

Full Plate PRESS

THE NEWSLETTER OF


**FEEDING
AMERICA**
West Michigan Food Bank

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Letter from the Board President and CEO

Last year, the board and staff welcomed a new CEO to Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank, and this year, we said a final goodbye to our long-time executive director and dear friend John Arnold. As we enter a new season in the life of our Food Bank, one thing will always remain the same: **Our shared commitment to ensuring that food is available to the hungry in our community.**

In 2011, Feeding America West Michigan celebrated its 30th anniversary. During that historic year, volunteers gleaned a record number of fruits and vegetables from local farms; two new staff members — Ron Groen and Katie Auwers — reinvigorated our push for donated food; and our fall gala brought in \$42,000 to support our mission.

In the following pages, you'll hear the story of 2011 told through numbers and personal stories. We hope you will gain greater insight into how our Food Bank works and a reminder of why our mission is so vital to our community.

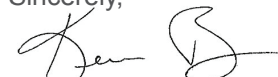
Before you continue, though, we want to thank you, our donors and volunteers. Without your support, none of this would be possible. Without your help, good food would be wasted and struggling neighbors would go hungry. Thankfully, that isn't the case in West Michigan. Last year, your compassionate giving sent millions of pounds of food to 100,000 families from Benton Harbor through the Upper Peninsula.

Because we know you're committed to the hungry in West Michigan, we're not afraid to ask once again for your help. We need you to volunteer, to donate and to tell your friends and family why you do. Nothing compels people to get involved like a personal story.

Remember, every hour and every dollar committed to Feeding America West Michigan feeds families in your neighborhood, in your church and in your workplace.

Thank you for making 2011 a year to remember. With your help, we're confident 2012 will give us just as much reason to celebrate.

Sincerely,



Kevin Begin, President of the Board



Ken Estelle, Chief Executive Officer



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www.feedingamericawestmichigan.org

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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 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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volunteers and

Volunteers Power the Food Bank Through Another Year

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Feeding America West Michigan. They help us collect food, they sort donations in our warehouse, they assist our office staff with record-keeping and in the summer and fall, many of them glean fruits and vegetables from local farms. In short, we depend on the generosity of people like you every day.

In 2011, 1,740 people volunteered 23,480 hours at our Food Bank. In our reclamation department, they cleaned and sorted 4.2 million pounds of product. While it would be almost impossible to thank them all, this is the story of one group of volunteers who helped us recently.



Abby Spickerman, a member of Future Farmers of America, gleans raspberries at the Agsearch Company in Conklin.

Serve Week

This summer, junior and senior high school students from around North America gathered at camps and churches in West Michigan for Serve, a multi-denominational series of week-long service projects. Presbyterian, Catholic, Christian Reformed and Baptist, they share a single mission: helping people in need.



Students and a minister from Camp Greenwood weigh frozen scrambled eggs in the reclamation department.

Students from Camp Greenwood and LaGrave Avenue CRC worked side by side in our reclamation department the last week of June, sorting frozen food and soap dispensers for food pantry clients all over West Michigan. "Our purpose this week for five days is to dedicate our time to help others," said Sam, a student from Mason, Michigan, who was attending Camp Greenwood. "The goal is to improve lives for other people, which helps us too."

"The idea is to move kids into a different context," said Clint Sozier, a Presbyterian minister leading the group from Camp Greenwood, "and if they can see how other folks live, they may be challenged to look at the ways they live."

In mid-July, Serve teams from St. Robert of Newminster Parish and Brookside CRC drove up to Sandy Bottom Berries in Rockford for a gleaning project. (Through our gleaning program, local farmers set aside a portion of their fields for volunteers to harvest.) Christian, a student from Georgia, talked about the importance of volunteering as he filled his bucket with blueberries: "There's so much you could do, like these berries. Someone could be eating these in a week or two. It just feels good to help people."



Much-needed rain washes the fields at Sandy Bottom Berries in Rockford, while teams from Serve and Americorps gleaned on July 18.

Serve teams play a key role at the Food Bank every summer. They illustrate one of the greatest benefits of volunteering: the bonds that are formed while serving others.

To Camp Greenwood, St. Robert, LaGrave, Brookside, Faith CRC, Plymouth Heights CRC and Week of Hope — thank you for pouring your time and sweat into serving the hungry.

food donors make it possible...

Michigan Farm Supports Food Bank Despite Tough Growing Season

Our Food Bank could not exist without the good food donated by producers, retailers and distributors. These donors come in all sizes and from all over the country, from family-owned blueberry fields in Ottawa County to large corporations like Sysco, Walmart and Sara Lee. This year, we wanted to highlight the vital contributions of our Michigan-based food donors. They provide some of the freshest and most nutritious food we distribute. This is a portrait of one of them.

A big, red barn stands beside a gravel road disappearing into rows of cherry and apple trees, bushy and green beneath a wide open sky. A closer look reveals the truth: Almost no fruit grows on the branches.



Renee Gavin points out one of the few surviving apples at Gavin Orchards.

Walking through the orchard, Renee Gavin spots one of the few apples that managed to escape this year's extreme weather. "You might get a bushel out of the whole acre," she says.

In early July, temperatures topped 100 degrees, and a drought scorched crops across mid and south Michigan. This comes after a spring whose early thaw coaxed fruit trees into blossom and then killed their buds with a sudden freeze—"a double whammy," explains Renee's husband Mike Gavin, owner of Gavin Orchards, one of Feeding America West Michigan's top local food donors.

The weather hasn't only hurt farmers. Prices in the grocery store have increased, the processing industry has taken a hit and many agricultural laborers are out of work. Next year, Mike explains, the trees will likely overproduce, flooding the market with cheap fruit. Mike expects Michigan will feel the economic aftershocks of the 2012 crop loss for five years.

"I personally don't recall ever having anything like this event," he says. Michigan farmers like Gavin Orchards supply much of the fresh fruits and vegetables our clients depend on. Despite the losses his farm has sustained, Mike remains committed to donating.

Behind the rows of apple and cherry trees, fields of cabbage and sweet corn sprawl across nine acres. Mike is cultivating these crops exclusively for the Food Bank. Keeping them alive through the drought takes almost constant irrigation.

"I've got water on top of it, I've got water underneath it — it's expensive for me, but I'm trying to fulfill my obligation," Mike says.

It takes dedication and a true commitment to the hungry for Michigan-based donors to support our work, especially in challenging years like this. To Gavin Orchards and all our local food donors, thank you. You make it possible for our clients to enjoy fresh, tasty, nutritionally rich foods, and we will always be grateful.

Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank's Largest Product Donors in 2011

Walmart / Sam's Club	2,868,288 *
Kraft Foods	900,025
Country Fresh Dairies	821,320 *
Spartan Stores	781,000 *
Dannon	739,902
Quaker-Tropicana-Gatorade	578,279
Kelloggs	535,752
General Mills	506,925
Gordon Food Service	440,482 *
Coca-Cola / Minute Maid	437,998 *
Mars Snack Food	416,025
Lighthouse Foods	321,508 *
Sysco Grand Rapids	260,358 *
White Wave Foods	259,080
Abbott Nutrition	256,805
Marker Farms	251,034 *
Welch's Foods	245,886 *
Roskams Bakery	238,791 *
H.J. Heinz	228,752 *
Nestle USA	222,489
Hearty Fresh Produce	182,003 *
Boar's Head Provisions	175,258 *
Gavin Orchards	170,679 *
Conagra	160,052 *
Casey Woodwyk Produce	155,284 *
Old Orchard Brands	132,690 *
Pepsi-Cola Bottling	131,919 *
Steve Miller Produce	127,001 *
Campbell Soup	105,120
Sara Lee Foods	104,361 *
Rice Lake Farms Packing	83,094 *
Spring Valley Farm	49,856 *
VanSingel Farm	47,699 *
North Bay Produce	42,437 *
Superior Sales	41,763 *
Cargill Kitchen Solutions	38,620 *
Klein Orchards	36,198 *
Hillside Orchards	31,364 *
Herbruck Poultry Ranch	27,746 *

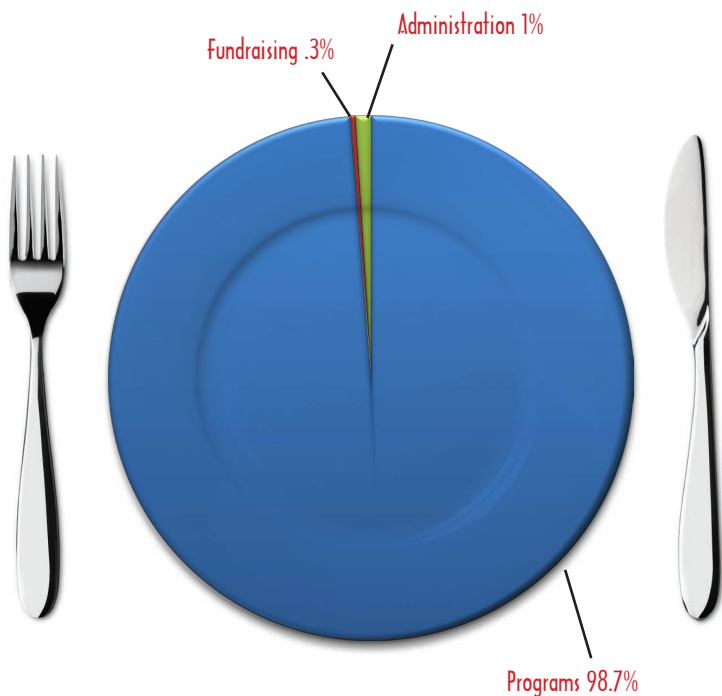
Hundreds more companies, organizations and individuals donated food for a total of 24,101,558 pounds. We greatly appreciate every pound, every donation and every donor!

* The product donated was grown or produced in Michigan, or was donated by a store within the state.



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION JUNE 30, 2012

the numbers...



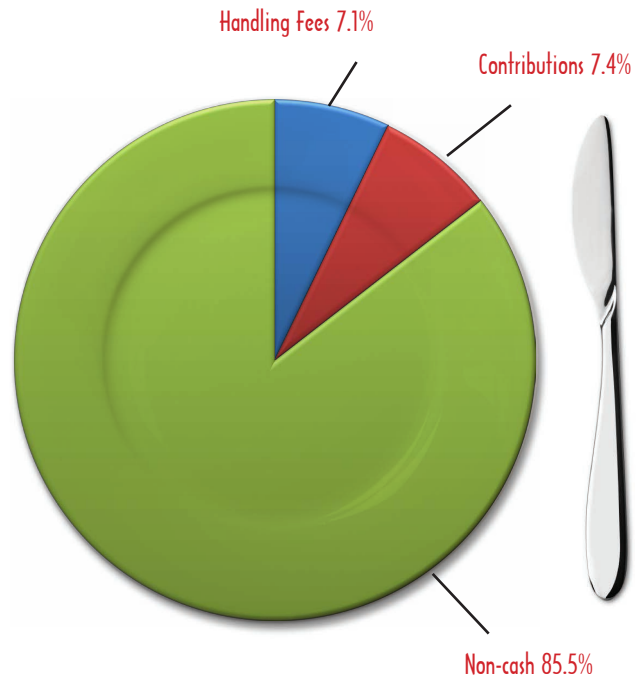
EXPENSES

Fundraising: This is the amount we spent on fundraising campaigns.

Administration: This is the cost of supporting our dedicated core of support staff.

Programs: All expenses related to reclaiming, storing and delivering food to some 1,250 agencies across West Michigan are recorded under Programs. Included here are Mobile Food Pantries, gleaning projects and the value of the product we handle.

Programs	\$36,059,026	98.7%
Fundraising	\$110,096	0.3%
Administration	\$351,433	1.0%
Total	\$36,520,555	



REVENUE

Handling Fees: Agencies help us bear the cost of obtaining, processing and distributing food. They receive most of their food for less than 10% of its retail value.

Contributions: Approximately half of our cash income comes from donors. Every dollar enables us to distribute about four meals.

Income: By far our biggest stream of revenue comes in the form of in-kind contributions, including the 24 million pounds of food we received in 2011.

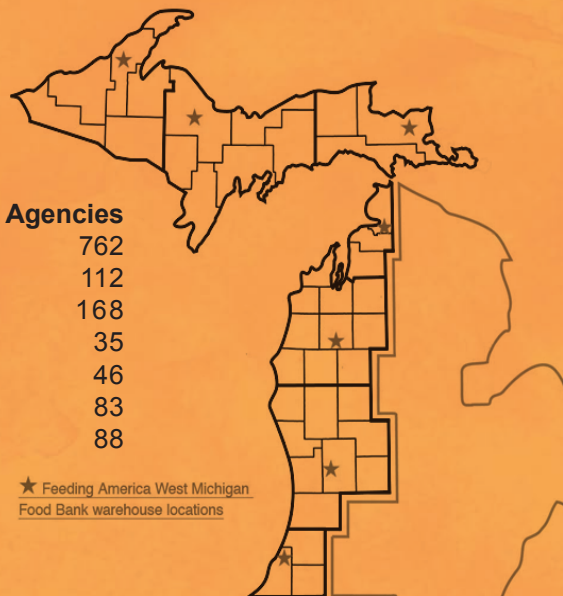
Handling Fees	\$2,603,515	7.1%
Contributions	\$2,677,312	7.4%
Non-cash	\$31,139,130	85.5%
Total	\$36,419,957	

ENDING NET ASSETS \$8,435,090

Pounds of Food Distributed From Each Warehouse in 2011

Warehouse	Pounds	Agencies
Comstock Park	15,253,173	762
Cadillac	2,073,918	112
Benton Harbor	1,893,120	168
Manna Food Project	1,734,086	35
Western U.P. Food Bank	864,691	46
Ishpeming	721,181	83
Sault Ste Marie	362,743	88

★ Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank warehouse locations



how we do it...

It takes a lot of coordination to fight hunger in a service area larger than Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts put together. To accomplish this task, Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank has grown into a network of five warehouses and two affiliated anti-hunger organizations. Together, we serve **100,000** families across **40** counties each year.

The Aspiring Film Student

A young woman with streaks of purple in her hair was watching the veterans set up a Mobile Food Pantry at the American Legion post in Rockford. Others had come from Boy Scout troops and the local Masonic lodge to volunteer. Asked if she was there to help too, the young woman told a different story.

Maggie, a senior at a local high school, had come to pick up food with her mom. She had been to food pantries before, but this was her first time at a Mobile Pantry. Fruit juice, yogurt, watercress, green beans, French bread — the truck was packed with fresh, minimally processed foods that help fill in the gaps left by many traditional food pantries.

Maggie talked about her interest in visual art and performance. She'd been involved with theater, but movies were her passion. "A visual representation on film sticks there longer than words," she said. "Other people can see what you want them to see."

After graduation, Maggie plans to attend film school. "I'm just so excited about it. I want to skip senior year and go straight there, but they won't let me," she said, grinning.

By supporting Feeding America West Michigan and its Mobile Pantries, you're sending food to over 100,000 families each year, and that helps students like Maggie reach their goals. She has a dream and the determination to realize it.

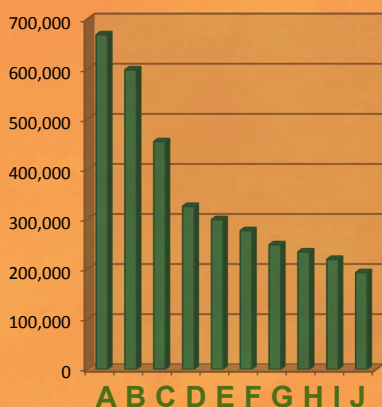
Thank you for not letting hunger stand in her way.

Volunteers set up tables, greet and serve Mobile Pantry clients at American Legion Post 102.



why we do it...

Right now in Michigan, hundreds of thousands of families are turning to food pantries or aid programs for help. Though the state's economy is slowly improving, unemployment is still above 8 percent, and in Kent County, 16.3 percent of people are in poverty. For many families, food pantries are the last line of defense against hunger.



Top 10 Agencies with Total Pounds Received

Agency	Total Pounds Received
A Buist Community Assistance Center	668,721
B Muskegon County Cooperating Churches	598,708
C Love, Inc. - Newaygo County	455,077
D Senior Meals Program and Food Pantry	325,888
E Salvation Army	299,430
F Family Network	277,460
G Project Hope of Allegan County	249,209
H NCCS/TrueNorth Community Services	234,969
I Love, Inc. of the Tri-Cities	220,075
J United Church Outreach Ministry	193,467
Total	3,523,004

In 2011, this network distributed a total of **23,616,119** pounds of food and other products to some **1,300** food pantries, soup kitchens, domestic violence shelters and other agencies.

Hunger remains a burden on thousands of families. In West Michigan, over **350,000** people are food insecure, and one out of every five children struggles with hunger.*

With government aid programs tightening their belts, more families will turn to Feeding America West Michigan for help. Your support is essential if we're going to meet this need.

* Rhoda Cohen, J., Mabli, F., Potter, Z., Zhao. *Mathematica Policy Research, Feeding America. Hunger in America 2010.*

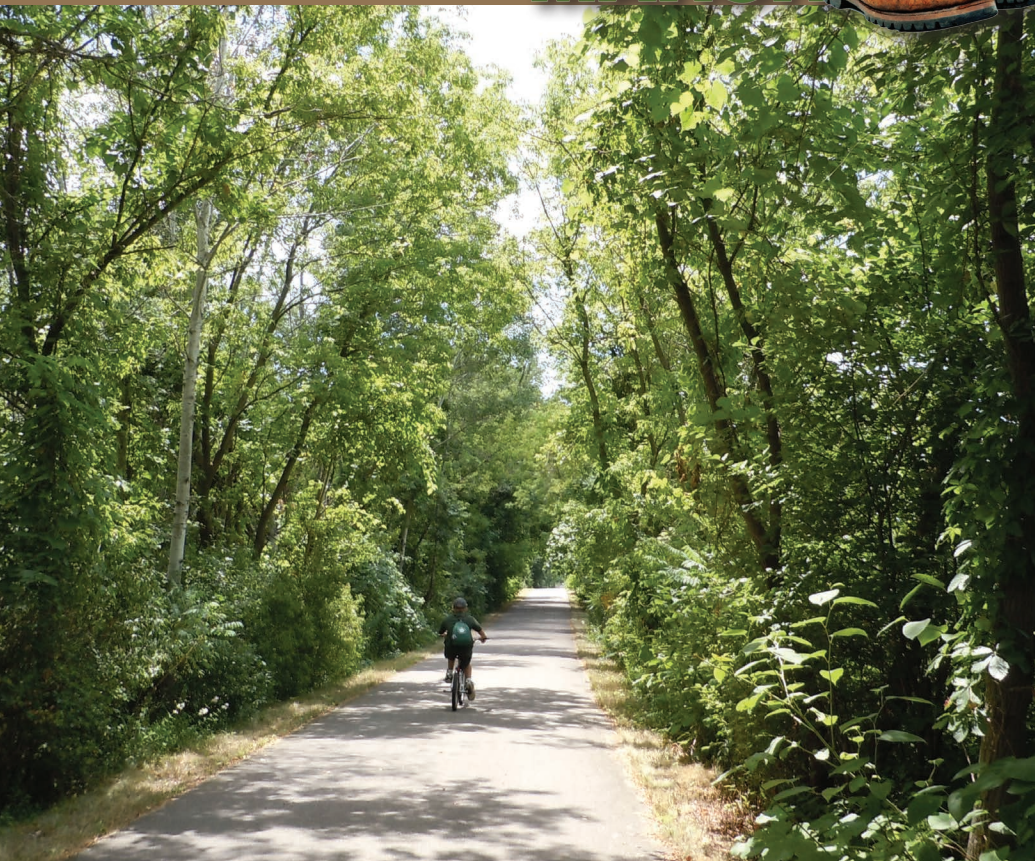
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FALL Newsletter 2012

Marching Toward a Million Meals

A couple hours on a wooded trail in late September. Music, hotdogs, all the colors of fall. Good food for West Michigan families in need.

This is the Million Meal March, and it's kicking off on Sept. 29 with a 10K hike on the White Pine Trail. The mission, taken up by hikers like you, is to raise enough money to send out one million meals in addition to what Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank already distributes. On top of helping hungry families, the Trail Hike also benefits Friends of the White Pine Trail, caretakers of the state park.



In our service area alone, the 40 Michigan counties from Berrien on the Indiana border to Gogebic in the Upper Peninsula, one in six people struggles with hunger. Among children, it's one in five. Is it really possible to meet this need? If we all band together, we can.

Stand up and add your strength to the March by signing up at MillionMealMarch.org. To reach our goal of sending one million meals to families in need across West Michigan, we're asking every participant to raise at least \$100. You're not alone in this. Once you register, we'll give you tips on how to encourage friends and family to give.

A host of West Michigan organizations have already joined the March: Friends of the White Pine Trail, Kent District Library, Wolverine Worldwide, Country Fresh, Eastown Veterinary Clinic, Forest Hills Foods, B.C. Pizza of Belmont, Rockford's Corner Bar, Reds on the River, Brick Road Pizza, and Cannonsburg's Honey Creek Inn and Grist Mill.

The White Pine Trail Hike begins at Feeding America West Michigan in Comstock Park (864 West River Center Drive). Starting at 9 a.m., participants can register in person, pick up t-shirts and drop off donations prior to the hike, which kicks off at 10 a.m. Water will be provided along the way, and The Corner Bar of Rockford will serve their famous hotdogs, free of charge, at the halfway point in Belmont. Live music will be performed by Hawks and Owls, Chinese Baseball and Suburban 5 & 10.

If you don't live in our immediate area or you aren't able to join us on Sept. 29, you can still march. Donate online, check out our Eat Out to Beat Hunger calendar to find a list of participating restaurants, or organize your own March. You can find all this information at MillionMealMarch.org.

Fresh foods are often too expensive for struggling families to afford. . . many of the guests at her pantry and community kitchen have never eaten home-cooked meals before.

Grants Bring Nutritious Food to Benton Harbor

On the east side of Benton Harbor, situated between an abandoned home and an old warehouse overgrown with sumac and shrubs, stands Feeding America West Michigan's southwest branch. The branch supplies food to 150 food-assistance agencies in Berrien, Cass and VanBuren counties.

A staff of four runs this operation full-time: April Buchtel, Cindy Thompson, Randy Derrick and branch manager Rich Glista. The branch may cover a small part of Feeding America West Michigan's 40-county service area, but it serves a vital role, especially in Benton Harbor, a small town plagued with unemployment. According to a 2011 article in The New York Times Magazine, 60 percent of its residents are on at least one form of public assistance.

At the same time, Berrien County is one of Michigan's most productive agricultural regions, number one in the state for direct-to-consumer sales of agricultural products. Despite this abundance, Feeding America West Michigan's southwest branch could store only a very limited amount of perishable food — until this June.

Together, the Walmart Foundation and the Frederick S. Upton Foundation granted over \$200,000 to overhaul the branch's warehouse. We used this money to install new, four-tier industrial racking, which increased the branch's storing capacity by 200 percent.

In addition, this grant allowed us to purchase a drive-in cooler for the branch. Designed and built by American Cooler Technologies of Lawrence, Michigan, and installed by Kalamazoo's Suburban Mechanical, the new cooler contains over 18,000 cubic feet of space. That space will be used to store delicate and nutritionally rich foods like milk, yogurt, lettuce, tomatoes and apples, many of which will come from nearby farms.

With this new stock of fresh food, the branch will be able to run more Mobile Food Pantries in southwest Michigan. Mobile Pantries are a means of sending whole foods like bread, milk, apples, and greens directly to the people who need them. The branch's goal is to run four per week by the end of the year.

Rev. Yvonne Hester, the executive director of Benton Harbor Street Ministries and one of Southwest's most active partners, said this increase in fresh food is exactly the kind of thing Benton Harbor needs.

Fresh foods are often too expensive for struggling families to afford, and Rev. Hester explained that many of the guests at her pantry and community kitchen have never eaten home-cooked meals before. She remembered one young man telling her, "Ms. Hester, we don't know how to eat like this. When we go home, we eat pizza rolls and TV dinners."

Sister Mary of Benton Harbor's Catholic Community Center has been working with Feeding America West Michigan's southwest branch for 12 years. Every Wednesday, the Community Center collects food from the branch. Fruit, Sister Mary said, is normally the hardest item for her organization to come by. Now that Southwest has a new, high-capacity cooler, she looks forward to accessing more produce donated by local farmers.

With Benton Harbor striving to reenergize its economy while caring for its most vulnerable, the grants from Walmart and Upton come at just the right time. Feeding America West Michigan and its partners in Benton Harbor are deeply grateful to the Walmart and Upton Foundations for investing in hunger relief and look forward to reaping the benefits of their generosity for years to come.





Hunger Action Week

If you've ever wondered what it's like to live in poverty, if you've ever doubted that it's possible to make a healthy meal with groceries from a food pantry, if you want to know what you can do about hunger in Kent County, now's your chance.

Hunger Action Week 2012 kicks off on Wednesday, Sept. 5, with a poverty simulation hosted by Access of West Michigan at the YMCA in downtown Grand Rapids. The four-day series includes a healthy food cook-off, food pantry tours and a screening of "Hunger Hits Home," a Food Network documentary on childhood hunger in the U.S.

Hunger Action Week, entering its second year, is coordinated through Kent County's Food and Nutrition Coalition, whose members include Feeding America West Michigan, Access of West Michigan, Kids Food Basket, United Church Outreach Ministry and Booth Family Services, a ministry of The Salvation Army.

Share Hunger Action Week with your friends on Twitter (@hunGRyweek) and on Facebook (facebook.com/hunGRy.actionweek). By spreading knowledge about hunger, you can spark change.

West Michigan **BIG LOTS!** Food Drive

On July 15, West Michigan Big Lots stores wrapped up their third food drive for Feeding America West Michigan in two years. During the 15-day drive, Big Lots collected 1,375 pounds of food and \$190 for the Food Bank.

Much of the energy behind this effort radiates from Mike Willis, assistant manager of the Plainfield Avenue location. His Big Lots store has donated excess product to Feeding America West Michigan for years, but after touring the Food Bank in 2011, Mike decided they could do more. His store expanded its donation list to include other products and started hosting food drives.

Part of Mike's motivation is personal. "I'm a parent of one child, and we're a dual-income family," Mike said, "and there are still times when I go to a local church to pick up food." Hunger, Mike insisted, is a problem that can affect anyone.

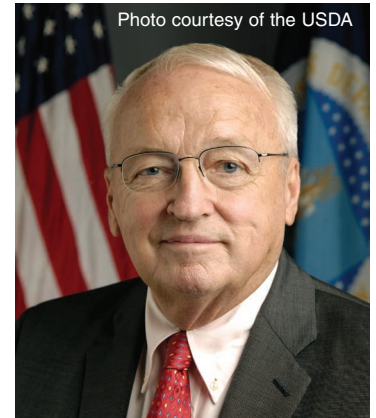
In addition to the immediate benefit to the Food Bank, Mike said, food drives are a chance to educate the public: "I know a lot of people know about Feeding America, but how many people know about Feeding America West Michigan — that there's one in their hometown?"

Thank you, Mike and West Michigan Big Lots, for remembering the hungry in our midst.

USDA Undersecretary Tours Food Bank

June 21 offered a rare opportunity for two key allies in the fight against hunger to meet face to face: our CEO, Ken Estelle, and Kevin Concannon, undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In his role at the USDA, Concannon oversees education efforts like MyPlate and hunger-relief programs like SNAP. The USDA supplied 15.5 percent of the product Feeding America West Michigan received in 2011.



"We appreciate the outstanding efforts of the Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank to ensure that food is available to struggling families and individuals throughout West Michigan," Concannon said. "With one of the largest service areas in the country, they are a vital partner with USDA in fighting hunger and connecting eligible people to our nutrition-assistance programs."

Even as Congress debates funding for food-assistance programs the USDA and Feeding America West Michigan reaffirmed our shared commitment to feeding the hungry. Whether in Washington or West Michigan, our goal remains the same.

Leave a Legacy

You care about hunger in West Michigan. Just as you wouldn't want your own family to go without, you've taken the responsibility to care for your neighbors. Did you know there's a way to provide for your neighbors and your own family at the same time?

By creating a will today, you can provide a secure financial future for your family and reserve a gift for the clients of Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank through a charitable bequest. To get started, contact Linda Vanderbaan at 616-389-6356 or lindav@feedingamericawestmichigan.org.

