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Feeding America West Michigan to double number of UP meals served in February

Manistique, Mich. — Feb. 1, 2016 — On Thursday, Feb. 25, [Feeding America West Michigan](#) will be providing food to an estimated 300 families at the Schoolcraft County Fairgrounds in Manistique. This Mobile Food Pantry is part of [a major expansion of hunger-relief services](#) to the Upper Peninsula the organization announced last month.

“There has been unmet need in the Upper Peninsula for years. We realized that if we were going to change that, it would take a new approach,” said Ken Estelle, CEO of Feeding America West Michigan.

In the past, partner agencies had to drive to one of Feeding America West Michigan’s branch warehouses in Ishpeming or Sault Ste. Marie to collect food for their pantries or meal programs, making it difficult to supply more remote communities. Under its new approach, Feeding America West Michigan is bringing the food directly to agencies and people in need.

The result: Feeding America West Michigan expects to distribute 152,000 meals in the Upper Peninsula this month, an increase of 114 percent over February 2015.

Feeding America West Michigan began sending [Mobile Pantries](#) into Manistique after the paper mill closed last year. Good Neighbor Services, which has worked with Feeding America West Michigan to stock its food pantry for years, acts as the local coordinator, organizing volunteers and spreading the word to people in need.

Co-director Margo Withey says the need is high in Manistique.

“The people visiting our food pantry have better than doubled since the mill went down,” Withey said, explaining that Feeding America West Michigan’s Mobile Pantries have enabled Good Neighbor to serve many more than it otherwise could.

“It’s a blessing to this community, to the whole Upper Peninsula, that we’re able to get this food into these areas. There’s a lot of people who would be going without [otherwise].”

The biggest hurdle in serving the Upper Peninsula is funding, Estelle says. The cost of each Mobile Pantry is covered by grants or donations from individuals, and Feeding America West Michigan is in need of new partners to support its outreach.

“We invite anyone who’s interested in working with us to come out and see a Mobile Pantry in action, see the impact we can have when the community works together.”

The Feb. 25 Mobile Pantry will begin at 11 a.m. at the Schoolcraft County Fairgrounds and is intended to serve seniors in need and those experiencing financial hardship.

Upcoming Mobile Pantries*

Feb. 11:
Hannahville Community Center, Hannahville, 11 a.m.
1705 Ash Street, Ishpeming, 10 a.m.

Feb. 12:
Cooks Congregational Church, Garden, 10 a.m.

Feb. 17:
Webster Elementary School, Escanaba, 2 p.m.

Feb. 18:
Abundant Life Mission Center, Menominee, 10 a.m.

Feb. 25:
Schoolcraft County Fairgrounds, Manistique, 11 a.m.

Feb. 26:
Norway Community Food Pantry, Norway, 5 p.m.

*Note: Mobile Pantry dates, times and locations are weather dependent.

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About Feeding America West Michigan. Serving local families in need since 1981, Feeding America West Michigan reclaims safe surplus food from farmers, manufacturers, distributors and retailers. We distribute that food through a network of more than 1,100 food pantries, youth programs, and other hunger-relief agencies in 40 counties from the Indiana border through the Upper Peninsula. Each year, an estimated 492,100 people receive food from Feeding America West Michigan. For more information, visit FeedWM.org.