



Full Plate PRESS

THE NEWSLETTER OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**
West Michigan

Take Action

In West Michigan and the Upper Peninsula, 1 in 8 people faces hunger, including nearly 70,000 children. Help your neighbors in need by getting involved with Feeding America West Michigan.



DONATE:
\$10 = 40 MEALS



VOLUNTEER:
In one hour, you can help us distribute up to 200 meals.



ADVOCATE:
Have a way with words? Help spread our mission by letting people in your community know about our services.



FUNDRAISE:
Your creative spirit can put meals on neighbors' plates.

FBI-FWM-19702

Meet some of the people we're helping.
See story on page 3



Connect with us



@feedingwestmich

ABOUT US

Feeding America West Michigan gathers and distributes food to relieve hunger and increase food security in West Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. By working with more than 900 local hunger-relief agencies, the food bank is able to distribute an average of 21 million meals worth of food each year.

Feeding America West Michigan is a member of Feeding America, The United Way and The Food Bank Council of Michigan. The food bank also maintains a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator.



**FEEDING
AMERICA**
West Michigan

864 West River Center Drive NE
Comstock Park, MI 49321

Learn more at FeedWM.org
Call us at 616.784.3250

2020 ISSUE 3

Special Annual Report Section Starts on Page 5

COVID-19 RESPONSE OVERVIEW

When the COVID-19 crisis hit, closing jobs and schools, Feeding America West Michigan quickly saw a ripple effect. As neighbors who had never before needed food assistance found themselves facing empty cupboards, and those already facing hunger found it even more difficult to make ends meet, the need for our services grew exponentially.

But just as quickly as the need increased, many stepped up to meet it — including generous businesses, grantors, individual donors, agency partners and even the Michigan National Guard. In the height of the pandemic, with the support of these hunger heroes, we distributed 42 percent more food than the same time frame last year.

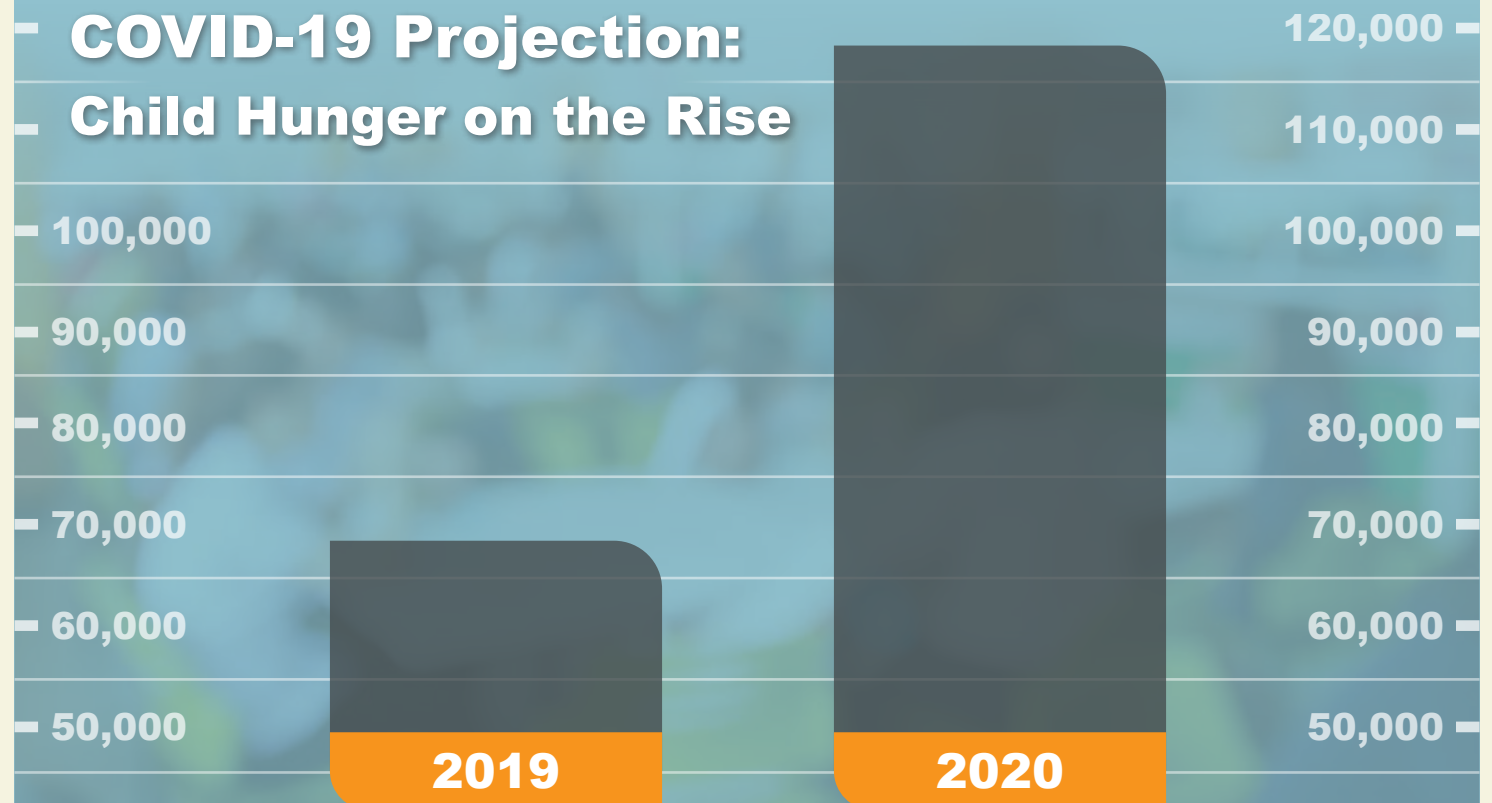
The increased need for food support during this time

was largely the result of unemployment. Even as many businesses have reopened, many of our neighbors are still struggling — the few months of uncertainty having completely changed their financial outlook for the rest of the year and even beyond.

We don't expect the heightened need to diminish anytime soon. Before the pandemic, 1 in 8 neighbors in our service area were food insecure — meaning they had inadequate resources to acquire enough food for a healthy, active life. The food insecurity rate is projected to increase to more than 17 percent, or 1 in 6 neighbors this year. Children are even more at risk: 117,870 are expected to face hunger in 2020, up from 67,530. But wherever there's a need, with the help of countless hunger heroes, the food bank is there — every day of the year. 🍌



COVID-19 Projection: Child Hunger on the Rise



Neighbors from all backgrounds received food during the pandemic

These uncertain times have caused many who never before faced hunger to become food insecure — which means they can't afford or don't have access to enough food to live a healthy, active life. Meet some of the neighbors who received help during the height of the pandemic in the stories below.

Katie is a 24-year-old Saranac resident who lost her job at a bookstore due to the pandemic. She lives with her mother and younger sister who also work in retail. When all three of them lost their jobs in March, Katie wasn't sure how they'd make ends meet.

Then, her sister heard about an upcoming Mobile Food Pantry — the first of six the food bank brought to her community to help neighbors during the pandemic.

At each of the distributions, Katie received fresh produce and other food for herself and her mother and sister.

"I'm really grateful, because otherwise we wouldn't know where to get food," she said.

These groceries supplemented items she purchased from the store. Since her mother and sister are immune compromised, she took on the responsibility of shopping in order to keep them safe.

"It's a great experience. The volunteers really try their best and take time out of their day to take care of everyone," she said.



Rhonda (right) is disabled and has been attending Mobile Pantries at TrueNorth Community Services in Fremont for the last couple of years. When her friend **Val** lost her job as a secretary due to COVID-19, Rhonda invited her to come along to a food distribution.

"I'm not used to it. I'm used to going to buy groceries and coming home," Val said.

Rhonda said no one should feel embarrassed — "that's why they're here to help."



Stephanie relied on food assistance for herself and her daughter more than a decade ago, when she was a young, single mom trying to make ends meet, but hadn't needed to seek help since. Then, the COVID-19 crisis hit and **Andy**, her husband, could no longer work his real estate job.

Stephanie and Andy weren't sure he'd be eligible for unemployment so, to ensure their three teenage sons had enough to eat, they went through the line to receive food at Bay Mills Community College, where Stephanie works. The family didn't end up needing to attend the following month, but chose to volunteer as a way to give back.

"No one should feel bad about going to accept food," Stephanie said. "We all have situations come about that we have no control over. Sometimes, it's hard to reach out for help. So that's why I wanted to volunteer — because I know that I've been in that situation before."

Whatever their circumstance, all Michiganders deserve to have food on the table. The food bank is proud to support resilient families like these during the pandemic and beyond. 🍌



Meet a Food Banker: Susie

Can you explain your role here at the food bank?

As development manager, I foster partnerships with corporations here in West Michigan. I spend much of my time building relationships with business leaders to see how their corporation wants to give back to the community and how we can work together to help West Michigan thrive.

What was your first experience with hunger in our community?

I first witnessed hunger during my first week on the job. It was January, and I visited a Mobile Food Pantry in Grand Haven. I'll never forget it because it was 10° above zero, and I actually rode with the truck driver — my first time being in a semi! Despite the cold, I was able to help a lot of people. It was really eye-opening to see the number of people who were there, all very cold, standing in a line — some of them without gloves or hats — and to see how much in need they truly were.

How has your job been impacted by COVID-19?

The heightened need for our services due to virus-related unemployment and school closings put a spotlight on our work. Because of this, lots of businesses we've never worked with before stepped up to help. It's been really heartwarming to see so many companies give above and beyond. Through this crisis, I've developed new partnerships with companies who wouldn't necessarily have known about the food bank before. I've been really impressed with the outpour of support.

What do you hope to see happen in the future with these partnerships?

It seems that many people and companies have changed their attitudes about hunger-relief because of the crisis. I hope the partnerships that I've developed through COVID-19 are long-lasting. Hunger was a real problem before the pandemic and will continue to be in the years to come.



What's your favorite part of your job?

Getting to know people from all walks of life. I love meeting the people we serve, and on the flip side, learning why people want to support our mission. Everybody has a different story. Some of it is based on personal experience, and some of it is that they simply love our organization and are very supportive of what we do.

Why do you think it's important for businesses to give back?

It's important that we keep West Michigan thriving. When businesses give back and support those in need, it benefits all of us. I believe that when we're all successful, fed well and healthy — that affects every aspect of business.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I love music. I play piano quite a lot. I also enjoy golfing and spending time outdoors. I'm an avid fly fisher and do some kayaking and hiking in the woods — a little bit of everything. ●

2019

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Many things have changed since the end of 2019, which made it more challenging to reflect back on some of the wonderful things we accomplished last year as it already feels that it was years rather than months ago. With help from our generous and hardworking supporters, staff and volunteers we accomplished great work in 2019 and some of the highlights are as follows:

1. **We distributed 25.3 million pounds of food through our network of distribution organizations and more than 900 agency partners.** This work fulfilled our mission to relieve hunger and increase food security in West Michigan and the Upper Peninsula by providing more than 21 million meals worth of food to our neighbors facing hunger.
2. **We started plans to build a new freezer in our main warehouse.** In years prior, we'd been offered upwards of 400,000 pounds worth of frozen food that we couldn't accept, simply because we didn't have the capacity to store it. We are happy to report that plans came to fruition in 2020. Nestled beside our existing freezer, our new freezer offers an extra 18,810 cubic feet of cold storage space that's enabling us to accept more frozen food donations than ever before — filling neighbors' freezers instead of landfills.
3. **We implemented our Fresh Start initiative.** Our first action item: providing recipe cards to go with the food neighbors receive at Mobile Food Pantries. Then, at select Mobile Pantries, we began offering kitchen tools and hosting recipe demonstrations and activities for kids to explore food in a fun way. In the years to come, we will expand the initiative further — its long-term goal to break the cycle of poor nutrition that leads to chronic disease and impaired development. You can learn more about the initiative at FeedWM.org/freshstart.

Thanks to the combined efforts of our partners, volunteers, staff and generous donors, Feeding America West Michigan continues to foster a hunger-free community — in 2020 and in all the years to come. You can follow our efforts by following us on social media @feedingwestmich.

Sincerely,



Kelly Calvert

Kelly Calvert
Board Chair



Kenneth Estelle

Kenneth Estelle
President and CEO

2019

ANNUAL REPORT

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION | DECEMBER 31, 2019

REVENUE

Handling Fees	2,675,573	5.65%
Contributions	1,772,532	3.74%
Grants	1,407,591	2.97%
Other Revenue	889,635	1.88%
Non-Cash	40,600,583	85.75%
Total	47,345,914	100%

Net Assets

Handling Fees: Cost-sharing with agency partners, who pay 6 to 18 cents per pound for most items.

Contributions: Gifts from individuals, companies and other organizations.

Grants: Income from charitable foundations and government agencies.

Non-Cash: The value of food and other in-kind donations received.*

EXPENSES

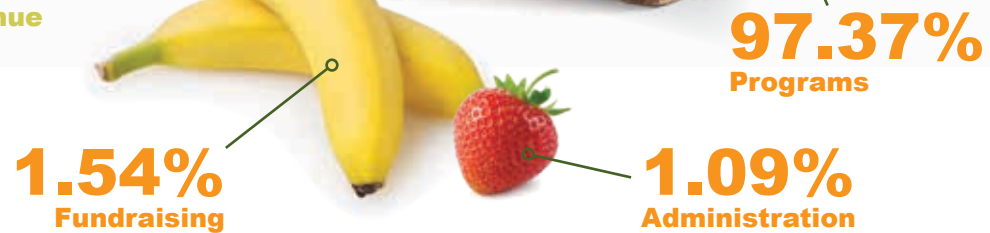
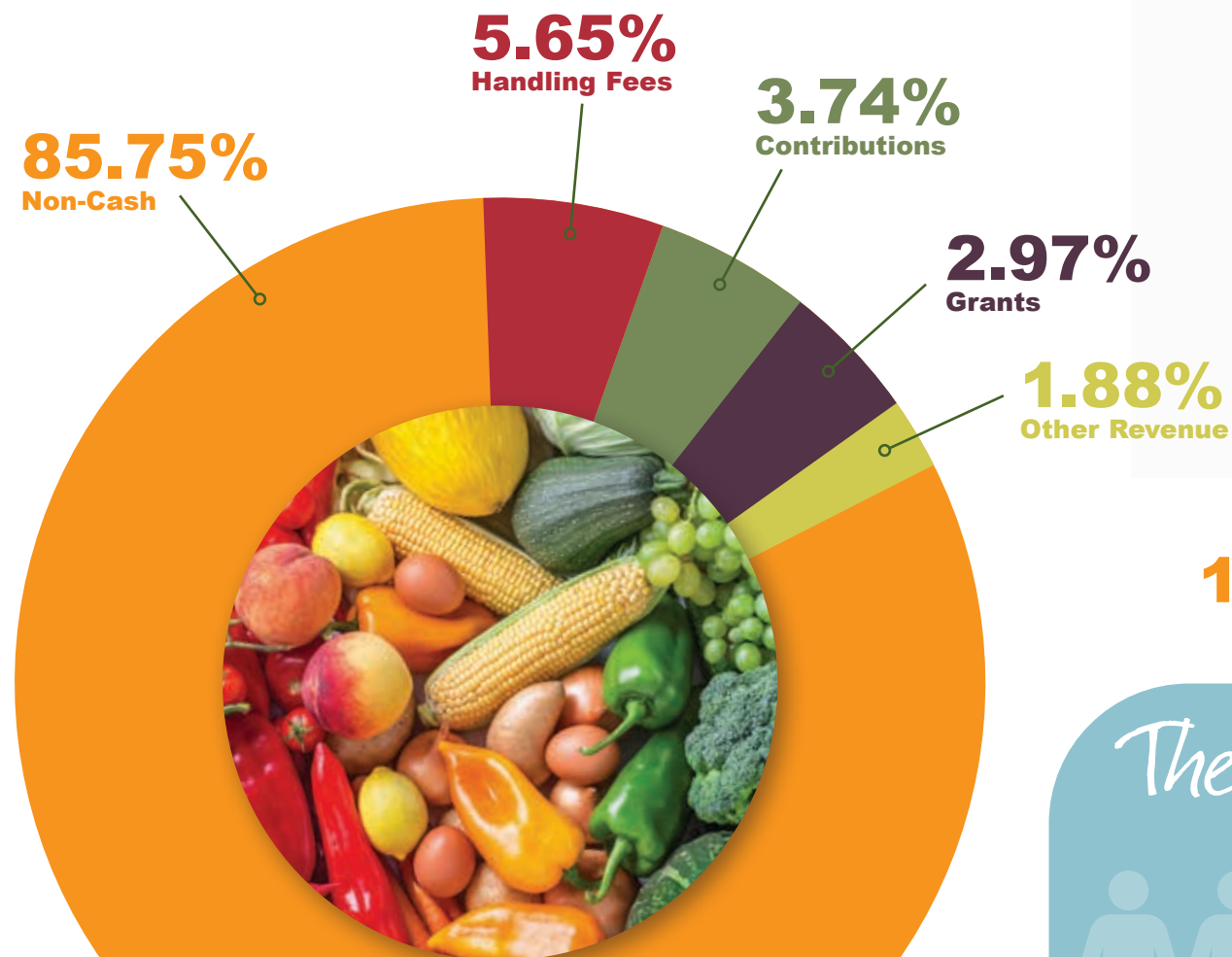
Programs	44,129,847	97.37%
Fundraising	699,041	1.54%
Administration	492,808	1.09%
Total	45,321,696	100%

Programs: All expenses related to reclaiming, storing and distributing food in the 40 counties we serve. Includes the value of \$36,041,721 for food and grocery items distributed.

Fundraising: The cost of communications and development activities.

Administration: Cost related to administrative and accounting activities, along with other expenses not directly connected to food distribution.

* Value based on an annual analysis done by the Feeding America National Organization by an independent auditor KPMG.



97.37%
Programs

RESCUED and REPACKED

Last year, our volunteers worked to sort, repackage, and label the millions of pounds of food that we received from our generous food donors. In 2019, our volunteers repacked 3,573,982 pounds of food, equivalent to 2,987,318 meals.

Volunteers.....	944
First-time Volunteers	792
Hours.....	23,975
Meals Per Hour	124

The VOLUNTEERS TOP 5 GROUPS

MOKA.....	2,733
Golden Kiwanis.....	942
Bethlehem Lutheran Church.....	441
Traverse City Immaculate Conception	390
Aldersgate United Methodist Church.....	345

HOURS

The NUMBERS

2019

TOP FOOD DONORS

Feeding America West Michigan receives food from hundreds of farmers, manufacturers, distributors and retailers who donate every conceivable type of food from fresh lettuce and frozen meat to breakfast cereal and milk. In 2019, **311 donors** provided a total of **27,817,269 pounds of food**.

ORGANIZATION	POUNDS DONATED
Meijer	1,856,034
Sam's Club	1,648,187
Walmart	1,510,181
Costco	693,965
Gordon Food Service	618,694
SpartanNash Stores	494,566
Coca-Cola North America	459,383
ALDI	418,469
National Food Group	378,000
General Mills	359,696
Old Orchard Brands LLC	320,625
Country Fresh Dairies, Inc.	319,630
Sysco Grand Rapids	306,215
Target	299,600
Kelloggs Company	215,373
Marker Farms	177,665
Cedar Valley Packing, Inc.	166,916
National Assoc. of Letter Carriers	157,039
Heeren Brothers INC.	145,785
North Bay Produce	139,268
Top 20 Donors Total	10,685,291

TOP AGENCY PARTNERS

AGENCY	CITY	LBS. DIST.
Community Food Club	Grand Rapids	470,028
Family Network	Wyoming	373,727
Salvation Army Adult Rehab	Grand Rapids	278,346
United Church Outreach Ministry	Wyoming	269,794
TrueNorth Community Services	Fremont	231,990
Holy Family Healthcare	Hartford	201,937
Senior Meals Program Food Pantry	Grand Rapids	172,212
Streams of Hope Food Center	Grand Rapids	162,153
Love INC Newaygo County	Grant	157,907
South End Community Outreach Ministry	Grand Rapids	148,086

TOP MOBILE PANTRY PARTNERS

AGENCY	CITY	LBS. DIST.
Muskegon County Cooperating Churches	Muskegon	552,865
Love in Action - Tri-Cities	Grand Haven	273,906
Good Neighbor Services	Manistique	197,610
Family Network	Wyoming	194,278
Cadillac Revival Ministries	Cadillac	152,333
Ishpeming Community	Ishpeming	150,114
Barryton Area	Barryton	119,515
Wesley Park UMC	Wyoming	118,785
Bridge Academy/Kinexus	Benton Harbor	114,608
Abundant Life Mission	Menominee	114,044

COUNTY DISTRIBUTION TOTALS

COUNTY	TOTAL LBS.	ACTIVE AGENCIES IN (YEAR)
Alger	120,629	7
Allegan	569,810	19
Antrim	530,604	15
Baraga	122,265	4
Benzie	325,780	6
Berrien	1,483,654	71
Cass	472,549	22
Charlevoix	413,075	19
Chippewa	412,744	24
Delta	431,181	16
Dickinson	340,130	13
Emmet	664,892	24
Gogebic	335,584	5
Grand Traverse	1,093,714	22
Houghton	728,754	26
Ionia	394,112	18
Iron	166,952	7
Kalkaska	304,242	6
Kent	7,094,416	271
Keweenaw	32,726	1
Lake	321,616	8
Leelanau	142,734	4
Luce	137,835	5
Mackinac	207,018	11
Manistee	185,289	12
Marquette	540,927	19
Mason	186,414	8
Mecosta	515,698	15
Menominee	190,299	7
Missaukee	124,844	9
Montcalm	472,967	21
Muskegon	1,225,307	33
Newaygo	1,134,413	25
Oceana	422,380	11
Ontonagon	129,450	4
Osceola	340,241	17
Ottawa	1,660,217	53
Schoolcraft	267,280	4
Van Buren	643,134	24
Wexford	435,484	19
Total	25,321,351	905
To other food banks*	497,649	





Michigan National Guard dedicates 2 ½ months to hunger-relief efforts during pandemic

From March 16 through June, Feeding America West Michigan distributed an unprecedented amount of food — 8,956,560 pounds to be exact. This food — equivalent to nearly 7.5 million meals — wouldn't have made it to the hands of our neighbors facing hunger if it weren't for the support of 17 Michigan National Guard members who dedicated 2 ½ months of their time to the cause.

Chief Kim and fellow guard member Melaney were among these soldiers, and both are musicians in the 126th Army Band.

“Everybody on the team here has been very dependable and it's been really great to work with them all,” Kim said.

The team's outstanding work ethic and eagerness to learn made them the most efficient volunteer group the food bank has ever had, and were absolutely vital to our efforts.

They worked in the reclamation department — sanitizing, sorting and repackaging food — prepared

emergency food boxes, filled our agency partner's orders and even helped distribute food at Mobile Pantries. Every minute of their time was invaluable and no doubt, a sacrifice.

“For some of us, I think it was a challenge to be away from home for so long. To be away from our families. The world doesn't stop just because you're on a mission,” Kim said.



Connecting to the mission

Kim and Melaney were glad to help from the start, but both connected to our mission more closely after serving at a Mobile Pantry. It was the first time they interacted with our neighbors facing hunger and from that point on, their passion for the mission only grew.

“I loved to see the faces and the thumbs up and even though we couldn't hug each other or shake hands, I always stood at the end of the row so I could wave at people when they left and smile with my eyes even though we all had masks on,” Kim said.

At one Mobile Pantry, Melaney had the opportunity to serve a Vietnam veteran who reminded her of her father who served in the same war. At that moment, she recognized that anyone, including her father, could be in the line.

“That one got me to tear up,” she shared.

Kim concurred: “It really helped to open our eyes.”

Serving at the Mobile Pantries reminded the team of their simple privilege to wake up each morning to a bowl of cereal or a stack of pancakes — “not everybody is as fortunate as you are to be able to have that,” Kim said.

Not only did the experience remind Kim to be thankful for the food in front of her, but also that, as Melaney said, “when things get tough, we rally around each other as humans.”

Kim recalled an encounter with one family who, after receiving food from a Mobile Pantry, gave their extra masks to the volunteers.

“It's like they wanted to give back, but they could only give what they had,” she said. “They were willing to sacrifice the last few masks that they had in their car.”

Melaney said she encountered a wide range of human emotions from the neighbors she served.

“Some of them are really grateful and some of them, maybe they didn't bring themselves to say anything, but I could very easily make an assumption that things are really hard,” she said. “It might be really hard for them to come into a line.”

She also noted that “how a person is dressed or what kind of car they drive might not have anything to do with needing some food.”



Reflecting on their experience

“I was surprised that so much food goes through this food bank. It's just amazing, the management and the production team it takes to keep this place running,” Kim said.

She was also struck by the variety that comes through the food bank's doors, and said she was glad to see things like baby and pet food.

“This place is nothing but good for the community. It's here for the right reasons, with the right people doing the right thing,” Melaney said.

“Everyone here at Feeding America [West Michigan] seems to know exactly what the mission is and has a passion for it,” she continued.

Both Kim and Melaney have grown a similar passion for hunger-relief and said that after having such an impactful experience at Feeding America West Michigan, they will absolutely be volunteering at food banks near their own homes in the future.

“I never would have imagined doing something like this as part of a mission for the National Guard, but it's been one of the most rewarding things that's ever happened in my whole life,” Melaney shared. “I would do it all over again.”

“I think we got as much if not more out of the experience as the food bank did,” Kim agreed.

Without the tireless work of the MI National Guard, Feeding America West Michigan would not have been able to serve so many neighbors during the pandemic. Each and every one of them is a hunger hero. 🍌