

# FOODFOR THOUGHT

FALL 2024



## MEET ANDREW

“Me and my family are homeless, staying with friends and family when we can,” shared Andrew when he reached out to make an appointment. His family consists of two adults and three children under the age of 5 years old. “We get a small amount of food stamps, but by the end of the month, we run out.” Andrew is hoping to find a permanent place to live soon, but it’s difficult to find something they can afford. “We just need help for a couple of weeks while we try to get on our feet,” stated Andrew.

## MEET DEE

“My family has fallen on hard times,” Dee expressed when she contacted KLF. “First time we have been in a situation like this.” Dee, a mother of four children, continued to share that she fell three months ago and suffered a serious back injury, placing her on medical leave and cutting the household income in half. “The doctors have tried a new therapy that is supposed to speed healing. Hopefully it works!” While recovering, Dee decided to take a couple of virtual classes to further pursue her education and eventually improve her employment opportunities.



## MEET OKPARA

Okpara is working towards a master’s degree in computer science at the local university, scheduled to graduate next spring. As part of his program, he is working with faculty and other students on an integrative software platform design. While this program is great experience, it does not allow Okpara time to work more than occasional tutoring of undergraduate students. Okpara knows that, when he graduates, there will be ample job opportunities. But for now, he is struggling to buy groceries. “My religion requires me to eat only halal prepared meat,” shares Okpara. “I appreciate that is an option at Loaves & Fishes.”



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

# A NOTE FROM JEN

Over the past few years, KLF has experienced a handful of challenges in response to community needs, fluctuations in food systems, new service delivery methods, and nationwide inflation. These challenges have inspired our organization to adapt, grow, and strengthen our internal structures. Rising to meet these challenges is a newer member of our team, **Senior Warehouse Manager, Brian Koenigsknecht**.

— Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director



Brian Koenigsknecht, Senior Warehouse Manager

**Q: Brian, what brought you to Loaves & Fishes, and what are your current goals for leading the Warehouse Department?**

**A:** I'd known of KLF and been involved over the years as a volunteer and supporter. After many years of warehouse management, I worked with Public Schools for a while, supporting many kids who experienced food insecurity. This opportunity at Loaves & Fishes called to me because not only can I use my warehouse management skills, but also help kids and families. This role at KLF is a great way for me to connect with the community and have an impact.

My current goals for the department are to unify our team and connect with our mission. Despite the stresses of the day, we are striving to enjoy our work and operate as a strong team. **We want to get the job done right, and I want to motivate our team to feel proud of their work each day.**

**Q: How do the challenges facing KLF compare to other organizations or warehouse departments where you've been involved?**

**A:** Working with perishable products, like produce, is a new undertaking. Storing and moving fresh food items requires a real sense of urgency. It's about getting the timing right to deliver perishable products to the right people, at the right pantries, and then making room for more food in our warehouse. It is a job that really makes you more aware of food waste, access, and the importance of fresh foods.

**Q: What is our organization doing well? Are there any plans are in place for improvement?**

**A:** The number of families and individuals served by KLF daily is truly impressive. We are touching the lives of so many people.

I would like to improve the diversity of foods available to our clients and continue to provide more produce and healthy options. We will be rounding out our team and making sure we provide a great experience for our partners. **When it comes to goals and improvements, I think the sky is the limit when we work well together.**

**Q: What are you looking forward to in 2025? Any predictions for the future?**

**A:** I am looking forward to further establishing myself at KLF. I'd also like to focus more on procurement, including meeting farmers and connecting with vendors and suppliers. We also want to continue working towards a positive, efficient environment in our warehouse. **It is important to create a happy and healthy atmosphere for groups and volunteers that inspires them to come back!**

Looking to the future, I believe KLF will uphold its reputation in the community, continue raising awareness about hunger, advocating when possible, and working to end the stigma around food insecurity.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes distributes packs to school-aged children every Friday to provide food support during the weekend. During the school year, we provide an average of 850 food packs per week at 16 schools and five school districts.**

# Corporate and Business Partnerships

The following companies supported our mission between August 1, 2023 – July 31, 2024 through volunteering, financial donations, food drives, and in-kind donations. **We are so grateful for these generous partnerships!**

3300 Miller Road	Comerica Bank	Greenleaf Trust	Kalamazoo Family & Cosmetic Dentistry	Menards	Padagis	Rust Riders Garage	Townsquare Media
600 Kitchen and Bar	Coney Island	Gull Run/Gull Prairie Apartments	Kalamazoo Family Dental	Mercantile Bank	The Paddock Apartments	Sackett Insurance Group	Tranquil Tummy Confections
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Affordable Moving Kalamazoo	CSM Group	Honigman	Knappen Milling	Morgan Stanley Financial Advisors	Pincanna	Shiloh Industries	Van's Carpet & Upholstery Cleaners
Airway Lanes	Culver's of Comstock	Honor Credit Union	Kreis Enderle	Miller Johnson	Pine Rest	Sign Art	Victorian Bakery
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	Grand Traverse Pie Company						
	Green Bay Packaging						
	Greenleaf Hospitality Group						

This list does not include government entities, schools, or non-profit organizations. **If there is an error or your name is missing, we are sorry!** Please contact **Erin** at [erin@kzoolf.org](mailto:erin@kzoolf.org) with any corrections.



**GET INVOLVED**  
**- VOLUNTEER**  
**- HOST A FOOD DRIVE**  
**- DONATE**

To learn more about how your business can help fight hunger, contact **Greta**, at [greta@kzoolf.org](mailto:greta@kzoolf.org) or **269-488-2617 x208**.





# Your Choice: Shopping, Curbside Pickup, or Home Delivery

The Grocery Pantry Program (GPP) is KLF's most utilized program, serving over **750** people each day and nearly **34,000** unduplicated people every year. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, all KLF pantries were set up like a grocery store, and clients shopped following a point system based on household size. However, the constraints of the pandemic forced KLF to look at service delivery differently and to be creative. Many temporary service changes became permanent in response to client feedback. Today, when an individual contacts KLF to make an appointment, they have several choices:



1

**1. Curbside Pickup.** KLF's Melzer Pantry, located adjacent to our warehouse, provides curbside pickup Monday - Friday. Each day, between 140 - 160 households are scheduled at the Melzer Pantry. A standard order includes milk, bread, butter, cereal, frozen meat, fresh produce, and a selection of non-perishables. Any dietary restrictions or special requests are noted when the appointment is scheduled. This option is quick and efficient, which is welcomed by clients with time constraints or who have young children with them.



2

**2. Shopping.** There are nine locations in the KLF pantry network that offer in-person shopping. Like the previous grocery store model, clients receive points based on household size and "spend" those points on food items. While the same food items are available to all locations, shopping allows the client to select specific items they prefer (i.e. canned corn versus canned green beans). This option is favored by individuals who have dietary concerns or who enjoy the social aspects of visiting a pantry.



3

**3. Home Delivery.** KLF started home delivery the first week of pandemic shutdowns, and this program quickly became an essential element of our service delivery. Over time, the program has grown to provide nearly 70 home deliveries every day. Anyone in Kalamazoo County is eligible to receive a delivery. This option has provided greater access for individuals without transportation, with health or mobility issues, or those who need to ration their gas throughout the week.

These service options increase equitable access to food assistance and help meet the diverse needs and challenges faced by our community.

## Financial Strain in the Past Year AMONG ADULTS AGE 50 AND OLDER IN MICHIGAN

**58%**

cut back on everyday expenses\*

**57%**

reported feeling stress about their personal finances

**51%**

said they have been impacted by inflation a great deal

**35%**

report access to affordable healthy food as a top concern



\* Includes gas, groceries, utilities, personal items, home maintenance, social and recreational activities.

Source: Michigan Poll on Healthy Aging, University of Michigan, July/August 2024

# TRIBUTES

Generous donations made to KLF in someone's **HONOR** or **MEMORY**. Donations made 6/1/2024 to 7/31/2024.

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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.



**KALAMAZOO LOAVES & FISHES**  
**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**Community Celebration**  
Thursday, September 26, 2024  
5-7 pm | The Fetzer Center  
2251 Business Court, Kalamazoo, MI 49008

**YOUR SUPPORT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE. DONATING TAKES SECONDS AT [KZOOOLF.ORG](http://KZOOOLF.ORG)**

**FALL 2024**

### CONNECT WITH US



### STAFF/BUSINESS OFFICE

269.488.2617

- Tim Bachman, Warehouse Coordinator
- Jesse Bankston, Warehouse Assistant
- Jillian Bryant, Volunteer Coordinator
- Mike Cattell, Program & Delivery Assistant
- Greta Faworski, Associate Director
- Leonardo Fernandez, Lead Pantry Coordinator
- Heather Hageman, Program Assistant
- Tiffanie Head, Program & Delivery Assistant
- Kristen Heggie, On-Call Administrative Coordinator
- Holly Hulfish, Office Manager
- Ibrahim Yahya Ibrahim Ismail, Bilingual Program Assistant
- Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director
- Larry Kelly, Program & Delivery Assistant

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