Dennis’s Story

Dennis wasn’t sure what to expect as he nervously approached the front doors of Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes on Portage Street. He had spent the weekend wrestling with the decision to seek help with groceries having never needed to do it before, but since taking in his three young grandkids he was having a hard time making ends meet.

The woman at the front desk greeted him with a smile and listened intently as he explained that he was temporarily looking after his grandkids and, despite working full time, was in need of some help. He breathed a sigh of relief when he was asked to take a seat in the lobby to wait for someone to assist him.

Dennis was surprised to learn that he would be assigned to shop at the Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes pantry closest to his home that same day and that he could choose the foods his family needed most. “Here I thought maybe I’d get a box or two of food and be sent on my way,” Dennis shares, “But instead I was able to pick out the foods I knew my grandkids would eat and that I could make into meals and save for leftovers.”

“ Asking for help wasn’t easy,” Dennis admits. “I’ve always been independent and able to stand on my own two feet, but I had to put my pride aside and make sure we had what we needed to get through the month.”

Dennis hopes his trips to KLF’s pantry are few and far between, but is grateful the service is available should a car repair or broken furnace throw a wrench in his monthly budget.

“I was shocked to learn that KLF helps an average of 700 people per day.” Dennis said.

“Hearing that made me realize that there are many others in my shoes.”

Dennis is grateful he can provide a sense of security to his grandkids, and he’s thankful to live in a community that helps its neighbors thrive.  

Client name changed for anonymity
Imagine the holiday season without tables full of delicious family recipes and counter tops overflowing with goodies from friends and neighbors. Oftentimes we take these routine elements of holiday memory-making for granted. For nearly 40,000 people in Kalamazoo County, sitting down to a table abundant with food this time of year may be dream rather than reality. Families are left to make difficult choices. Paying the rent. Filling the car with gas to get to work. Keeping the house warm in the winter. When the monthly necessities are covered, there’s often little money left for food.

For 35 years, our community has partnered with KLF to provide food assistance to those trying to make ends meet, especially this time of year. From holiday food drives and new volunteer groups lending a helping hand, to local businesses getting creative to generate community support to fight hunger - our community fosters hope for so many and makes it possible for people to share wholesome, healthy meals around the dinner table. We’re asking that, while wrapping up another year celebrating family traditions, you consider starting or carrying on a tradition of giving. Every dollar donated to KLF stays local, has an immediate impact, and provides enough food for three full meals. Your gifts allow those struggling to go to sleep at night with the faith that tomorrow will be better. What better gift could there be?

From the KLF family to yours – happy holidays. We wish you a healthy and joyful new year.

NOTE FROM JEN

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: KALAMAZOO CENTRAL’S STUFF THE BUS

Over the past five years, the ambitious students at Kalamazoo Central High School have donned their Maroon Giants gear and braved cold temps to pack a school bus full of food for people struggling with hunger in Kalamazoo County. They mingle with shoppers outside of local Harding’s market stores, encouraging people to donate what they can. Their efforts have been instrumental in helping Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes fill pantry shelves during the holiday season, generating over 25,000 pounds of donated food since 2011. This year, students are gearing up for another morning of food-filled fun on December 10th from 9 a.m. - noon at Harding’s Market locations on West Main and Stadium Drive.

Students at Kalamazoo Central make Stuff the Bus a priority largely due to their exposure to a diverse school district and community as a whole. Students expressed that they see how important good meals are to the success of their peers, both in and out of the classroom, and wholeheartedly believe everyone deserves the opportunity to not worry where their next meal will come from.

Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes is honored and grateful to have the support of students who want to make a difference in their community. Their efforts serve as a great reminder of the good that can be accomplished when a group of determined individuals come together for a common cause.

Thank you, Kalamazoo Central students and staff! The holidays are made brighter for so many because of you!
MONTHLY GIVING COUPONS

DECEMBER
COUPON #158
‘Tis the season to give. Your donation stays local and has an immediate impact.

Donation Amount
$

Please send your contribution by December 16th.
Food Wish List: Canned Meat

JANUARY
COUPON #159
Start the New Year by extending a hand to someone in need.

Donation Amount
$

Please send your contribution by January 20th.
Food Wish List: Beef Stew

We have the perfect volunteer position for you! Join us at an upcoming orientation to learn more!

Orientation Dates
December 10th
January 14th
January 25th

Sign up with Volunteer Coordinator Cherise Buchanan at 269.488.2617 ext 209 or Cherise@kzoolf.org.

OVER 400 VOLUNTEERS PITCH IN EACH WEEK TO HELP FEED HUNGRY PEOPLE IN KALAMZOO COUNTY. THANK YOU TO OUR AMAZING COMMUNITY!
WHAT YOUR GIFTS MAKE POSSIBLE

The community plays a vital role in Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes’ ability to feed as many people as we do each day. Only three percent of our funding comes from federal sources and that means the other 97% comes from grants, bequests, designations, and donations from individuals, groups and corporations. For nearly 35 years, you have answered the call when neighbors are struggling with hunger and have helped us grow from our beginnings in a church basement to now 23 pantries county wide. Your help was instrumental in making 2016 a success and allowed us to further fight hunger in Kalamazoo County.

The largest of our programs, the Grocery Pantry Program, continues to thrive providing nearly 700 people with grocery assistance each day. We’re committed to providing both perishable and non-perishable food items in each of our pantries and it’s with your help that we can continue to offer fresh dairy, fresh produce, and fresh meat to those who need it.

We’re now welcoming groups of volunteers to our warehouse each month to assemble Weekend Food Packs for local elementary school children. Packs are distributed to 850 children each week to bridge the gap during weekend hours when food may be limited at home. We’re also gearing up to open another high-capacity food pantry in the Northside neighborhood in early 2017. Once fully functioning, the pantry will serve an additional 200 households per month.

Thanks to the generosity of local growers and the help of weekly volunteers, we were able to glean and process 27,500 pounds of food donations from the Kalamazoo Farmers Market between the months of July and October. The donations from this first-year endeavor created an additional 22,900 meals for people in our community.

As we begin to wrap up another year, we want to extend our most sincere gratitude for your support. You allow us to tackle local hunger in new ways and continue to be the reason the 40,000 individuals and children struggling with hunger in Kalamazoo County don’t have to go to sleep with empty bellies. Thank you.

IN DEMAND ITEM: PROTEIN

One of the most in-demand items Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes’ pantries stock is high-protein food. Oftentimes people with limited food budgets have to forego purchasing higher cost food like fresh or canned meat, dairy and high-protein soups and stews. For this reason we try to make sure we have options available in all of our pantries to help clients maintain a well-balanced diet and access nutrients to keep them healthy.

Protein plays an important role in the human body, and at KLF we understand the important role food plays in keeping the community healthy and strong. If you’re donating food this holiday season, consider donating high-protein items like canned chicken or fish, high-protein soups and stews, or healthy fruit and nut mixes.

IMPACT TIP

Have a hard-to-shop-for someone on your list this holiday season?

Give to Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes in their honor!

- Your gift stays local and has an immediate impact.
- For every $1 gifted, you’ll provide three meals for someone in need.
- KLF can provide to you or mail special gift recognition cards for your recipients.

Visit kzoolf.org for donation details.
TRIBUTES 9/5/16 - 10/31/16 Special thanks to those who honor friends and family through contributions to KLF!

IN HONOR OF
Sue Beadling
Bob & Jean Christie
Samuel & Abigail Berman
Eleanor J. VanZandt
Margaret Carr
Barbara Guse
Father Robert Cole
Art Cole & Sally Reames
Bob & Diane Dekker’s 50th Anniversary
Roy & Mary Ackerman
Colleen Anspach
Jacqueline & Lamie Austin
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Roger & Barb Dekker
Shirley & Douglas DeYoung
James & Yvonne Hackenberg
Wilbur & Marilyn Leer
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IN MEMORY OF
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Jerome & Kathleen Amrhein
Betty Anderson
Carl & Gale DeKeene
Mary Anson
Robert Anson
Effie Bauer
Mary Ansa.

In Memoriam
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Larry Belz
Thomas & Kathleen Fewless
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Nelson Mullins
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Mike & Shirley Lohrberg

For corrections or mailing database updates, please contact Laura Galaviz at 269.488.2617 ext. 206 or Laura@kozolf.org.
Our Mission
Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes will feed hungry people and engage our community in the fight to end hunger.

Our Values
- Respect
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Stewardship & Accountability
- Integrity
- Collaboration
- Urgency
- Service

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twitter.com/KzoLoavesFishes

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Art Cole, Services Director
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