



**For Immediate Release**

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# HOLD ON TO HOPE

PARTNERING WITH NON-PROFITS: MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN MICHIGAN

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LIVE LOVE MICHIGAN  
PROJECT

## Hope on their sleeves: Michigan t-shirt startup believes in state's ability to overcome challenges

Comstock Park, Michigan — March 11, 2014 — Community investment is an afterthought for most companies, something they work into their business plans after they've gotten established. For [Live. Love. Michigan.](#) it was the founding principle.

A marine biology student at Michigan State University, Jake Prusakiewicz's true love was graphic design, and the Dexter native wanted to use that passion to better his home state.

"He kind of got fed up with the way Michigan was being portrayed in the news. He didn't like the bad press," said Abigail Ehn, campaign manager for Live. Love. Michigan.'s [Hold on to Hope](#) project and Prusakiewicz's high school classmate. Ehn, Prusakiewicz and designer Nathan Leindecker make up the company's complete staff.

"He wanted to make Michigan better by recognizing people that were doing something good for the state but weren't necessarily getting recognized for it."

On March 17, Live. Love. Michigan. will roll out a line of t-shirts custom-designed for [Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank](#). Created at no cost to the organization, each shirt will return 50 percent of its sale price to the Food Bank, funding the distribution of approximately 50 meals to food-insecure Michiganders per shirt.

Live. Love. Michigan. has raised more than \$3,000 for four Michigan-based nonprofits through Hold on to Hope since December.

The state's charities could certainly use the help.

Michigan's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average for decades. [Poverty is at 16.3%](#), its largest city is bankrupt, and [demand for food assistance](#) is higher than ever, at least in West Michigan and the Upper Peninsula, where Feeding America West Michigan distributed a record-setting 25.6 million pounds of food in 2013.

The question is, why is Michigan worth fighting for?

"We really love nothing more than Michigan," Ehn said. "It's home. Being from Dexter, I think we both learned the ... importance of a tight-knit community."

"We don't need the bad press about Detroit being bankrupt or the lack of jobs or the housing market crash because we believe in it," she said.

“It’s the people that are going to make the change in the schools and the economy.”

Feeding America West Michigan’s CEO Ken Estelle believes Michigan is equal to the task.

“There’s more than enough food to go around,” Estelle said. “The challenge is getting it to those in need. That’s what we’re here to do, and that’s what Hold on to Hope is going to help us accomplish.”

Visit [holdontohope.org](http://holdontohope.org) to see Live. Love. Michigan.’s line of Food Bank clothing.

**About Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank.** One of the nation’s largest and most effective food banks, Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank reclaims edible surplus food from farmers, manufacturers, distributors and retailers. It stores, processes and distributes that food through more than 1,200 local food pantries and other hunger-relief agencies in 40 Michigan counties from the Indiana border through the Upper Peninsula. More than 100,000 West Michigan families rely on food from Feeding America West Michigan. For more information, visit [feedingamericawestmichigan.org](http://feedingamericawestmichigan.org).