

FOODFOR THOUGHT

SPRING 2023



MEET VIVEK

Vivek contacts the Call Center one afternoon to schedule an appointment. He starts by telling the staff how much he loves talking to them because it brightens his day. “I’m an old man, probably much older than your grandfather,” Vivek laughs. “But I still need to eat!” Vivek visits KLF only a few times a year when he has trouble stretching his fixed income to the end of the month. When he calls, he requests an appointment at one of KLF’s locations in Portage that offers in-person shopping. “I don’t like to be a pain, but I do like to pick my own things now and then. Plus, it keeps me out of trouble,” Vivek jokes. Before he hangs up, Vivek says, “Thank you, thank you, thank you!”



MEET MELISSA

Melissa pulled up to KLF in a pick-up truck with several pieces of furniture in the back. She told our staff that she just relocated from Indiana, trying to start over after leaving a bad relationship. Before moving, Melissa had saved money for her apartment deposit and the first few weeks of expenses. Unfortunately, shortly after arriving, her truck required a major repair, which depleted the money she had saved. Luckily, she was able to secure an apartment, but had little left for anything else. Melissa tears up and points to the items in the back of the truck, “I am trying to sell these things to get some cash because I don’t know what else to do. My new job starts on Monday, but I won’t get paid for two weeks. It only pays \$11 per hour — it will take a while to save anything.” One of her new neighbors suggested she contact KLF to help with groceries in the meantime. “This was supposed to be my fresh start, but nothing is going right. I’m too old to be asking for help,” Melissa says as she wipes her tears.



MEET DEANDRE

DeAndre writes KLF via email. “I’m writing from the library because I don’t have minutes left on my phone to call, and we don’t have internet at home.” DeAndre goes on to explain that he is currently caring for his aging mother as well as his four-year old daughter. It has been a challenge taking care of them simultaneously because they both need so much attention. His car won’t start, but he can’t afford to tow it to a shop, let alone have it repaired. We set up an account for him and schedule a home delivery the next day. “I feel like I’ve failed everyone,” DeAndre shares. “Thanks — this will help a lot.”



While the client stories featured above are true, their names and images have been changed for anonymity.

A NOTE FROM JEN



Inset photo: Pantry Coordinator Davonne Pierce with volunteers. Main photo: The Church of Christ

Church of Christ on Virginia Avenue in Kalamazoo has become a recent KLF pantry partner, conveniently located near Parchment and the Eastside neighborhood. Offering an evening option, this pantry is becoming increasingly popular with clients who need appointments later in the day. We sat down with Pantry Coordinator, Davonne Pierce, to learn more about this important partnership.

— Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director

Q: The evening pantry hours offered at Church of Christ are well-liked by our clients. What are your hours of operation, and what kind of demand are you seeing?

A: Our current hours (5-8 pm) offer clients more flexibility and accessibility. I believe we are the only pantry that is open during this time. We have seen an overwhelming amount of steady appointments and walk-in clients. If someone would like to visit our pantry, they can schedule through KLF's Call Center at 269-343-3663.

Q: Curbside pick-up from KLF's Melzer Pantry is a convenient option for many clients, but some prefer to select their own grocery items. Your location, as well as other KLF pantries, offer in-person shopping. What choices are available for clients visiting your pantry?

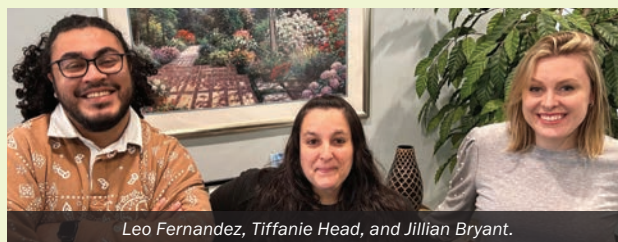
A: While we offer both curbside pickup and in-store shopping, most of our clients prefer to come inside and select their own items. Using the "points" system developed by KLF, clients can shop for the items that they need most. They have access to the same inventory offered through curbside pick-up — milk, eggs, bread, produce, meat, and non-perishables.

Q: Recruiting volunteers and adjusting to new operations can be difficult. What challenges have you faced since opening the pantry at Church of Christ?

A: We have experienced challenges staffing the pantry. We initially wanted to be open on Tuesdays and Thursdays; however, due to staffing, we are only open on Thursday evenings for the time being. Hopefully, as our Church experiences more growth, we'll be able to open back up on Tuesdays because we know there is a need for evening pantry hours.

Q: Why was it important for your congregation to implement a food pantry, and how did it come to be?

A: Our congregation has been a partner with Loaves & Fishes for over 30 years, starting at our former location at 1101 North Westnedge. We valued the importance of supporting those who need food assistance. Since we relocated to our current location on Virginia Avenue, that same need is still present.



Leo Fernandez, Tiffanie Head, and Jillian Bryant.

Staffing Changes at KLF

We would like to welcome **Tiffanie Head** as your newest Warehouse Assistant! She will help our warehouse team with product deliveries, mobile food distributions, and inventory management.

Jillian Bryant has moved into the role of Volunteer Coordinator. She is a familiar face at KLF because she previously worked in our services department as the Program Navigation Coordinator. She will be bringing her skills and organizational knowledge to her new role managing volunteer scheduling and recruitment.

Moving into the Program Navigation Coordinator role is another familiar face – **Leo Fernandez**. Leo was previously our Bilingual Program Assistant and now will be coordinating daily Call Center activities.

We've also had to say goodbye to two valued team members in recent weeks. **Jay Steeb**, former Delivery & Program Assistant, was with KLF for two years, providing valuable support in our pantry and home delivery program. **Ray Kuerth**, former Volunteer Coordinator, was part of the KLF team for six years, greeting volunteers with a smile and enthusiasm for our mission. We are so grateful for their commitment and dedication during their time with the organization. Best wishes to both Jay and Ray in their new endeavors. They will be missed!



Save the Date!



The OnStaff Dollar Drive Thru will be held on Thursday, July 13th.

MANY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The OnStaff Dollar Drive Thru raises both awareness and funds to alleviate childhood hunger during the summer. We need nearly 150 volunteers to make this fundraising event successful! Volunteers will work in 2-3 hour shifts collecting donations at an assigned location. This is a great opportunity for groups or teenagers needing school service hours. Visit kzoolf.org/events or email jillian@kzoolf.org to get more information.

LOVE TO GARDEN? Consider planting a row for KLF!

We accept donations of fresh produce, which is one of our most requested food items. While we accept fresh produce Monday-Friday, we encourage you to bring in perishable donations earlier in the week, so we have time to distribute them when they are the freshest.



Connect with Us on Social Media

Follow KLF on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter! You'll find fun updates, shout-outs, important program information, and local resources. Interacting with us digitally helps promote our anti-hunger efforts.

Here's how you can help:

- Share our posts on your personal feed.
- Invite others to also follow KLF on social media.
- Respond to upcoming events and encourage others to join.
- Tag us in your posts! We love to see photos of food drives, volunteer projects, or other neighborhood happenings.
- Visit www.kzoolf.org for info on our programs and how to get involved.

MONTHLY GIVING COUPONS

GIVING COUPON:

MAY

COUPON #228

A tribute donation to KLF makes a great Mother's Day gift.

Donation Amount

\$ _____

FOOD WISH LIST:
Cereal

GIVING COUPON:

JUNE

COUPON #229

Every gift is like a seedling of hope for those in need. Thank you!

Donation Amount

\$ _____

FOOD WISH LIST:
Baking Items
(flour, sugar, cooking oil)

CHILDCARE CHALLENGES



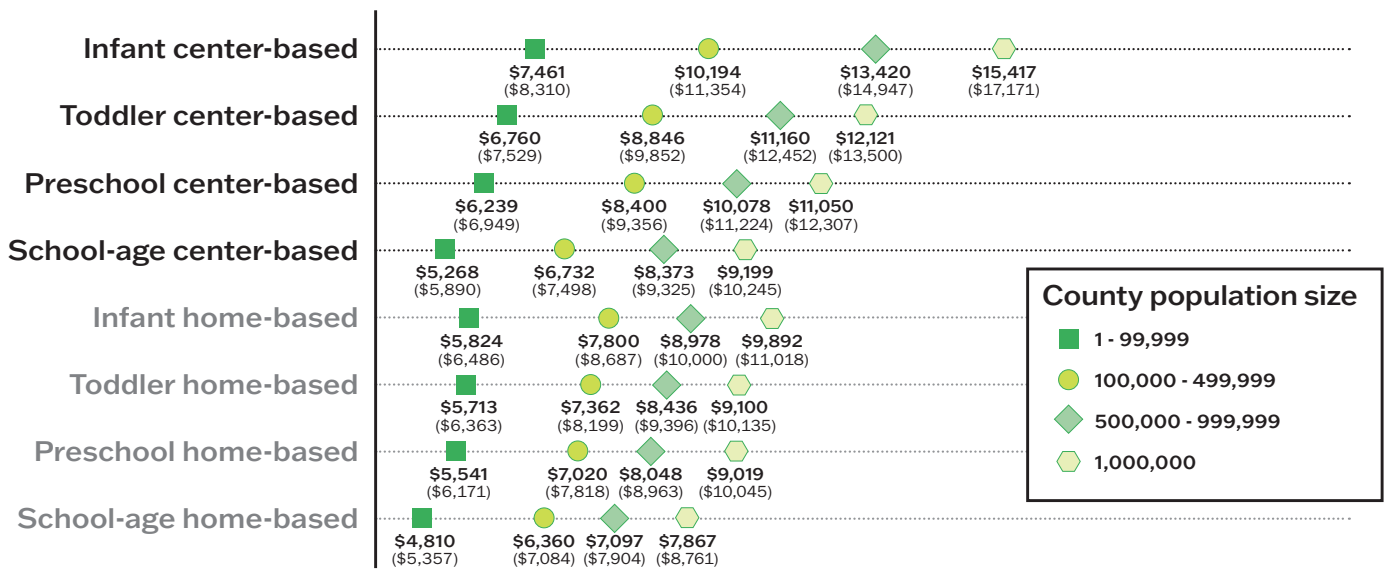
Parents and other guardians are feeling the weight of steep childcare costs. For some families, childcare has become impossible to afford, forcing difficult decisions regarding employment, household bills, and how to care for their children.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, the average annual cost of infant care in Michigan is \$10,861, or \$905 per month. Families with multiple children face an even higher cost. Childcare for two children – an infant and a 4-year-old – costs \$19,751. That’s 48.7% more than average rent in Michigan. This cost is only an average and does not consider the quality, location, or availability of daycare facilities.

Reform of the childcare system in America is becoming an increasingly popular policy debate. Some argue that the cost of childcare should be capped as a percentage of a family’s income. This could potentially free up dollars for other necessary household expenses—rent, groceries, health-care, and transportation. These measures may also allow more parents and guardians to enter the workforce and contribute to the state’s economy.

It should also be noted that daycare employees themselves are struggling. The families of childcare workers are more than twice as likely to be living in poverty than other working families. For a minimum-wage worker, more than 50% of their income may be going towards childcare. This causes some to consider whether it is worth the price. If staying home means saving money but forfeiting an income, how do parents and guardians continue to make ends meet?

MEDIAN ANNUAL PRICE OF CHILD CARE FOR ONE CHILD



Sources: <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/MI>
<https://blog.dol.gov/2023/01/24/new-childcare-data-shows-prices-are-untenable-for-families>

Note: Childcare prices are presented in 2018 and 2022 real dollars. Estimates for 2022 are in parentheses.

TRIBUTES

Generous donations made to KLF in someone's **HONOR** or **MEMORY**. Donations made 2/1/2023 to 3/31/2023.

IN HONOR

Lee Accorso
Sam & Barb Accorso

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Donna Emerson

Our 25th Wedding Anniversary
J. Dale & Cheryl Westbrook

IN MEMORY

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Promoting a Hunger-Free Community Since 1982

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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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

MOBILE FOOD INITIATIVE MOBILE FOOD INITIATIVE MOBILE FOOD INITIATIVE



Our **Mobile Food Initiative** started in 2008 with the goal to provide supplemental food to the community in a quick, accessible way. Here are some facts about this program:

- At each distribution, 5-7 food items are provided, often perishables such as produce.
- No appointment is needed to visit a mobile food distribution.
- KLF offers 12 regularly scheduled mobile food distributions each month. The current schedule can be found at kzoolf.org/mobile-food-initiative.
- Clients can attend mobile food distributions in addition to the Grocery Pantry Program.
- Our Mobile Food Initiative is possible because of wonderful partners at:
 - Galesburg United Methodist Church
 - Sunnyside United Methodist Church
 - Chapel Hill United Methodist Church
 - Comstock Middle School
 - Saint Andrew Community Church
 - Douglass Community Association
 - Vicksburg United Methodist Church
 - The Salvation Army
 - Centerpoint Church

SPRING 2023

CONNECT WITH US



KALAMAZOO LOAVES & FISHES IS A



STAFF/BUSINESS OFFICE

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