

For Immediate Release

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9-year-old anti-hunger advocate to join Judge Smolenski on stage at luncheon



May 30, 2014 — Comstock Park, Michigan — On June 10, [Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank](#) is hosting a fundraising luncheon to support hunger relief in West Michigan and the Upper Peninsula.

The event, called [Many Hands Against Hunger](#), features an encore appearance from Judge Sara Smolenski as keynote speaker. This year, she'll be joined by nine-year-old Owen Ronning, one of the Food Bank's strongest advocates.

Last summer, Owen had an unusual birthday request: Instead of an Xbox game or a new bike, he asked for a [Mobile Food Pantry](#). With his parent's encouragement, he went door to door until he had collected enough money to give 5,000 pounds of fresh produce and other goods to families in need in his hometown of Hudsonville.

"We think it's going to be a powerful moment," said Food Bank CEO Ken Estelle. "He's a living example of something we say all the time in food banking, that everybody has something to offer, whether it's time, money, or passion. In Owen's case, he's given all three."

In 2013, Feeding America West Michigan distributed more food than in any previous year: 25.6 million pounds, or approximately 20 million meals.

“In spite of all the positive economic signs, the need is growing,” Estelle said.

As the recent debate over Michigan’s minimum wage illustrates, thousands of Michiganders have gone back to work but aren’t making enough to get by. That means private organizations like Feeding America West Michigan continue to play a pivotal role in making sure that the 1.7 million people who struggle with hunger in the state can get enough to eat.

“As long as there’s a need for our services, we’ll be there to help,” Estelle said. “And we couldn’t do that without the financial support of people in the community.”



Judge Sara Smolenski

To reserve your seat at the luncheon and join Feeding America West Michigan in the fight against hunger, visit FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org/Luncheon. The cost is \$25 per person. Registration closes at noon on June 6.

Many Hands Against Hunger is being underwritten by [Meijer](#) with support from [Metro Health Hospital](#) and [Star Truck Rentals](#).

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 distributes that food through a network of 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 households receive food from Feeding America West Michigan. For more information, visit feedingamericawestmichigan.org.