Rich’s Story

Rich slowly rises from his seat at KLF’s Melzer Pantry and grabs his walker. The woman next to him rises, too, guiding him by chairs of people to take his turn to shop for groceries. The pantry volunteer assisting Rich takes the piece of paper he’s holding that outlines the food allotments for a household of one. “I’m shopping for me, but she’s helping” Rich says, gesturing to the woman following behind him.

The woman with him, an acquaintance who happened to have a bit of free time to drive Rich to the pantry, helps him decide what food to select. “He doesn’t have a lot of family in the area, and I’m not sure he’d be able to make it here on his own,” she leans in and quietly shares with the volunteer. Although Rich has a hard time getting around these days, he still lives alone and is determined to take care of himself. Most days it can be a challenge getting to the mailbox let alone to the grocery store when you can’t drive, so Rich is grateful his neighbor offered to take him to KLF when his food supply was low and his food budget was maxed out.

“Neighbors helping neighbors. That’s what this is,” Rich says when praised for asking for help when he needed it. “You see this?” he asks as he gestures to the volunteer and the woman who drove him to the pantry, “This is three layers of neighbors helping neighbors.”

Rich is right. At KLF, we see firsthand each day how multiple layers of neighbors looking out for one another builds a better community. It takes volunteers who generously give their time in our warehouses, call center and pantries as well as donors who supply the food and funds we need to sustain our programs. It takes people like Rich’s neighbor who, even with her own busy life, is still looking for ways to help those around her.

“I think this will get me through,” Rich mutters to himself as he surveys the food he selected for himself. We think Rich and his neighbor are the perfect reminder that, even when life is busy, we can still find ways to help those around us. □

Client’s names changed for anonymity
A NOTE FROM JEN - MEET LAURA STANDAL

To further our efforts to allow readers to see KLF through the eyes of our staff, volunteers and community partners, we sat down with Laura Standal, Special Ed Resource Room Teacher and Coordinator for the Weekend Food Pack Program (WFP) at Comstock’s North Elementary School. She plays a key role in ensuring students at her school receive the 90 food packs KLF delivers each week, providing them meals during weekend hours when other food sources may be scarce. - Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director

Q: In your opinion, how important are school food programs to the children within your school?
A: They’re vital. The breakfast and lunch programs are so important for these students.

Q: Do you feel the food packs your students receive from KLF make a difference in student’s ability to thrive both during the week and on weekends?
A: Absolutely. If they didn’t have these packs, many of them would have little-to-no access to food during weekend hours.

Q: Do you feel every student within your school who lacks food security during weekend hours is currently covered by the WFP Program?
A: No, but we have such a large need at our school, and we have to prioritize which students are most in need. That’s why we make sure to inform parents and caregivers about other KLF services like the Grocery Pantry Program where they can receive four-days worth of groceries for everyone in the household versus two days worth of food for one student.

Q: As an educator, how do you see hunger effecting your students in the classroom?
A: If a child is hungry, their ability to take in information, process that information and learn is nearly impossible. That’s why it’s so important to make sure basic needs are met first. If those basic needs go unmet, how can we expect a child to move past that starting point and succeed academically?

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: KALAMAZOO FARMERS MARKET

For 104 years, the Kalamazoo Farmers Market has been a staple on Bank Street. On a mid-summer Saturday, the market can be abuzz with as many as 125 local farmers and vendors selling their produce, homemade jams, local honey, pasture-raised meat, and so much more.

In 2013, the PFC Natural Grocery and Deli took over market operation and has seen tremendous growth in attendance and vendor participation since that time. They’ve also made a commitment to getting fresh food into the hands of those in our community who can’t afford to purchase their own. So, last year, market management teamed up with KLF to connect vendors with ways to donate their leftover food goods for those experiencing hunger when Saturday hours came to a close.

“It’s the role of KLF staff and our vendors’ generosity that make this all happen,” says Gaby Gerken, Market Manager. “A few vendors even bring extra product to the market specifically to give to KLF.”

Previously, leftover food was being composted, dumped, or schlepped back to farms and businesses for sale elsewhere. This partnership allows for easy on-site donation to KLF each Saturday and generated nearly 30,000 pounds of donated fresh food in 2016.

Equitable access to fresh food is vital to building a healthier Kalamazoo community. We’re excited to partner with the Kalamazoo Farmers Market again this year, and we are extremely grateful for the generous donations of fresh food we receive from vendors.
VOLUNTEERS ARE VITAL

Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes’ largest food program, the Grocery Pantry Program (GPP), serves an average of 700 people per day through 24 pantries. These pantries are tucked inside churches, community centers and service organizations throughout Kalamazoo County and are, for the most part, operated by volunteers. At any given time, KLF has around 1000 active volunteers who assist without food programs. It takes an average of 450 volunteers each week to successfully operate KLF’s programs and, without ample volunteer manpower, the impact of the GPP would be greatly diminished.

“Our pantry coordinators and the army of volunteers who support them, are among the most dedicated, dependable, mission-driven people that we partner with here at Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes,” Deb Josephson, KLF Services Coordinator, said. “Their concern for the food security of the families we serve is exhibited daily, as they do whatever it takes to make sure that our pantries are open, warm and welcoming to the members of our community who are in need.”

Volunteers help with an array of pantry operations. In addition to the warehouse volunteers who ensure food deliveries are made each day, volunteers stock pantry shelves, assist clients while they shop, ensure pantries are kept clean and safe, take weekly pantry inventory, and even help recruit other volunteers to pitch in. Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes’ two high-capacity pantries, the Douglass and Melzer pantries, are the only pantries within the network that have paid staff members to oversee the volunteers who help in those locations.

We’re always looking for dependable hands to help! If you’d like more information about becoming a regular KLF pantry volunteer, please contact KLF Volunteer Coordinator Cherise Buchanan at 269.488.2617 ext. 209 or Cherise@kzoolf.org.

THANK YOU

This year’s National Association of Letter Carriers Food Drive generated 85,742 pounds of food for hungry people in our community!

Special thanks goes to NALC Branch 246
TRIBUTES

IN HONOR OF
Lee Accorso
Sam & Barb Accorso
Martha Betke
Cynthia & Kevin Kole
Susan Beute
Harvey Beute
Carolyn Kozlowicz
Kathy Spilman
Sidney Brush’s 70th
Birthday
Susan Grother
Art Cole
Evon & Sharon Kokaales
Stu Eddy
Rita & Norman Bober
Harold Fitzgerald
William Fitzgerald
Laura & Joe Galaviz’s 1st
Anniversary
Jane & Jeff Puvogel
Doutzen Gernaat
Meg & Matt Gernaat
Weather Han
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Betty Haas
Ronald & Donna Holmes
Jackie Hanna
Judy Hanna
Sarah Hill
Tom & Janelle Hohm
Dona Marie Johnson
Larry & Elaine Johnson
Jennifer E. Johnson
Jon Riccio
Kalamazoo Central HS
Class of 1954
The Ladies of the 80s
Kalamazoo’s Hungry People
John “Dale” & Cheryl
Westbrook
Carter Macey
Melissa Richardson
Mothers
James & Megan Roth
Niambi Pringle
Ryan Allen
Rachel Vote
Jim Robey and the W.E.
Upton Institute for
Employment Research
Kalamazoo Community
Foundation
Our 38th Wedding
Anniversary
Howard & Robyn Robinson
Margie Sherwood
Kathleen Sherwood &
Karen Cathcart
Daniel Sitar
Andrea Hurst
Beth Spencer
June Swanson’s 96th
Birthday
Tom & Jan Tiderington
Rodney & Robyn Todd
Christy Kenyon
Tiffany & Daniel
VanPeenens’s Wedding
LaKeisha Gill
Jane Irwin
Bryan Simpson
Ineke F. Way
Yvonne Unrua
Stuart Werner’s Birthday
Richard Hutson
John “Dale” Westbrook’s
79th Birthday
Cheryl Westbrook
IN MEMORY OF
Richard Albert
Trudi L. Giffin
Don & Beverly Huff
Al Anumden
Penninnah & Mark Miller
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Westbrook
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Dan & Susan Curtiss
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Mother’s Day
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Joseph Dillon
Colleen M. Berger
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Alvin & Betty Holmes
Evon Ebling
Moray & Ebling
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Josie Hoekstra Talsma
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Les & Jane Kochkerbocker
Larry MacPhee
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Violet Maki
Maria Maki & Brian Smith
Margaret Maneikis on
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Sandra L. Manfield
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Patrick Clark

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DOUGLASS PANTRY NOW OPEN

On May 9th, we had our inaugural service delivery in our new high-volume pantry located within the Douglass Community Association. After several years of exploration and planning, we are excited for the growth in service capacity that this new pantry allows. The pantry will support the needs of many Kalamazoo residents in the Northside neighborhood who currently travel to our Melzer pantry in Edison for their groceries or are not able to access a pantry at all. Lack of transportation can be a major hurdle to food security.

The number of individuals we can serve through this pantry depends on the availability of both funds and volunteers. During the first year of operation, we will serve 40 households - approximately 120 individuals - each week. As funds and volunteers are secured, we will continue to add shifts.

Special thanks to the staff and board of directors of the Douglass Community Association for their leadership and partnership (they are pictured with the KLF staff and board in the adjacent photo). We would also like to thank the individuals and groups, including Advia Credit Union and Stryker, who have already committed regular volunteer hours to this pantry. Lastly, we are grateful to our donors, including the PNC Foundation and LISC, who have invested in this new endeavor. Gifts of food, funds, and time from our generous supporters are what allow us to continue to help those who are struggling in our community.

CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITIES

A UNIQUE WAY TO GIVE.

GIFTS THAT PAY YOU INCOME.

A Charitable Gift Annuity enables a donor to transfer cash, marketable securities or real estate to an organization issuing the gift annuity in exchange for a current income tax deduction. In addition, the organization promises to make fixed annual payments to the donor for life. When the donor passes away, the charity keeps the gift and that donor leaves a legacy in their name. Annuity payments can begin immediately or can be deferred to some future date. For more information about supporting Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes through Charitable Gift Annuities, please contact KLF Development Director Greta Faworski at 269.488.2617 ext. 208 or Greta@kzoolf.org.

HELP FUEL KIDS FOR SUCCESS ALL SUMMER LONG

Your donation to this year’s Food is Fuel Campaign helps KLF provide food to the thousands of kids who lose the security of school feeding programs during summer months.

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THE SIMPLY GIVE PROGRAM GIVES TO KLF

Look for Simply Give donation cards next time you shop at Gull Rd. and Westnedge Meijer stores. Last year, your donations through this generous community program totaled nearly $21,000 and allowed KLF to purchase the variety of foods we needed to meet our nutritional standards.
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

THE LASTING EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD HUNGER

For thousands of children in Kalamazoo County, hunger is a daily reality. It’s not only about the day-to-day struggle of not having enough to eat. Oftentimes the effects of hunger can be lifelong and can play a significant role in a child’s ability to thrive.

Children facing hunger are 2X more likely to have chronic health issues than those who don’t experience hunger.

- Malnutrition
- Stunted and wasted growth
- Cognitive, emotional, and social issues
- Reduction of motor skills
- Lower activity levels
- Psychiatric distress
- Low self-esteem
- Behavioral issues
- Depression, aggression, and irritability

You can help fight childhood hunger this year. Donate to KLF’s Food is Fuel Campaign for Kids.

KZOOLF.ORG/Donate

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