

KALAMAZOO LOAVES & FISHES FOOD for THOUGHT

Promoting a Hunger-Free Community Since 1982

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

BECKY'S STORY

Most people sitting in a business meeting with Becky would never suspect that she relied on Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes to put food on the table for her and her family in the past. With a resume that boasts impressive job experience and two master's degrees, she's not what many envision as someone in need of a helping hand.

"I'm quick to remind people not to confuse who I *am* with what I *look like* on paper," Becky says with a slight smile.

A Kalamazoo native, Becky grew up with a single mother who worked tirelessly to



provide for her children. While money was always tight, Becky's mother consistently stressed the importance of getting an education and persuing goals with tenacity. She landed her post-college dream job amidst an ailing U.S. economy only to be laid off eight months later. After moving a handful of times for work and living paycheck to paycheck, she found herself unemployed, applying for benefits, and feverishly looking for work again.

In 2013, with a new husband and new baby, Becky moved back to Michigan to

pursue job opportunities after realizing her current employment wasn't a good long-term option. Finding work in Michigan was tough, so Becky applied for various state benefits hoping to utilize them to bridge the gap while looking for a job, but, for a variety of reasons, was always denied.

"I felt like I was constantly under a microscope," Becky recalls. "I felt trapped. That feeling of failure, of feeling responsible for that failure, is horrible."

Becky was thankful when she received a referral to Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes for groceries. "The volunteers were so kind and so helpful. It was a relief to have that resource when and if I needed it."

Today, Becky can't help but approach her work from the lens she looked through for so many years and feels the challenges she's faced allow her to develop more equitable projects. While she and her husband still live on a tight budget, she's incredibly thankful to not only have a job, but also one that now allows her to give back to organizations that helped her when she needed a hand. ■

Name changed for anonymity

TOP 10 FOOD DRIVES

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2015

- 1 Kalamazoo Central High School, Stuff the Bus
5424 Pounds
- 2 Borgess Hospital
1520 Pounds
- 3 Knights of the Columbus 6980
1519 Pounds
- 4 KAMSC
1432 Pounds
- 5 Prab, Inc.
1345 Pounds
- 6 King-Westwood Elementary
1337 Pounds
- 7 Kalamazoo County Water Safety & Recovery Association
1135 Pounds
- 8 Milwood United Methodist Church
1126 Pounds
- 9 Bethel Baptist Church
1075 Pounds
- 10 St. Luke's Episcopal Church
1032 Pounds

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

THE FIGHT TO END LOCAL
HUNGER WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE
WITHOUT YOUR GENEROSITY!

NOTE FROM JEN

Diversity and inclusion. These words are heard often in our society; however, as sometimes happens when words are used frequently and broadly, we often begin to gloss over them or forget the depth of their meaning. At Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes, we make a concerted effort not only to talk about diversity and inclusion, but also to integrate these practices into every aspect of our organization. We grew out of the belief that everyone, regardless of individual differences and life circumstance, deserve to have their basic needs met. And while our name derives from Judeo-Christian beliefs, we remain a secular organization that does not believe anything should come between hungry people and food.



KLF serves a diverse clientele. From ethnicity and religion to age and socioeconomic status, we see people from all walks of life coming through our doors each week. Because hunger doesn't discriminate, it's important to us to make sure our shelves are stocked with food that can meet the dietary, cultural, and preferential needs of anyone coming to us for help. However, we know there is more we can do to serve our diverse community so we recently dove into local training workshops and seminars to explore ways to expand or tweak services to reach unmet needs.

In 2013, KLF's Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce was formed (pictured above). Our internal taskforce is charged with helping the organization put its commitment to diversity and inclusion into action. The taskforce's work currently includes providing training for staff, discussing barriers and racial inequalities in the work of food security, and reviewing KLF's policies and procedures. Over the course of the next year, we'll be exploring a number of options to make our organization more inclusive for all – clients, volunteers, donors, and staff. We have lofty goals, but we're not ones to set the bar lower than our caliber.

We're proud of the progress we've made and hope you're proud to support an organization that is so strongly committed to diversity and inclusion. ■

Executive Director

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: WALTHER FARMS



*A local company that believes in
growing people by growing potatoes.*

Family owned and operated since 1946, Walther Farms has been perfecting the art of potato cultivation for 70 years. Headquartered in Three Rivers, Michigan, the company produces spuds for some of the top potato chip processors in the country as well as local grocers.

Founders Leonard Walther, Sr. and his wife Regina always believed in sharing the blessings bestowed upon them with others, and that foundation of giving is at the core of Walther Farms' mission today. "A portion of our profits go to supporting local organizations that help people in the communities we work and live in," said Chad Cottingham, Director of Employee and Community Relations.

Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes is grateful to receive a weekly donation of fresh potatoes from Walther Farms, which totaled over 40,000 pounds in 2015 alone. Those potatoes are then packaged and distributed to KLF clients who need help filling their cupboards. Walther Farms' generosity also touches the lives of 360 Three Rivers school district students each week through their independently-run Paw Pack program. "We grow food to feed people," Cottingham said, "We feel compelled to give some of what we have to ensure people in our community aren't going hungry."

Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes is proud to partner with Walther Farms and is so grateful for their support in working toward a hunger-free Kalamazoo County. ■





CONSIDERING A MONTHLY GIFT?

- Give via credit card, direct debit, or check from your financial institution.
- Convenient, yet very effective way to support the community.
- Makes it easy to budget your charitable giving.
- Provides KLF with a stable, continual source of revenue.
- Helps people in need year-round, especially when donations are low but need is high.

If you are dedicated to feeding hungry people, we've got an easy way to do it – join our *Sustainers Circle Monthly Giving Program* today.

For more information, please contact Greta at 269-488-2617 x208 or greta@kzoolf.org.



The Link: Poverty and Poor Health

Poverty is the main cause of hunger worldwide, and Kalamazoo County is no exception to that statistic. Nearly 40,000 residents, including 10,500 children, are food insecure in our community. Because stretching an already stretched budget is no easy task, many of the individuals and families have to make the tough choice of purchasing a small amount of fresh produce or a larger amount of processed food. Sadly, some aren't even fortunate to have that choice, oftentimes running out of funds before a grocery budget is allocated.

The affects of food insecurity don't end when someone has a full stomach. A prolonged lack of access to nutrient-dense food negatively impacts healthy growth and development and can lead to compounded health issues later in life. According to a recent study conducted by the Bread for the World Institute, hunger and food insecurity increased health expenditures in the United States by \$160 billion in 2015. Many chronic diseases – depression, cardiovascular disease, asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure - are directly linked to poor diet.

Solving this issue is not as simple as replacing a few cans of ready-made ravioli with an armful of fresh carrots and oranges. Over the last 30 years, prices for fresh fruits and vegetables have risen at a higher rate than any other food group¹. The incentive to spend your last dollars on fresh food simply isn't there when that money can purchase double the amount of groceries if spent on ready-made or processed foods. It's for this reason that Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes (KLF) works hard to source fresh produce, dairy and meat products for clients each week.

Each week KLF clients have the opportunity to grab fresh food from our pantries, knowing that these types of groceries allow them to spend time cooking with their children or provide what they need to create multiple meals from just a few items. Fresh, unprocessed foods add more than food to bellies – they provide sustenance for healthier lives, healthier families, and an overall healthier Kalamazoo County. ■



¹ Bread for the Word Institute. (2015) . 2015 *The Nourishing Effect: Ending Hunger, Improving Health, Reducing Inequality* Retrieved from <http://www.bread.org/library/cost-hunger>.



VOLUNTEER THANK YOU

OVER 75 VOLUNTEER GROUPS HELPED SORT & REPACKAGE 73,503 POUNDS OF FOOD FROM SEPT. THROUGH DEC. 2015
THAT EQUATES TO ENOUGH FOOD FOR 61,253 MEALS FOR THOSE WHO MAY OTHERWISE GO HUNGRY



Are you interested in helping make Kalamazoo a hunger-free community? We've got a place for you! Attend a brief volunteer orientation to get started.

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

ORIENTATION DATES

SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 13

WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 24

SATURDAY
MARCH 12

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes is excited to welcome three new Board members to the KLF team: **Ryan Conboy**, an attorney with Kreis Enderle in Kalamazoo; **Kim Labadie**, Vice President Treasury Sales at Mercantile Bank of Michigan in Kalamazoo; and **Rob Kakuk**, Director of Human Resources for Western Michigan University, officially joined KLF's Board of Directors in December of 2015. Each new member brings a wealth of diverse experience to KLF's team and the fight to end local hunger. Existing board member **Rob DeWit**, President and Chief Executive Officer for Southwest Michigan Innovation Center, has stepped into the role of Board President following the steadfast leadership of Past President Sam Lealofi, Executive Director at Kalamazoo Center for Youth & Community. We're looking forward to another year of progress with help from KLF's Board of Directors. ■

MONTHLY GIVING COUPONS

GIVING COUPON:
FEBRUARY
COUPON #149

Continue the spirit of giving the whole year through. Thank you for your generosity!

Donation Amount
\$ _____

Please send your contribution by February 19th.

Food Wish List Item: Rice

GIVING COUPON:
MARCH
COUPON #150

Start the spring season with a gift to help end hunger in Kalamazoo County.

Donation Amount
\$ _____

Please send your contribution by March 18th.

Food Wish List Item: Canned Fruit

**KLF'S WEBSITE
GOT A FACE LIFT!**

SEE WHAT'S NEW AT
KZOOOLF.ORG

A SIGN OF SUPPORT

Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes was recently the recipient of a new electronic sign thanks to the generosity of **SignArt** located at 5757 E. Cork Street in Kalamazoo. The new sign will allow KLF to better inform Kalamazoo residents and visitors about programs, news, and events as they drive by our 901 Portage Street location. **SignArt** has been a fantastic community partner over the years, and we're thankful for their support in allowing us to get our message out in a new way. Give us a honk the next time you drive by our snazzy new sign! ■



Thanks to the support of Presenting Sponsor **Maple Hill Auto Group** and co-hosts **Gazelle Sports** and **Kalamazoo Area Runners**, the 2015 **Run Through the Lights** was a festive success! Nearly 1000 participants generated 819 pounds of food and over \$8,500 in proceeds for KLF. The event contributed enough donated food and funds to provide food for 26,182 meals for people in need during the holiday season. We're looking forward to the 2016 event and the colorful fun it will bring! ■



We Asked. You Gave. Thank You

Thanks to your support we were able to reach our Annual Campaign goal this year. Because of your generosity, KLF is better equipped to tackle food insecurity in Kalamazoo County, particularly during the late winter/early spring months when donations taper off, but demand is still high. Thank you for believing in our mission and allowing us to continue the fight to end hunger today and for future generations.

TRIBUTES

Generous donations made to KLF in someone's MEMORY. Donations made 10/21/15 - 12/31/15.

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KLF Staff and the Good They Do
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Ladies' Library Association Board of Directors
Ladies Library Association

Ed LaForge's Birthday
Sandra Kristen

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Jane & Thomas Norton

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Dolores Heidanus

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Fran Mason's 90th Birthday
Joyce Thorson

Michele McLaughlin
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Alan & Rhonda Messenger
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Jerry & Susan Miller
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Matthew Miller
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Anna Nicolen
Judith Harris

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Patricia Pettinga

Physicians Referring Patients to the Practice
The Surgical Group of SW Michigan

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Garry & Nancy Hopkins

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Donna Popke
Joan Young

John Post & Staff Landscaping
Rosemary Barnum

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Richland Food Pantry

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Gino Brewster

St. Luke's Church
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Laureen Summerville
Alana Meyers

June Swanson
Lee & Kris Dyer

Mike & Janet Sydlaske
Rick & Mary Halpert

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Kalamazoo Round Table

Combs Kids
Joyce K. Thrane

The Macatawa Gang
Aileen Greanya

Oppliger Children & Grandchildren
Larry & Kay Oppliger

Joe, Lisa, Avery, Paris & Xavier Thomas
Catherine Marschke

Marge Thomas
Anna Mae Miller

Those Who Serve God Through Service to the Poor
Adam & Melissa Kelien

Richard Tomlinson
Dr. & Mrs. David Milko

Paul and Leslie Triemstra
Joel Triemstra

John & Carol Trittschuh
Rick & Mary Halpert

Tuesday Bridge Group
Shirley & Allan Heavey

Emily Turner
Maggie Stockwell

Shirley Tyndall
Jane & Jeff Puvogel

Kay Van Dis
Tucky & Chuck Elliott

Sandy Vandenberg's Birthday
Carol Vandenberg

Laura VanVlack-Ailes
Bruce VanVlack

Dad & Mom Waggoner
Henry & Mary Elizabeth Bell

Tamara Webster
Diane K. Freestone

Lisa & Brad Welniak
Rick & Mary Halpert

Steve & Debbie Weston
Rick & Mary Halpert

Michael, Stephanie, Paul & Nicholas White
Richard & Barbara Baker

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John & Elizabeth Williams
Charles & Virginia Spaniolo

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Mike & Lynn Tompkins

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WMU Human Resources
Laureen Summerville

Maggie Woodruff
Jim Woodruff

Woodward's Garage
Russell & Sally Kowalysin

Mrs. Ruby Wortman
Carla Torgerson & Thomas Wortman

Susan Wright
Barbara Albanese

Lys Buck & Liz Yoon
Chong & Jan Yoon

Dr. Larry Youse, DDS
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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

You're Invited!

COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

MARCH 24 : 5:30-7:30 PM

KALAMAZOO VALLEY MUSEUM
230 N. ROSE STREET
DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO

RSVP TO MEG AT 269.488.2617 EXT. 218 OR EMAIL HER AT MEG@KZOLF.ORG



Join us for an update from our Executive Director, donor & volunteer accolades, 2015 statistics, munchies, and more!

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

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Cherise Buchanan, Volunteer Coordinator
Mary-Elizabeth Bell, Finance/Office Coordinator
Paul Bushek, Warehouse Assistant
Art Cole, Services Director
Joe Cook, Warehouse Assistant
Bob Dekker, Warehouse Assistant
Greta Faworski, Resource Development Director
Linda Fox, Call Center Coordinator
Joe Galaviz, Warehouse Assistant

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