

Full Plate PRESS

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

Mobile Pantries Come to the UP for the First Time



Kids volunteer at Link's Mobile Food Pantry in November.

Despite the rain, there was an almost festive atmosphere around the Luce County Community Resource and Recreation Center in Newberry, a village of 1,500. A few weeks before Thanksgiving, Luce County saw one of Feeding America West Michigan's Mobile Food Pantries roll in with 7,500 pounds of fresh produce, bread and dairy products.

The Food Bank delivered its first Mobile Food Pantries to the Upper Peninsula in 2013.

"Usually we can only afford to serve 20 families," said Mary Archambeau. "This time it's 120."

Archambeau has served as director of the Link, as the center is known, since it was founded 16 years ago. Since then, volunteers and private donations have allowed the agency to grow into a central part of its community, providing food, youth mentoring, access to state programs and sometimes even shelter, as it did when the area was ravaged by wildfires in 2007 and 2012.

Wildfires are far from Newberry's only challenge. The Upper Peninsula has some of the highest rates of food insecurity in the state. Its chronically high unemployment is compounded by a lack of resources for those in need.

Jennifer Dibble, a Link volunteer and client, has to drive 700 miles round-trip to see a specialist in Ann Arbor, spending money she doesn't have.

"We get \$15 in food stamps a month," Dibble said as she loaded a case of yogurt into a client's box. "We don't know how we're going to pay every bill ... It creates a lot of stress."

"Everybody in this community cares for everybody else," Archambeau said. "That's how we survive."

November's Mobile Pantry provided as much food as Archambeau is able to pick up from the Food Bank in several months. The agency plans to host more Mobile Pantries in the future.

"I'm seeing more and more people needing help, so this is great," Archambeau said. "Together we can help this community in ways I could never help them before."

A woman collects food at Link.





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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.



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From Ken's Keyboard:

By all accounts, the need for food assistance is growing in West Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. Four years from one of the worst economic downturns in recent history, demand for our help is higher now than it ever was during the Great Recession.

In April, Feeding America West Michigan broke its record for most food distributed in a single month, and then broke it again in October. In 2013, the Food Bank distributed about 25.5 million pounds of food.

With the housing market back on its feet and the stock market soaring, how could more than 316,000 people in our region be struggling with hunger?

The truth is that this wave of prosperity has left many treading water. Michigan's unemployment rate remains higher than the national average, while many of those who can find work are hired part time. Meanwhile, federal food assistance decreased for all recipients in November with deeper cuts on the horizon.

But there's another side to this story. As need has increased, so has the generosity of our supporters. Local growers like Near Farms and Gavin Orchards have poured produce into the Food Bank, while large-scale donors like Kellogg's and Meijer are donating more surplus food than ever. Individuals like Sally Munk have included us in their estate plans, and children like Owen Ronning have raised money to bring Mobile Pantries to their neighborhoods.

This year will be remembered for its incredible challenges, but more importantly, for the boldness and generosity with which they were met. Thank for you standing with us in the fight against hunger.

Ken Estelle, CEO



Million Meal March Draws a Crowd

More than 250 hikers supported the Food Bank during the second Million Meal March 10K Trail Hike on Sept. 28. Together with 30 sponsors, they raised \$20,000, enough to send 80,000 meals to struggling families. In less than two years, the Million Meal March has provided 617,000 meals.



Taking the Fight to Hunger from Chennai to Greenville

The Tripura Foundation is donating \$2,500 each month to revive food distribution efforts in Ionia and Montcalm counties, where food insecurity is high. Based in India, the Tripura Foundation recently began a campaign called A Million Meals of Hope to fight hunger around the world.



Foundations, Corporations Keep Food on the Road

This was a tough year for our fleet, and many of our trucks had to be retired. To keep the food moving, Meijer donated three Volvo tractors to the Food Bank, and a growing number of foundations are committing funds to restore our fleet, including Greenville Area Community Foundation, Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area, Grand Haven Area Community Foundation, Bank of America and Walmart.



Correction - Our organization's total expenses were printed incorrectly in our most recent annual report. The correct total is \$38,208,783. Total revenue for 2012 was \$38,049,927. Figures include value of food.

Full Plates Forever: A Society Dedicated to Solving Hunger

We have always believed that West Michigan has enough food for everyone. The challenge is getting that food to those who need it. To do that, we need a group of people singularly devoted to the cause of ending hunger.

The Full Plates Forever Society is that group. Whether by giving generously during their lifetimes or by designating a portion of their retirement fund or estate to the Food Bank, they have included the Food Bank in their long-term plans.

In gratitude for their fundamental role, the Food Bank will recognize these supporters in a variety of ways. Each will receive a custom-designed lapel pin, invitations to special events and a place on our Full Plates Forever wall.

You don't have to be wealthy to join the Full Plates Forever Society. All you have to do is include the Food Bank in your long-term plans at whatever level you feel comfortable with — and let us know about it.

If you have already made a commitment or would like more information about the Full Plates Forever Society, contact Linda Vanderbaan at 616-389-6356 or LindaV@FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org.



Sally Munk: Driven by Passion for Food and People

During the Great Depression, the destitute would go from house to house looking for scraps of food, maybe an apple or a heel of bread passed through the door. When beggars came to her family's farmhouse in Springport, Sally Munk's mother would invite them to join the family for dinner.

Sally's niece Joanne wonders if the memory of her mother's kindness was the reason Sally decided to leave a portion of her IRA to Feeding America West Michigan. "It's just a natural extension of her personality," she said.

Sally and her husband Marlin met in Grand Rapids in 1947 and never left. They loved the city, especially its food. Sally was a fixture at local restaurants like Marco's and Marie Catrib's, and her dinner parties once landed her in the Grand Rapids Press.

Sally stayed active after Marlin's death. When she wasn't watching MSU football or video-chatting with relatives on her computer, she was finding ways to serve people. Sally passed away in October 2013 at the age of 92.

Through Sally's generosity, the Munk family's compassion is still providing meals to people in need. We're grateful for this incredible gift and the exuberant woman who gave it.

Ways to Make a Planned Gift

Bequest: The most common form of planned gift, a bequest can be a designated dollar amount or percentage, a piece of property or the remainder of your estate.

Retirement Accounts: When you name a charity as a beneficiary of your IRA or 401K, you can make sure your money goes to the cause of your choice after your lifetime.

Charitable Gift Annuity: Make a gift to the Food Bank today, and you can create a reliable source of income for the rest of your life.

Donor-Advised Fund: Creating a donor-advised fund is like setting up your own charitable foundation but without the hassle. You receive a tax deduction, your gift is grown through investments, and you can issue grants to charities at your own pace.

Traditional Skills Preserved at Baxter Community Center

As a girl growing up in Mississippi, Marvie Johnson, 74, watched her grandmother tend a garden full of peaches, plums and persimmons, canning almost everything, even jelly made out of peach skins.



Danielle Veldman (right) leads Baxter Community Center's canning class.

Baxter Community Center, an agency of Feeding America West Michigan, is helping southeast Grand Rapids rediscover those skills. On a Thursday evening in September, Marvie and five

other participants in Baxter's Around the Table canning class, are skinning tomatoes, chopping peppers and simmering it all together to make salsa. (Note: Cooking facilities like Baxter's must pass state health inspections.)

After each session in the 10-week course, participants take home a dozen jars of food they've canned themselves. The graduation present: their own set of canning equipment.

"The only way that's possible is through Feeding America and donations," says Baxter staff member Danielle Veldman. Almost all the produce used in the class comes from Feeding America West Michigan.

According to Cooking Matters, the average American family wastes \$1,600 in food each year. Food banks can cut down on large-scale waste by

reclaiming surplus food, but it takes an approach like Baxter's to help families get the most out of the food in their own kitchens.

"Until I came here, I never liked beets," says participant Tunia Ward.

Through this course and others offered at Baxter, Ward has learned to appreciate a wider variety of foods. Canning also allows her to stockpile that food for lean times. She says a greater knowledge of recipes and techniques helps her waste much less.

"I garden, so I wanted to learn how to do this," says Derek Leshan as he ladles salsa into jars. Canning appeals to him because it's healthy, cheap and actually pretty easy. Because of the skills he's gained at Baxter, his 10-year-old stepdaughter is getting into it too.

Food Bank Farm Celebrates First Harvest

If you're standing between Charlie Ham and a row of sweet corn, get out of the way. In two short hours this September, the owner of Ham Family Farms and his employees picked 5,800 pounds of corn with their bare hands. It was something to behold.

In the Food Bank Farm's pilot year, 38 volunteers, including the Coopersville Future Farmers of America and students from Calvin College and Grand Valley State University, helped us put 17,192 pounds of sweet corn on the tables of families in need.

"We learned a lot about the trials that farmers go through and how the weather can really affect everything that you do," said Katie Auwers, food sourcing specialist at the Food Bank.

None of this would have been possible without the support of the West Michigan Agricultural Education Center, which donated 3.5 acres for this project. WMAEC board member Matt Hehl managed the farm, while Dr. Adam Kantrovich of the MSU-Extension provided guidance throughout the season.



Charlie Ham with employees Lindsey and Varo.

Remembering Ed Nieuwenhuis



Ed Nieuwenhuis (back left), shown with his family.

Long-time board member Ed Nieuwenhuis passed away unexpectedly in October. Ed possessed a quiet wisdom in the service of a compassionate heart.

When he retired from Meijer, Inc. in 2002, Ed brought his expertise to the Food Bank's board of directors and pushed to install a racking system in the warehouse, increasing our capacity three-fold.

Ed was returning from his grandson's soccer game when he suffered a major heart attack. He passed away shortly after. Ed and his wife, Sandy, were married 50 years.

Memorial gifts may be sent to Calvin Christian School, Grand Rapids Christian School, Feeding America West Michigan and Covenant Life Church.