Everything is so different in this country. The first two years were especially difficult, emotionally and physically.

MEET SAMARAH

ANY PARENT OF THREE YOUNG CHILDREN knows how busy and tiring life can be. But amidst the chaos, Samarah is also very grateful that her children are safe. In 2015, Samarah, her husband, and children came to the United States as refugees. In their home country, they were surrounded by continued conflict and violence. Knowing they couldn’t raise their children in those conditions, they left everything familiar behind to settle in Kalamazoo.

“Everything is so different in this country,” says Samarah. “The first two years were especially difficult, emotionally and physically.” She and her husband both had advanced degrees in Chemistry and spoke English; however, they found that their degrees could not be credentialled in the United States. Samarah found a job as a teacher’s aide, but soon discovered that everything she earned was being used to cover the cost of childcare. She decided to stay home with the children while her husband went to his job in a local factory. Making ends meet is a struggle every month. “Housing is very expensive here,” Samarah states. “The five of us live in a small, two-bedroom apartment that costs $855 per month.”

Samarah realized that her family needed help securing enough food. She discovered Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes by searching online. “It took a lot of courage to call and ask for help. I didn’t know what to expect and how I would be treated.” But Samarah was pleasantly surprised. “Everyone was very welcoming and kind. They were always smiling, and it made me more comfortable to return when I needed to do so. I am glad to see the variety of food — even that I had a choice of halal meat at some of the pantries.” In addition to visiting the pantries, Samarah’s family occasionally visits one of KLF’s Mobile Food Initiatives for supplemental groceries.

Despite the challenges they’ve faced, Samarah’s family is determined to improve their situation. Her husband has just been accepted into a Master’s degree program at WMU, and her boys continue to improve their English and settle into their school life. Right now, Samarah and her husband don’t have any family nearby, but they hope their parents will soon be able to join them in America. And someday when her children are older and some current medical conditions are resolved, Samarah hopes to return to work — something she misses very much.

“We are grateful for Loaves & Fishes. They have helped us a great deal during this time,” says Samarah. “Whenever they are collecting food at the boys’ schools, I try to give something. It’s important to give back and remember that there are some people who have less than we do.”
A NOTE FROM JEN - MEET PASTOR JIM DYKE, MFI COORDINATOR

Last fiscal year, KLF’s five Mobile Food Initiative (MFI) sites distributed thousands of pounds of food to those struggling with food insecurity. For this newsletter, we sat down with Jim Dyke, pastor of Saint Andrew Community Church and MFI Coordinator, to learn more about this important food program. — Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director

Q: How many people does Saint Andrew’s MFI serve each month?
A: We have approximately 50 volunteers that help distribute between 6,000 and 16,000 pounds of food to our neighbors on a once-per-month basis. We estimate that we serve 220 families during our distributions. Our volunteers have learned the names and listened to the stories of those who utilize our MFI site. We feel honored that the community has entrusted us to provide this food with compassion and gratitude.

Q: In what ways have you seen this program evolve over the years?
A: We’ve been doing this for eight years and, over that time, have seen a sense of community develop around the MFI. The SPCA took a heartfelt interest in our project and now donates thousands of pounds of pet food. St. Tom’s Parish provides thousands of roles of toilet paper and personal hygiene products each month. Our own parish provides infant diapers — all on top of the fresh groceries KLF provides.

Q: Why is it important for you and Saint Andrew Community Church to continue this work?
A: We are very passionate about meeting people’s basic food needs. It’s also good for us to be reminded that we need to take care of the next generation. They are our replacements. It is a privilege to participate.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: ADVIA CREDIT UNION

In May 2017, Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes opened a high-capacity food pantry within the Douglass Community Association. Opening a new pantry comes with expected challenges — familiarizing the community with the new location, additional weekly food deliveries for the warehouse to coordinate, and recruiting volunteers to help stock shelves and assist clients while they shop. Volunteers are essential to our capacity at any pantry location.

When Advia Credit Union learned about the need for pantry volunteers at the newly opened Douglass Pantry, they eagerly expressed interest. Advia employees had been assisting in the KLF warehouse for several years but committed to provide employees to staff a pantry shift each month. Today, they’re a key part of the collaboration that has allowed the Douglass Pantry to grow from limited capacity in the beginning to now serving nearly 300 households per month.

“Advia has been on board since the early days of this pantry location,” states Gina Nowling, Douglass Pantry Coordinator. “We appreciate their dedication, positive energy, and hard work.”

Advia Credit Union encourages employee volunteerism through their Advia ACTION Employee Program. The program allows employees time away from work to lend a hand to charities that are meaningful to them. KLF is so grateful to the Advia team for giving their time to the continued success and development of the Douglass Pantry.

If your team is interesting in volunteering for a pantry shift, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Ray, at 269-488-2617 x209 or ray@kzoolf.org.
In the U.S., 40% of edible food never meets mouths. Instead, unused food ends up in landfills or is left behind in fields, comprising the single largest type of waste we produce each year. With nearly 50 million Americans struggling with hunger, it seems reasonable to assume that remedying our food waste problem could have an overwhelmingly positive effect on hunger. While the obvious place to start tackling this issue is within our own kitchens, it’s also important to be aware of other food-waste channels that contribute to the problem.

At The Farm: The biggest culprit of farm food waste is cosmetically challenged food — food that’s fresh and edible but doesn’t look perfect.

At The Store: Grocery stores toss billions of pounds of food from shelves each year due to sell-by dates and imperfections. Sadly, a lot of the food being pitched is edible.

At School: Recent statistics show that grade schools waste an estimated 1—2 percent of the total food produced. Universities produce around 22 million pounds of waste each year or 142 pounds per student.

At Work: According to StopWaste.org, corporate kitchens typically throw away 4—10 percent of the food they purchase before it reaches a customer’s plate due to overproduction, expiration, spoilage, and trimmings.

At Home: Households generate approximately 150,000 tons of food waste each day amounting to half of the total food waste in the U.S.

The good news is that there are glimmers of hope on the food-waste horizon. Consumers are starting to better educate themselves about food labels and what those dates actually mean. Imperfect produce has been seen on grocery store shelves at reduced prices, and more grocers have started donating outdated food to organizations like KLF. School cafeterias and corporate kitchens are teaming up with non-profits to repackage unused food to fight hunger. Large cities like Boston are even piloting curbside composting programs!

The Internet is a wealth of knowledge when looking for opportunities to reduce food waste. Start by visiting kzoolf.org to see how to better decipher food labels to make the most of what’s in your kitchen.
EXPANDING OUR REACH

We have become very aware of the need to supplement our efforts in the Grocery Pantry Program with non-traditional outreach. In addition to the recent service change to open capacity throughout the pantry network, we have started to implement more non-traditional outreach activities. These activities are designed to reach individuals who simply cannot be served by the current model for a variety of reasons. These efforts include:

- Monthly food distribution at Lutheran Church of the Savior and African Christian Fellowship to approximately 90 Congolese refugee families
- Partnership with Kalamazoo Covenant Academy and Kalamazoo Valley Community College to provide emergency food to non-traditional students
- Weekly grocery distribution to homebound seniors receiving Meals on Wheels delivery from Senior Services
- Food distribution at Phoenix High School to cover the gap of spring break
- Monthly food distributions to homeless encampments
- One-time mobile food distributions during critical times (school breaks, irregular SNAP benefit distribution during the first quarter of 2019)
- Identification of food insecure families at the time of a routine or sick child visit through the Food is Medicine project (a workgroup of the Hunger-Free Coalition)

These outreach efforts have been very successful but are just the beginning. Our goal is to continue outreach to underserved populations. Other target populations outlined in our outreach plans include those recently released from the prison system, LGBTQ+ youth, veterans, and those with limited transportation options.

Bequests are gifts given to a charity after an individual’s death as specified in their last will and testament. Bequests are most often financial gifts, but may also be gifts of personal property or stock. What an amazing way to leave a legacy and continue helping others after your passing! Since a gift can be made in a specific dollar amount or as a percentage of your estate, there are ways to support multiple charities and to ensure your loved ones are cared for as well.

For more information about supporting KLF through a bequest, contact KLF Development Director Greta Faworski at greta@kzoolf.org or 269-488-2617 x208.

KNOW THE STATS

BE AN ADVOCATE

Meet ALICE — Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. ALICE represents our friends and neighbors in the community that are employed yet are still struggling to make ends meet. In Kalamazoo County, 26% of households must make difficult decisions every day. Healthy food or car insurance? Healthcare or safe childcare? To simply survive, a family of four (2 adults, 1 infant, 1 preschooler) would need to make $66,528 per year or $33.26 an hour. Survival budgeting does not allow saving for unexpected expenses, making even the smallest repair or health expense a catastrophe. While unemployment rates have decreased, wages vary by location. Sixty-one percent of all jobs in Michigan pay less than $20 per hour.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SINGLE ADULT</th>
<th>2 ADULTS, 1 INFANT, 1 PRESCHOOLER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monthly Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Food</td>
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<td>Taxes</td>
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<td><strong>ANNUAL TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$20,976</strong></td>
<td><strong>$66,528</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hourly Wage</strong></td>
<td><strong>$10.49</strong></td>
<td><strong>$33.26</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Monthly costs include:

- Housing
- Child Care
- Food
- Transportation
- Health Care
- Technology
- Miscellaneous
- Taxes

Other costs include:

- Utilities
- Phone
- Cell Phone
- Internet
- Entertainment
- Personal Care
- Personal
- Travel
- Pets
- Gas
- Transportation


Bequests are gifts given to a charity after an individual’s death as specified in their last will and testament. Bequests are most often financial gifts, but may also be gifts of personal property or stock. What an amazing way to leave a legacy and continue helping others after your passing! Since a gift can be made in a specific dollar amount or as a percentage of your estate, there are ways to support multiple charities and to ensure your loved ones are cared for as well.

For more information about supporting KLF through a bequest, contact KLF Development Director Greta Faworski at greta@kzoolf.org or 269-488-2617 x208.
TRIBUTES

Generous donations made to KLF in someone's honor or memory. Donations made 3/1/19 - 4/30/19.

IN HONOR OF
Lee Accorso
Sam & Barb Accorso
Susan Beute's 75th Birthday
Harvey Beute
Carolyn Kozlowicz
Kathy Spilman
Herb Boyer
Christine Flagler & Jim Ishida
Art Cole
Jon Riccio
Thom Davenport
Jeanne & Harry Church
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Harold Fitzgerald
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Joseph Mauro
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Beverly Schmitt
Our 21st Anniversary
J. Dale & Cheryl Westbrook
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Millie Lambert
Brian Stephenson
Chris & Mary DeYoung
Josh Weiner
Cheryl & Bruce Briney
Anna & Wayne Nicolen
Rose Williams
Kevin Springer

IN MEMORY OF
Jill Adamski
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Roy Betzler
Ronald & Donna Holmes
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Kathleen Fleece
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Paul & Diana Swope
Shirely Tyndell
Gale & Kathleen Newell

NEW TO THE KLF TEAM!

Mandakini Quiñones is our new Development and Communications Coordinator. She plays an instrumental role in keeping our database organized, planning events, and connecting KLF with the community. We’re thrilled to have her on our team!

Mandakini can assist you with any corrections, mailing database updates, or how your newsletter is delivered (via USPS, email, or both). Please contact her at 269.488.2617 ext. 206 or Mandakini@kzoolf.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

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME CHALLENGES FOR FAMILIES
Summertime brings with it additional challenges for families already struggling with poverty and hunger. Some of those challenges include:

- Loss of access to school meal programs
- Loss of access to school-administered weekend food programs
- Need for childcare and high childcare costs
- Increased household expenses including food and utilities
- Increased transportation costs and barriers
- Children and teens with increased unmonitored time and responsibility to care for themselves and siblings

Many of the above challenges are felt by families during all school break sessions, but the duration of summer vacation makes June—August particularly difficult. To see how you can help families this summer and into the next school year, visit kzoolf.org