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First Quarter Finds Food Bank Busier Than Ever, Embarking on Fight Hunger. Spark Change. Campaign

Comstock Park, Michigan — March 28, 2016 — As first quarter of 2016 draws to a close Feeding America West Michigan's services are in greater demand than ever. The food bank distributed 27.6 million pounds of food in 2015 — its third record year in a row — and is currently distributing 15.2 percent more food, year to date.

"We're not slowing down by any means," said CEO Ken Estelle. "Even though the economy is better overall, there is still a lot of unmet need in our state."

According to the [Map the Meal Gap report](#), one in seven people is food insecure in West Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. While resources for food-insecure people are plentiful in densely populated areas like Grand Rapids and Muskegon, Estelle says that people in smaller communities, especially in the Upper Peninsula, often have a harder time getting help when they need it.

For that reason, Feeding America West Michigan is undertaking [a major expansion of services](#) in the Upper Peninsula. The goal: to increase food distribution in the Upper Peninsula from 2.2 million in 2015 to 2.7 million this year.

"Growing our food distribution means our financial needs are growing as well," Estelle said. "We encourage people to give what they can, and if they can't give cash, to consider coming in and [volunteering](#)."

Beginning today, would-be donors have another way to get involved: the [Fight Hunger. Spark Change.](#) campaign organized by Walmart.

Fight Hunger. Spark Change. runs from March 28 to April 25 and benefits local food banks like Feeding America West Michigan as well as the national Feeding America network.

Participants can take action in four ways: By donating money at the register, purchasing participating products, using the #FightHunger hashtag on social media and — the simplest and fastest option — clicking a button on Walmart’s website that triggers a donation.

Estelle says Fight Hunger. Spark Change. is an easy way for people to get involved in hunger relief, especially those who have never given or volunteered before. All donations made at Walmart stores in West Michigan and the Upper Peninsula will be passed on to Feeding America West Michigan, which makes a big difference: Every dollar the Food Bank receives sends four meals into the community.

“It’s a great feeling, to see the impact of your gift. That’s the power of food banking. We’re able to do so much with very modest resources,” Estelle said.

To learn more about the campaign, visit FeedWM.org/HowToHelp/FightHunger.

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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.