "dashboard" of key indicators that urgently need improvement.

Whatever your political affiliation, please learn more about the EITC's huge benefits to Michigan business and our economy overall. Then contact your legislator and let him or her know how you feel and why.

We at the Food Bank feel incredibly fortunate to be able to help feed hard-working Michiganders in need. But ending the EITC will make doing so harder than ever as it increases financial burdens on the working poor – the clerks, cashiers, restaurant servers, day care aides, home health workers and janitors who are a huge and vital part of our economy and community. More and more of them will be forced to turn to the 1,300 church pantries and other hunger relief organizations in the 40 counties we serve.

For more information go to www.saveoureitc.com

*In the February 2011 survey, 76 % of Michiganders opposed ending the state EITC, 70 % of them "strongly." Among Republican women, 66 % opposed ending the credit, as did 59 % of Republican men and 59 % of Tea Party supporters.

Nation's Leading Charitable Rating Authority Renews our Four-Star Status

For the third straight year, Charity Navigator, Inc. granted Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank its coveted four-star, "exceptional" evaluation.

Only 14 percent of rated charities have ever received this recognition for three years straight, indicating that Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank "consistently executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way ... and outperforms most other charities in America," according to

Ken Berger, Charity Navigator's president.

Forbes, Business Week and Kiplinger's Financial magazines have all profiled Charity Navigator's data-driven analyses. The organization evaluates ten times more charities than its closest competitor and attracts more visitors to its website than all other charitable rating groups combined.

"As the non-profit sector continues to grow at an unprecedented pace, savvy donors are demanding more accountability,

transparency and quantifiable results from charities," Berger noted. He added that the four-star rating "differentiates Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank ... and demonstrates to the public that it is worthy of trust."



COMING UP

Some upcoming events and occasions that we think are worthy of note. Call Linda Vanderbaan at 616-784-3250 to learn more.

When	What	Where	Why
April 10-16	National Volunteer Week	Everywhere	Because it feels so good.
May 7	ACCESS/GRACE Hunger Walk co-sponsored by Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank	First United Methodist Church, Grand Rapids	Success happens step by step.
May 14	National Letter Carrier Food Drive	Your mailbox	These guys <i>really</i> deliver.
June 18 or 25	Alpine Golf Outing	Alpine Golf Course	Beat hunger with clubs!
July 30	30th Anniversary Picnic	Food Bank Main Warehouse	To thank you for all you do.
October 14	30th Anniversary Gala	Johnnie Noto's, Grand Rapids	Dude! It's been, like, 30 years!

30th Anniversary Tiles and Totes



Own a beautiful tile or tote bag celebrating 30 years of successfully fighting hunger.



Show your support for hungry families and for the environment with a spiffy new canvas bag, yours free with a donation of \$50 or more to Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank. The bag features a luscious, four-color logo commemorating the Food Bank's 30th anniversary. It includes the words "30 Years Feeding Families." Silkscreened on green cotton canvas, it's a sturdy, stylish tote to help you shop for food for your family. Look for the same beautiful commemorative logo on Food Bank trucks this year. It's also available on lustrous commemorative tiles that can serve as trivets or kitchen wall art. The tiles are also yours free with a donation of \$50 or more. Call Linda Vanderbaan at 616-784-3250 for yours.

AGENCY ACCENT

Newaygo and 10 other counties count on NCCS

It may be called Newaygo County Community Services, but it actually supports programs in 10 other counties as well: Benzie, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Muskegon, Oceana, Osceola and Wexford.

Organized in 1949 as The Fremont Foundation, the organization grew to become a vigorous, vital resource serving basic needs, youth development, family services, self-sufficiency, citizen involvement and the arts. Its best-known programs today include emergency housing, utility assistance, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and – not surprisingly in today's economy – a fast-growing food pantry.

The pantry.

With help from 150 volunteers, Lisa Johnson runs the NCCS pantry which serves approximately 7,000 households (including almost 500 new families added to the clientele last year). The pantry relies heavily on food from Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank.

"We get many hundreds of thousands of pounds of food from the Food Bank each year," says Lisa, a native North Carolinian, in a warm, throaty drawl. "Sometimes I'm amazed at the choices they offer."

Choices are important at the Newaygo pantry, where "clients come from all walks of life. There's a lot of diversity in our community, so there needs to be diversity in our food pantry, too," she points out.

"We've learned that what we order from Feeding America needs to be what families will use, not necessarily what we would like ourselves."

Healthy guidance.

That's not to say that NCCS doesn't encourage good nutrition. They emphatically do. "We color-code our groceries based on the (U.S.D.A.) food pyramid," Lisa says. "Green means fruits and vegetables, for example." Along with color-coding, the pantry posts and hands out food pyramid graphics, healthy menus and shopping lists focused on healthy, simple, affordable meals.

"Our menus and shopping lists really help stretch out meals," Lisa says. "For example, we show how beef or venison can be used for a pot of chili or goulash, then you can add veggies and noodles to the leftovers for another meal."

Lisa says young mothers are most appreciative of menus and other guidance. "They really want to learn, to help their kids

grow up healthy," she notes.

Besides groceries for its own pantry, NCCS also hosts monthly distributions by Feeding America West Michigan's Mobile Pantry program. "The fresh produce and perishable they bring are really welcome," Lisa observes. "Best of all, the mobile (pantries) have food for everyone, even people who don't meet (NCCS) income guidelines."

Does NCCS worry that families with means will take advantage of mobile distributions? "These days, hunger isn't limited to low-income families," Lisa points out. "To come somewhere and ask for food has to be one of the hardest things a person can do.

More than food.

"People come here when they're in crisis. I see them month to month, and they're so down. I tell my volunteers, put yourself in the clients' shoes. You know when they come to us, it's a really bad day for them. We can offer dignity along with food, and make their day so much better.

"When you go home at the end of the day and know you did all you could, that you made somebody's day better, it's a really good feeling," Lisa concludes. "I truly do love this job."



Tomatoes roll in – in a big way

On February 9, a bright Red Gold Tomatoes truck rolled into the main Grand Rapids warehouse, filled with 15,000 pounds of canned tomatoes from Red Gold, Inc. The Indiana-based company gets much of its crop from Michigan farms and sells under several brand names nationwide.

The donation was highlighted by the presence of an eye-popping, 3-D billboard on U.S. 131 and Wealthy Street, featuring what the company called "the world's largest tomato cans."



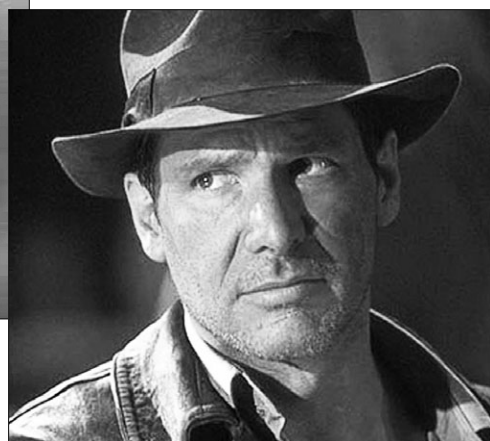
Get your glam on for the 30-year Gala.

Flaunt your flashiest gems. Dig out your hair gel. Strap on some shoulder pads. On Friday October 14, it will be 1981 all over again at the Food Bank's 30th Anniversary Gala.

Do yourself up as Debbie Harry, young Madonna or one of the Carringtons. Release your inner Indiana Jones. Dance to live '80s anthem rock on the humongous dance floor at Johnnie Noto's, 6600 28th Street, S.E. (near the intersection with Cascade Road).



Gala proceeds will benefit the John Arnold Endowment Fund for the Food Bank. So put one of those new-fangled Post-It notes* on your calendar. And watch your mail for more details about this most epic event.



*First introduced in 1981 - just like us!



Bank Roles

Business Manager Brenda Ward never gets bored.

"Never a dull moment" is how Brenda Ward describes her job. And she wouldn't have it any other way.

A 15-year veteran of the Food Bank, Brenda oversees the organization's computers (hardware and software), other office equipment, accounts payable and receivable, donation processing and acknowledgements, online ordering and all employee meetings and events. On top of all that, she supervises the administrative staff of six.

"I guess I'm the master troubleshooter," she says. "If someone's having trouble with software, I'm the one they call." The same goes if new reports are needed for a grant evaluation,



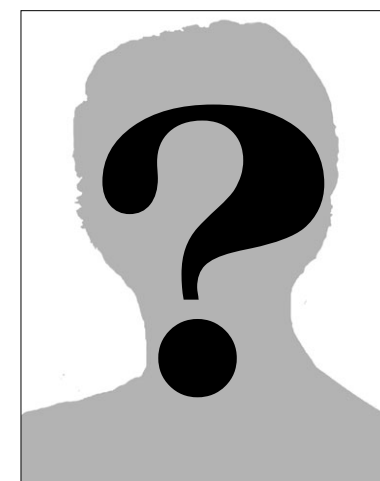
or if computers or phones go down. She does plan her days in advance, but notes that her plans can change radically "on a dime."

"You have to be really flexible to work in a food bank," she says. "I think everyone here is willing to pitch in wherever they're needed."

She says the Food Bank staff is "like a family" and, in her case, it's literally true. Her daughter Sara has worked there and her husband Mike still does.

"I'd be bored to death working anywhere else," Brenda says. "So I figure I'll be here until they drag me out, kicking and screaming. But seriously, what's important to me is to help continue what (former Executive Director) John Arnold started. That's reason enough for me to stay as long as they want me to."

BE WEST MICHIGAN'S NEXT FOOD STAR!



Follow in the footsteps of Paula Deen, Rachael Ray and Giada de Laurentis - sort of. Enter the Food Bank's new quarterly recipe contest, featuring ingredients from our generous food donors.

This issue's contest - our very first - features fresh sweet cherries from Gavin Orchards in Coopersville. The 240-acre farm, family-owned for three generations, produces apples, peaches, pears and summer vegetables that are sold in several Midwestern states and as far south as Florida.

You can find Gavin Orchards sweet cherries at many local grocery stores. (If you can't, you can substitute any Michigan-grown sweet cherries.) Use the luscious fruit in an original recipe of any kind - appetizer, soup, salad, entree or dessert.

Judges from the Food Bank and Gavin Orchards will choose a winner based on taste and originality. The winner will be featured in the next newsletter, in Food Bank news releases and at an annual contest and media event, tentatively scheduled for November.

Please send your original recipe featuring these sweet cherries to Linda Vanderbaan, Donor Relations Manager, at the address on the back cover of this newsletter. For more information, call 616-784-3250. Online submissions opens April 1 at www.FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org

2010 Mobile Pantry deliveries up 10 percent

Demand and deliveries through the Mobile Pantry program grew 10.2 percent last year, up to 9.2 million pounds - more than one third of the Food Bank's total distribution. Mobile Pantry trucks made 1325 deliveries - 13 percent more than in 2010.

Demand grew as the economy tightened in much of the Food Bank's 40-county region, increasing the burden on local pantries and other relief groups supported by the Food Bank. (Mobile Pantry visits hosted by these local groups allow direct delivery of fresh produce and other urgently needed, supplemental food.)

A new truck from Kraft Foods and a new Mobile Pantry operations hub at the Benton Harbor warehouse made the increased

deliveries feasible, according to Mobile Pantry Program Coordinator Jerry Knapp. "We're now sending out 771,000 pounds of food a month on Mobile Pantries," Jerry said. "If the Mobile Pantry program were its own food bank, it would be bigger than about half of the food banks in the Feeding America network."

Jerry continued, "What really matters isn't how big the program is, just that it's big enough. With

continued support from West Michigan's generous companies and communities, we can keep it that way."



Volunteers glean 8 tons, process 3.8 million pounds.

Day in and day out, in the fields, orchards and warehouse, you'll find Food Bank volunteers gathering, sorting and packing food for the 1,300 food pantries, 40 counties and 100,000 families we serve.

In 2010, these volunteers "gleaned" more than 16,000 pounds of fresh produce from local farms. (That is, they picked leftovers after the main harvest – with the farmer's permission, of course.) Agencies and their clients get a surprising amount of healthy, fresh produce from these outings, which attract many families and school and church groups.

Also last year, volunteers working in our Reclamation Department sorted and packed food to suit agencies' and clients' needs. Much of their efforts go into turning large commercial loads into family-sized

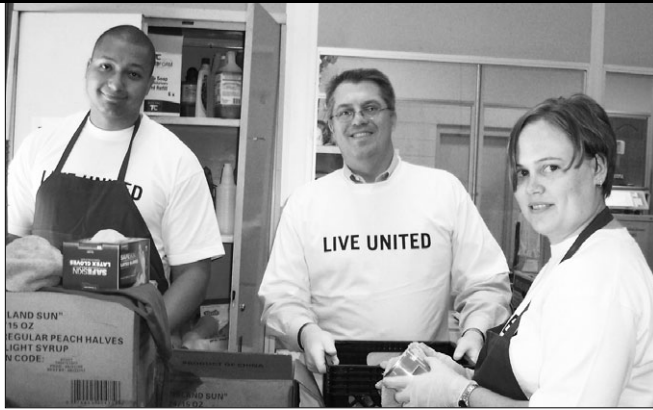


packages. For example, Panera Bread restaurants send us huge packs of bread products daily. Volunteers immediately put the breads into bags of the size you'd buy at a store, so they can be used by hungry families before they go stale.

But not all donations come in huge batches. Sometimes we get small amounts of food or have a few pallet leftovers. Volunteers pack these goods into Assorted Food Boxes (AFBs), which some agencies prefer to offer their clients. They packed 790,800 pounds of food into 26,360 AFBs last year.

It's because of our volunteers that Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank can keep its costs among the lowest of any food bank in the country. It's because of them that we win recognition from groups like Charity Navigator. (See the story on page 2.) In fact, without our 2,000 volunteers, we probably couldn't run the food bank at all.

To learn more about volunteer opportunities at the Food Bank, call Dena Rogers at 616-784-3250.



2010 Gleaning Report

The gleaning season in Michigan lasts from April through September. Here's a sample of what volunteers picked after harvest at our communities' farms in 2010.

Groundswell Farm, Zeeland
663 pounds of carrots and parsnips

Daly Orchard, Hart
240 pounds of cherries

Sandy Bottom Berries, Rockford
264 pounds of blueberries

Bridget Tubbs-Wolford, Ada
5,399 pounds of apples

Ridgeview Orchards, Conklin
9,535 pounds of apples

Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank Largest Product Donors in 2010

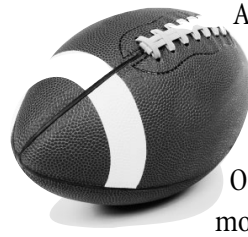
Walmart/Sam's Club	2,295,491
Quaker-Tropicana-Gatorade	1,238,329
Spartan Stores	1,216,082
Country Fresh Dairies	846,091
Coca-Cola	719,278
Nestle	718,646
Kraft	613,543
ConAgra	551,776
General Mills	532,388
Gordon Food Service	497,443
H.J. Heinz Co.	341,388
Dannon	321,896
White Wave Foods	284,206
Hillside Orchards	277,625
Kelloggs	272,449
Hearty Fresh Produce	262,167
Marker Farms	261,533
Litehouse	235,951
Sysco Frost Pack	186,128
Abbott Nutrition	180,977
Welch Foods Inc.	177,423
Pearson Foods Corporation	173,051
Pepsi Cola Co.	144,015
Superior Sales	140,966
Van Solkema Produce	140,332
CVS	120,489
Boar's Head Provisions	118,318
Heald's Valley Farms	114,695
Twin City Foods	113,244
Request Foods, Inc.	104,792
Woodwyk Casey, Inc.	101,285
Total	13,301,997

Hundreds more companies, organizations, and individuals donated an additional 11,573,526 lbs. We greatly appreciate every pound, every donation and every donor!

In December, Walmart provided a refrigerated truck to Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank. Valued at \$90,000, the truck has a load capacity of 10,000 pounds. The 17th truck in our Food Bank fleet, it will be used primarily – and coincidentally – to pick up donated food from regional Walmart and Sam's Club stores. This truck was funded through a Feeding America national grant.



Kraft Foods and Spartan Stores huddle to hand us \$10K



After its "Huddle to Fight Hunger" football season campaign, Kraft Foods and its retail partners donated millions of dollars to Feeding America food banks nationwide. Our food bank received \$10,000 – the monetary equivalent of some 30,000 meals.

For the fundraising campaign, Kraft Foods "huddled" its well-known brands (including Kraft Macaroni & Cheese, Planters nuts, Oscar Mayer meats and Maxwell House coffee), using coupons, online games, Facebook, texting and in-store displays to encourage participation. The campaign was the giant food company's largest charitable event ever.

New fundraising committee forms

To help the Food Bank keep up with fast-growing community needs, seven community leaders have joined our new Fundraising Committee. The committee will support new and ongoing fundraising activities, including media relations and special events.

Members include Brett Christie of the Grand Rapids Press, Michele DeSelms of WXMI/Fox 17 news, Meredith Gremel of Gremel Communications, Eric Gruener of Sysco, Craig MacMillan of Country



Fresh, and Dave Straw of Skytron.

Board chairman Kevin Begin of Country Fresh and board member Kelly Crosse of Amway will attend committee meetings as board liaisons.

"I'm deeply grateful for the concern and commitment of these respected business professionals," said Donor Relations Manager Linda Vanderbaan. "Their energy and expertise should give our efforts the extra 'oomph' to stir even more community support."

STAFF AND BOARD GATHER FOR JOHN ARNOLD'S FAREWELL

On Friday, December 17, Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank's board and staff hosted a small farewell breakfast to honor retiring Executive Director John Arnold.

Associate Director Teresa Pawl-Knapp presented John with a scrapbook crafted by local artist Kristi Hekker, filled with staff and board members' personal remembrances and archival photos.

Two vice presidents from Feeding America's national office, Rose Dalba and Sandra Hensley, visited in lieu of President Vicki Escarra (who was unable to attend due to sudden family illness). They presented John a custom-made plaque thanking him for his "many significant contributions to food banking" and bearing this quote from Cesar Chavez: "To make a great dream come true, the first requirement is a great dreamer. The second is persistence."

It could have been written to describe John's 28 years of game-changing innovations and unflinching effort.





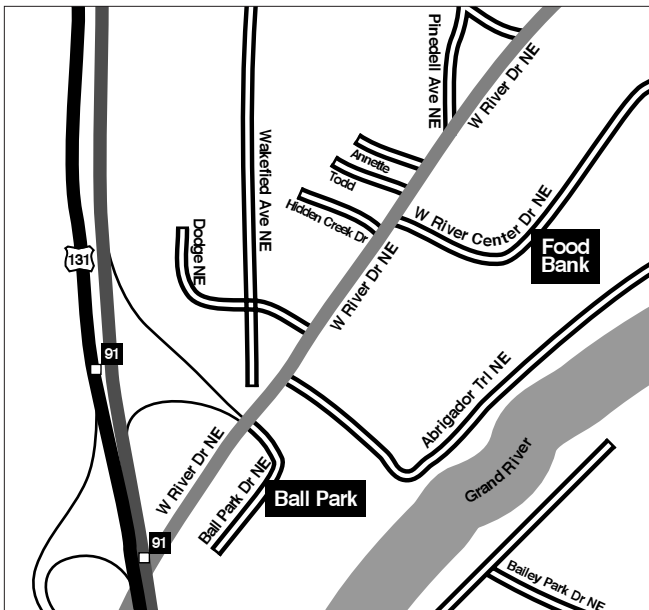
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**VISITING THE FOOD BANK?
We're easy to find.**

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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