

Contact:
Sean Little
616.432.6976
slittle@feedwm.org



Volunteers pick apples for Feeding America West Michigan at an orchard in Ada. Volunteer opportunities will be available throughout Hunger Action Month.

Food Bank Encourages Community to Take a Stand During Hunger Action Month

Comstock Park, Mich. — *August 22, 2017* — This September, [Feeding America West Michigan](#) joins hundreds of food banks around the country in calling on members of their community to take a stand during [Hunger Action Month](#).

“Hunger Action Month is about showing people that hunger is a big problem, but that they can do something about it,” said Ken Estelle, president and CEO of Feeding America West Michigan.

The 36-year-old hunger-relief organization distributes food to a network of food pantries, soup kitchens and community centers in 40 counties in West Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. One in eight people is food insecure in this region, meaning they struggle to get enough food to lead a healthy life. Nationally, food insecurity affects more than [42 million people](#).

During Hunger Action Month, Feeding America West Michigan will focus on four ways people can get involved in their mission.

Contact:
Sean Little
616.432.6976
slittle@feedwm.org



“We’re encouraging people, especially those who’ve never been involved before, to take one concrete action in the fight against hunger, whether that’s volunteering, giving a financial gift, contacting their elected officials or attending one of our Hops Against Hunger events,” Estelle said.

Volunteer

Feeding America West Michigan’s work is largely powered by volunteers. Because much of the food the organization receives comes in bulk from processors and manufacturers, it often needs to be repacked before it can be distributed. The food bank has two volunteer shifts per day at its Comstock Park location.

“Volunteering is a really great, really tangible way for people to make a difference,” said volunteer coordinator Nate Maroulis. “They can roll up their sleeves, so to speak, and spend a couple hours packing the food that will end up on a family’s dinner table, in many cases, that same night.”

The organization is also planning a number of “gleaning” events at local farms, where volunteers will be able to harvest fruits and vegetables for people in need.

Each hour volunteered at Feeding America West Michigan provides an average of 200 meals. [Opportunities are listed online.](#)

Donate

Those looking to make an immediate impact on hunger can consider donating financially. While Feeding America West Michigan relies on funding year-round to keep the food moving, they’re offering an incentive to give during Hunger Action Month.

From Sept. 12-Oct. 10, [gifts made at FeedWM.org](#) will be doubled. [Weingartz](#), a Michigan lawncare equipment company, has offered to double up to \$15,000 in contributions.

“If people have thought about giving before, this is a good time to do it, because one gift can move so much food,” said Sean Little, development associate for Feeding America West Michigan.

During the match, each dollar will provide eight meals in the community.

Advocate

Nonprofit organizations like Feeding America West Michigan are only part of the solution to the problem of hunger. Another crucial response comes the public sector.

The largest of these programs is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP provides food assistance to [more than 40 million people](#) living near or below the poverty line. The majority are children, the elderly or the disabled.

Contact:
Sean Little
616.432.6976
slittle@feedwm.org



But this critically important safeguard against hunger has been targeted for budget cuts by some in Washington. Feeding America West Michigan is encouraging supporters to contact their representatives and senators to express their support for a strong federal response to hunger.

Simple instructions and messaging can be found on [Feeding America West Michigan's website](#).

Raise a Glass

Rounding out Feeding America West Michigan's Hunger Action Month four calls to action is one participants may find especially palatable: [Hops Against Hunger](#).

Begun by Feeding America West Michigan in 2016, Hops Against Hunger is a statewide campaign uniting the state's ever-growing craft beer community with local food banks. This year's campaign includes 40 breweries, restaurants and beer bars organizing fundraisers for Michigan's seven Feeding America-member food banks.



Events are taking place across the state, from Marquette to metro Detroit. The roster includes New Holland Brewing Company, Lansing Brewing Company, Arcadia Ales Kalamazoo and all six HopCat locations.

"One of the reasons people seek out craft breweries is because of their strong local identity. We've met so many incredibly generous brewers and restaurant owners who want to get involved in solving hunger locally," Little said. "And we live in the 'Great Beer State!' What better way to get people to pay attention and get connected?"

Carrie Veldman, sustainability coordinator for BarFly Ventures, which owns HopCat and Grand Rapids Brewing Company, said they saw a synergy between the food banks' model of recovering surplus food and giving it to those in need and their own commitment to reducing food waste.

"By partnering with local nonprofits such as Feeding America, breweries and bars have the opportunity to invest in the community that has spent time & money investing in them," Veldman said.

More information, including a map of participating breweries and an events calendar, can be found at HopsAgainstHungerMI.org.

A Year-Round Effort

Estelle hopes that people who participate in Hunger Action Month continue to be involved with Feeding America West Michigan and its mission after September. The food bank and its network of local partner agencies rely on donors and volunteers all year long.

Contact:
Sean Little
616.432.6976
slittle@feedwm.org



“As a state, we’ve made some real progress on the issue of food insecurity. Fewer people are at risk of hunger today than they were in the aftermath of the recession. But we still have a long way to go,” Estelle said.

“It’s my hope that Hunger Action Month will be a moment when our community refocuses on this foundational issue and commits to solving it once and for all.”

Information about all Hunger Action Month events and calls to action can be found at FeedWM.org/HAM.

Feeding America West Michigan’s Hunger Action Month campaign is sponsored by CHASE, Meijer, Fifth Third Bank, Spectrum Health, and Fox 17.

###

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. That food is distributed through a network of more than 900 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.