

# Full Plate PRESS

THE NEWSLETTER OF



## From Ken's Keyboard:

Time goes by quickly! We are now through another busy holiday season, and I am again amazed at the continued generosity and support we see from our Michigan community. Over this past holiday season, I heard many stories of need, but also stories of hope and encouragement.

One of the most memorable events of this past year was the project initiated by 10-year-old Payton, who for her birthday decided to raise money to sponsor a Mobile Food Pantry for her community. This act of selflessness by this young lady was an inspiration to many of us. It demonstrated that there is no specific age, income or experience needed to help those in need.

As proud as I am of Payton, I am also proud to live in a community that refuses to stand by and accept that some of their neighbors worry about how to provide the next meal for their families. Whether you are supporting your local food pantry, soup kitchen or shelter, or supporting our work at Feeding America West Michigan, your willingness to share time and resources is what makes this such a wonderful community.

I am also encouraged by the number of caring organizations within our 40-county service area that are committed to fighting hunger, homelessness and, ultimately, poverty. As I look at the year ahead, I am excited by how many of these organizations are working together to leverage resources and experience to do more together than any of us could do alone. I see a renewed desire to collaborate more than ever before.

On behalf of our Board of Directors and our Food Bank Staff, I would like to wish all a very warm and happy New Year.

  
Ken Estelle, CEO



## Food Bank Passes Milestones on March Against Hunger

What was only an idea a few months ago has now translated into over \$86,000 to fight hunger in West Michigan.



This September, the Census Bureau announced that 15 percent of Americans were living in poverty. In West Michigan and the Upper Peninsula alone, one in six people has unreliable access to food.

It was clear to us that figures this daunting couldn't go unanswered, so we declared our intention to raise \$238,000, enough to send an additional 1 million meals to families in need. The Million Meal March was underway.

On a brisk morning in late September, 250 people came out to Feeding America West Michigan to show their support for this crazy goal by hiking 10 kilometers along the White Pine Trail. Together, teams from churches, schools and businesses raised money for our Food Bank and made it clear they were serious about tackling hunger.

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## Board of Directors:

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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. Ultimately, 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](http://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.



### You can feed West Michigan

To give online please visit our website at [www.feedingamericawestmichigan.org](http://www.feedingamericawestmichigan.org)

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## March Against Hunger...continued from page 1

One month later, we held our Million Meal March Awards Luncheon to celebrate Access of West Michigan, Old Orchard Brands, Walmart and volunteer Kristi Hekker for making our work possible.

Even as we honored past achievements, our speaker, Ali Benjamin, challenged us to advance our million-meal goal. Benjamin, whose documentary work on childhood hunger has reached millions, reminded us that a community's greatest responsibility is to care for its most vulnerable members, especially the one in five children growing up food insecure in West Michigan.

Since then, the Million Meal March has continued with a series of events at local restaurants. The list includes famous establishments like Brewery Vivant, which set aside 30 percent of one day's sales for the March, and village eateries like Cannonsburg's Grist Mill, whose owner paid to have our cause promoted on a local radio station.

None of this could have happened without the support of our many sponsors. From local veterinary clinics to Fortune 500 companies — all have given generously from the very beginning. We're sincerely grateful.

The Million Meal March campaign is far from over. More events are in the works, including partnerships with Reds on the River and The Gilmore Collection. We hope the relationships we've made with compassionate individuals, hikers, restaurant patrons and business owners will only grow stronger.

As we continue pressing toward our million-meal goal, we hope you'll walk with us.

### Thank you to the following sponsors. You made the Million Meal March possible.

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The Gilmore Collection

Flo's Pizzeria Ristorante & Sports Bar

Hawks and Owls

Chinese Baseball

Suburban 5 & 10

The Corner Bar

Friends of the White Pine Trail

Amway Grand Plaza

GR Outdoor





Feeding America West Michigan was honored to have writer and researcher Ali Benjamin speak at our Million Meal March Awards Luncheon on Nov. 1. Ali's 2011 book, "The Cleaner Plate Club," offers practical recipes for parents seeking independence from prepackaged foods, and her Emmy-winning TV special, "Sesame Street: Growing Hope Against Hunger," brought stories of childhood hunger to a national audience.

**FAWM:** Can you explain the connection between health and cooking?

**AB:** Wow, that's something that I so just take for granted. Simply [for food] to be processed, there's added sugar, there's added chemicals, there's added salt. Rarely does processed food include vegetables we should be eating.

Home cooking has terrific benefits for people's health, to be sure. But the benefits go well beyond that. Cooking brings people together in a way that they don't often anticipate — every family we featured in the Sesame Street program experienced a greater sense of togetherness when they started cooking at home, using more whole ingredients.

Being able to make a meal from scratch can also be incredibly empowering for families — it's a way of doing for

oneself, not depending on big corporations, in a way that can be deeply satisfying.

**Q:** Why was it important for you to tell the stories of food-insecure children?

**A:** I knew it was going to reach audiences that aren't ordinarily reached with those messages. Through the whole thing, everybody that we dealt with at Sesame Street was so thoughtful and so incisive and so — I'm trying to think of a different word than demanding — but expectations were so high because it wasn't about them, it was about the kids.

I knew it had the potential to kind of move the dial, to sort of shift things a little bit and shift people's perceptions and help people get reconnected with [hunger]. And it was really fun.

**Q:** What role can Food Banks play in solving food insecurity, rather than simply assisting those who are food insecure?

**A:** I think anything you can do to expose kids to cooking classes [is helpful]. If there's a way to make it easy, where you get a bag and it includes curry and onions and carrots and whatever you're going to cook with it — it's raw and the recipe is right in there.

If [food banks are] where people are getting their food, then you totally do have a role to play in helping them figure out how to do it as healthy as possible in the same way that, I think, schools do.

**Q:** What makes you hopeful about the American food system?

**A:** I think people are talking about it. Sesame Street turned their attention to it, but they're not the only ones. People are talking about all aspects of it in a way that I haven't seen in my life before. There's a kind of awareness rising, and it's not that the solutions are easy because I don't think they're easy. But the fact that we're talking about it is hopeful.

In the last year and a half, I've talked to people around the country who are working in the food system, and they're so dedicated and thoughtful. I feel like there have been small pockets [of change] that are going on and if we could sort of integrate everybody, that's really a powerful force.

## OUT OF THE OFFICE AND INTO THE WAREHOUSE

This summer, public accounting firm Crowe Horwath LLP sent its interns to Feeding America West Michigan to get personally acquainted with hunger relief. They spent July 27 in our reclamation department, hauling vegetables and bagging popcorn.

Senior auditor Julie Jansen recommended Feeding America West Michigan to this summer's interns because of an experience another group of interns had in 2010. "I was very impressed with how organized the Food Bank was," Julie said of the project.

After getting a little dirt under their nails at the Food Bank, the interns organized an office-wide cash drive. Altogether,

Crowe Horwath's Grand Rapids office raised \$7,000 for local nonprofits, \$1,150 of which was donated to Feeding America West Michigan.

Crowe Horwath integrates community involvement into its internship program because it reflects the culture of the firm, said managing partner Charles Frayer. "It's also a great opportunity for us to see the interns work together on a project."



## DARDEN FUNDS MOBILE PANTRIES

The vast majority of our financial donations, the ones that sustain the Food Bank from day to day, come from people like you. For specific projects — IT, infrastructure, even new staff members — we often look to foundations for support.

This year, the Darden Foundation granted \$4,000 to expand our Mobile Food Pantry program in Kent County; hosted by East Leonard Christian Reformed Church and Aberdeen Reformed Church, these Mobile Pantries will bring food into the heart of Grand Rapids' northeast side.

Darden's gift was actually four grants, each awarded by one of their Grand Rapids restaurants. (Darden owns Red Lobster, Olive Garden and LongHorn Steakhouse, among others.) "Our service philosophy extends far beyond the walls of our restaurants," said CEO Drew Madsen. "These grants bring that philosophy to life by helping to develop a better future for those we serve, one community at a time."

Restaurants feeding the hungry — it makes sense. Thank you, Darden.

## Family Tradition of Generosity Bears New Fruit

On Oct. 22, Jim Haadsma signed over the title to his 1999 Sterling straight truck to Feeding America West Michigan. The truck, which will be converted into a refrigerated unit with a lift gate, replaces one that the Food Bank recently took out of service. For Jim, the seed of that donation was planted 30 years ago.

As an independent contractor with FedEx Ground, Jim owns seven delivery routes and employs eight drivers and an operations manager. He got his start in the transportation business in the late 70s, delivering milk for his family's dairy company, Quality Creamery.

"We were one of the last dairies to deliver door-to-door in West Michigan," Jim said. While visiting customers' homes, Jim saw the dire economic straits many of them faced. "Even if they had 70 or 80 dollars owed to our company, they still needed milk for their kids," he said. His father and uncle quietly waived their bills.

Later, as a distributor for Voortman Cookies, Jim began donating to Feeding America West Michigan.

This year, Jim was looking to sell one of the trucks in his fleet. A local church asked him to donate it to their food pantry, but they discovered it was too big for their purposes. "As soon as they said 'too big,' I remembered the Food Bank," Jim said.

The week after Jim made his donation, one of the Food Bank's trucks broke down completely. "It was perfect timing on that. It could not have been better," said Tim Johnson, logistics manager at the Food Bank.

Once Jim's truck is converted, it will be able to haul meat and produce, even at the height of summer. Its versatility will be a great asset, Tim emphasized.

"I hope it was as good a vehicle [for you] as it was for me," Jim said.

Like Jim, each donor plays a crucial role in getting food to the families who need it. Each one has a history, a reason they feel inspired to give. What's yours?



## THESE BUSINESSES ARE FEEDING WEST MICHIGAN



*Meijer supports our work with food donations and volunteers.*



*Volunteers from Ameriprise help us pack bulk food into family-size containers.*



*One of our biggest donors, US Signal also sends employees to help in the warehouse every month.*



## Holiday Donors Fill Food Bank's Shelves

Every year, without fail, nonprofits across the country are flooded with cash donations between Thanksgiving and New Year's.

At Feeding America West Michigan, the same applies to food donations.

On Nov. 2, a truck driver dressed like Santa Claus — beard and all — pulled into our dock with 3,600 loaves of Aunt Millie's bread. Just before Thanksgiving, FireKeepers Casino dropped off a stretch-wrapped gift of 200 turkeys, part of their 1,000-bird donation to food banks in Michigan and Indiana.

Our food sourcing specialist Katie Auwers recorded 15 separate food drives running simultaneously this season. Some of these drives are big, company-sponsored events like Lake Trust Credit Union's food drive, which brought in 880 pounds.

Many others are held at schools and churches. They may not come with eye-catching graphics or media campaigns, but the food they provide is no less valuable. Fifteen West Michigan schools brought in 3,300 pounds of food in November, an impressive haul by any standards. With the holiday parties over and the New Year begun, we want to thank all of you who gave food, money or time to make this season a little more hopeful for your neighbors in need.



*Santa Clause dropped off 3,600 loaves of Aunt Millie's bread.*



*Lake Trust Credit Union hosted a holiday food drive.*

## Locally Grown Produce on the 'Horizen'

Hydroponics — it sounds cutting-edge, but it's actually as old as Babylon.

Bridgette Ujlaky, co-owner of Horizen Hydroponics, explained how the Babylonians used an early hydroponic technique to create the famous Hanging Gardens. According to Bridgette, many of the tomatoes on sale in supermarkets today are grown hydroponically.

The concept is simple. Instead of growing vegetables in the soil, where they are at the mercy of weather, deer and insects, grow them inside in containers filled with aerated water and nutrients. The result, Bridgette said, is greater yield with a third of the water.

Bridgette and her husband, John, started Horizen Hydroponics out of their home 13 years ago; the company now has four locations in West Michigan, and they're using its success to feed the hungry.

This August, Horizen held a month-long food drive for Feeding America West Michigan that culminated with the fourth-annual Grand Harvest Festival on the 25th. Offering \$500 in gardening equipment for the largest donation, Horizen collected 1,396 pounds of zucchini, squash, cucumbers, corn, watermelons and tomatoes for the Food Bank. Funny Farm Organic Produce of Grant, Michigan, claimed the prize.

Horizen has collected food for Feeding America West Michigan since the Grand Harvest Festival began in 2008.



*Horizen Hydroponics and its customers donated 1,396 pounds of fresh produce this summer.*

The thought of her own children not having access to fresh produce is one of the biggest motivations for her involvement, Bridgette said.

"We're connoisseurs of food, and we wanted to share that with the community," she said. "There's just so many hungry people, it's staggering, and for us to be able to make a difference — it's our way of giving back."

# 10-Year-Old Michigan Girl Gives Up Birthday Presents to Feed Hungry Neighbors

*Note: This article first appeared Oct. 16, 2012, on The Huffington Post.*

This summer, the Disney Channel aired a TV spot about hunger in America. Ten-year-old Payton Babcock of Twin Lake, Michigan, happened to be watching that day.

Her mother Angie Babcock remembered how Payton came up to her and said, “Mommy, I don’t want to get gifts for my birthday, I want to give people food.”

Angie and her husband Chris made a deal with their daughter: If Payton could raise \$400, they would cover the remaining \$400 to bring a Mobile Food Pantry to their community.

“That’s when she got really gung-ho about it,” Angie recalled. “She went out that day and got started.”

Payton knocked on doors, wrote letters, and with the help of her parents, created a Facebook page to spread the word. After four weeks, she had beaten her parents’ challenge by more than \$200.

Payton’s grandma Lisa confirmed that this is her granddaughter’s typical way of interacting with the world — “She’s always looking for chances to give things to her sisters. She’s always got that heart.”

On a Saturday in late September, Payton and more than 30 of her friends and family greeted the truck from Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank when it pulled into the parking lot of Holton United Methodist Church. As they unloaded the truck’s 10,000 pounds of tomatoes, watermelon, yogurt, bread and meat, the clouds that had briefly dribbled sleet on the volunteers began to clear. By 2 p.m., the sun was shining, and nearly 90 people had gathered to collect food.

Wearing a pair of latex gloves and a bright blue T-shirt that read, “Little kids can do big things,” Payton stocked tables with summer squash and bell peppers. Payton talked with her clients, many of them seniors, some younger couples with children, and tried to convince them to take more fruits and vegetables. Asked if coordinating a

Mobile Food Pantry was hard work, Payton replied, “Mhmm, but it’s fun.”

Scott, a 52-year-old native of nearby Muskegon and a 27-year-old veteran of the National Guard, watched Payton at work as he stood in line. Despite being employed as a furniture fabricator for Herman Miller, Scott’s financial situation is far from secure. “I go to court Monday to get evicted from my foreclosed house,” he said matter-of-factly. “Everybody has more wants than needs,” Scott said. “Food is a need.”

More than one in six people is food-insecure in Muskegon County, according to Feeding America’s most recent study. While the job market in the county is improving, the unemployment rate sits at a dicey 9.1 percent.

These figures are part of a larger story, one in which, as the USDA reports, 17 million American children struggle to meet their nutritional needs and poverty holds at the two-decade high of 15 percent. Yet as USA Today, The Nation, and The Washington Post pointed out recently, direct discussion of poverty and how to reduce it have been largely absent from the political discourse this election season.

One Mobile Food Pantry funded by a 10-year-old girl from Twin Lake won’t lift Muskegon County out of economic difficulty, but it has gotten people talking. Payton’s birthday present to her community is a singular example of what one person can accomplish with selfless vision and a dash of creativity. Children like Payton Babcock signal that a change may well be coming in our society’s attitude toward the hungry — a move away from grudging charity toward personal investment.

“It’s so much fun to have the kids out here,” said Judy Clark-Ochs, a long-time hunger relief worker in Muskegon County who was present that day. “Look at what it’s doing to them. This is the next generation.”

The Mobile Food Pantry program is administered by Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank. It is designed to put fresh and healthy food directly into the hands of those who need it. To learn more, visit [feedingamericawestmichigan.org](http://feedingamericawestmichigan.org).





## Interns Reflect on a Summer of Service

This summer, Feeding America West Michigan was fortunate enough to have two interns from Thornapple Evangelical Covenant Church working in our reclamation department. Colin McLaughlin, a high school senior, and Sean Baas, a freshman in college, spent much of the summer working at our Food Bank through Thornapple's Glenn Van Noord Short-Term Urban Missions Program.

The Van Noord program connects Thornapple's high school students with local nonprofit organizations and pays them a small stipend for their time. Our Food Bank has benefited from Van Noord interns for the last three years. "They've been some of the best workers we've ever had," said Heather Powell, assistant reclamation coordinator. "If you ask them to do something, they'd do it without question."

As a final project, Colin and Sean wrote reflection papers about how working at the Food Bank changed their perspective on hunger and their ability to address it.

Sean

*"I got to meet a ton of new, fantastic people, learn a good work ethic and help people who are in need all at the same time. I had a great time working there and would go back in a heartbeat if I was given the chance." The impact of his work was hammered home for Sean when his grandparents told him about something called a "Mobile Food Pantry" that had visited their church. "I told my grandparents that I had most likely sorted those potatoes, cleaned the squash and helped consolidate all of the tomatoes they got. They were so thankful [for] the work that I had done and very proud of all the people that I had helped."*

Colin

*"Glenn Van Noord has brought a whole new perspective of the world and its inhabitants into my own life. I now have a greater awareness of problems in my own community. Also, I have truly learned to look at people in need as people just like you or me. In my service at Feeding America, a difference is made each day that is significant. I was able to help thousands of people each and every day at work. Before Glenn Van Noord, I was under the [impression] that I really didn't make a difference in the scheme of things. That thought has completely vanished now, and I am fully aware of what I can do for my community."*

*"I WAS UNDER THE [IMPRESSION] THAT I REALLY DIDN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS. THAT THOUGHT HAS COMPLETELY VANISHED NOW, AND I AM FULLY AWARE OF WHAT I CAN DO FOR MY COMMUNITY."*

Colin McLaughlin, high school senior

## Rockford 5-Year-Olds Feed the Hungry

Stephanie Arnett, former director of AppleTree Christian Learning Center's summer program in Rockford, wanted to get her kids involved in hunger relief. At five to 12 years old, though, an afternoon working in the Food Bank warehouse wasn't the best option for them.

Instead, they held a car wash fundraiser, and then Stephanie brought the kids to the Food Bank to see how the money was used.

"A lot of those kids are privileged," Stephanie said. "We wanted to show them that not everybody does have food readily available and to show them that they can give back".

For the kids, Stephanie said of their fundraiser, it was a lot of fun. "We had about 40 to 45 kids," Stephanie said. "We put them into small groups and, as a vehicle approached, we had a rinsing team, a washing team, and they all had different parts of the car that they were responsible for. "They definitely had a few water fights as well," she admitted.

AppleTree's approach — a fundraiser coupled with a tour of the Food Bank — works well for elementary schoolers, said

Dena Rogers, Feeding America West Michigan's volunteer coordinator: "To come here to the Food Bank [and work] is great, but it's not always age-appropriate. When they do fundraising, it's very impactful."



Around West Michigan, kids are diving into hunger relief. These students from North Park Montessori sorted food at our Food Bank this summer.

## Volunteers Glean Tomatoes at Bos Greenhouse



On a breezy Monday afternoon in mid September, customers were bustling in and out of the store at William Bos Greenhouse and Farm with grocery carts full of corn, squash and the summer's last watermelons. Behind the store, the fields were flush with red tomatoes, and six volunteers from Feeding America West Michigan were gathering the leftover crop.

"We've just had tomatoes galore," said Kevin DeBaar, in charge of business development at the farm. The weather may have been disastrous for apples and corn this year, but Bos' tomatoes thrived in the dry heat.

The Food Bank's gleaning program was ready and willing to take the excess.



Out in the field, Food Bank volunteer Karen Wolf discovered a couple cherry tomato vines growing alongside the giant beefsteaks. "They're sweet as you can possibly imagine," she said. "They're like candy."

In another row, Brad Friedland was rooting for tomatoes in the tangled vines. A retired physician, Brad does service projects in his free time. "I've done other volunteer work, but I'm probably better with tomatoes than with people," he said, smiling.

Though this year's gleaning program struggled alongside West Michigan's farmers, the Food Bank managed to collect over 5,000 pounds of produce from four farms. More than 3,200 of those pounds came from Bos.

Bos Greenhouse and Farm began donating tomatoes and other produce to the Food Bank in 2004. Bill Bos, Jr., grandson of Peter Bos, who started the farm in 1913, had a simple explanation: "They go to waste otherwise."

Beyond simply reducing waste, Kevin added, Bos supports Feeding America West Michigan and the families it serves "because it's the right thing to do. Just like the Bible says, you know, share the corners of your fields."

To the farmers who supply our Food Bank with fresh, Michigan-grown produce and the many volunteers who glean it, we're immensely grateful. Thank you.



## Planned Giving is about Values, not Finances

What is planned giving? Simply put, it's "a way to do in perpetuity what you have faithfully done for years," said Debra Minton, president of Philanthropia Partners, a consulting firm that advises nonprofits and their donors.

"Sometimes they're 26, and sometimes they're 66. It all depends on the individual," she said.

By including a nonprofit's endowment in their will or estate plans, donors can ensure the same kind of security for that organization that their loved ones will enjoy.

Planned gifts can take any number of forms, Debra said. "If you can clarify the what, ultimately you can figure out the how."

While she recommends talking with a trusted financial advisor to determine which kind of planned gift is best for you, Debra offered two basic methods to consider. First, she recommends naming an organization as one of the beneficiaries of your life insurance policy. Second, she suggests bequeathing the money that remains in your estate after your loved ones have been taken care of.

"If someone leaves 4 or 5 percent to an organization, that can really add up," she said. "Those are really two very easy ways to go about it."

*To learn more about how planned giving can benefit Feeding America West Michigan and you, please contact Linda Vanderbaan at 616-389-6356 or [lindav@feedingamericawestmichigan.org](mailto:lindav@feedingamericawestmichigan.org).*

For Debra, planned giving is not really about personal finances, investments or tax law. It's about values.

"If you have ... people who have given regularly and faithfully throughout their lives, they want an opportunity to do that after their time on earth is over," Debra said. "It's a way to ensure that the way you feel [about] and support an organization is continued forever."

Debra pointed out that most of us are inspired to create a will when we experience what she calls an epiphany event: "It could be the death of a parent. It could be the birth of a child. It could be a divorce. ... Any time when you begin to think about your values and about your family, making sure that your desires and wishes are going to be carried out."