

FOOD FORTHOUGHT

SPRING 2026



MEET JACOB

KLF received an email from Jacob who is a sophomore at a state university. Jacob shared that he was writing to thank KLF and a volunteer who was particularly kind to him when Jacob's family visited a pantry. "I had just started high school, and it was a rough patch in my life," Jacob explained. "My family and I are doing better now; while we still rely on Medicaid, we don't need to go to food pantries anymore." Jacob continued to detail one visit to KLF that has stuck with him. After picking up Jacob and his siblings at school, his mother stopped at KLF to get food. It was a blustery winter day, and their car was not well insulated due to damage from a previous accident that caused the back door to let in cold air. While their groceries were loaded in the car, a KLF volunteer noticed that Jacob was shivering. The volunteer offered a hat to Jacob so he could warm up. It was a random act of kindness that has stuck with Jacob through the years, even after he went to college. "I wanted to say thanks to someone, even if I probably won't be able to find him again."

MEET SYLVIA

Sylvia has lived in a small community in rural Kalamazoo County her entire life. She is currently in her early 30's, working part-time so she can be home when her two elementary school children return from school. "I come to Kalamazoo twice a month to donate my plasma for a little extra money. That's how we make ends meet," Sylvia shared. When she needs food assistance, Sylvia schedules her KLF appointment on the days she comes to Kalamazoo. "I like the shopping locations," Sylvia continued. "Then I can only take the items I really need and leave the rest for others."



MEET COREY

Corey arrived at KLF on his bicycle, coming straight from a work site where he is employed in construction. "Sorry – I know you are about to close but I couldn't get here any earlier," Corey said. "We try not to come here often but we are having a rough week." Corey continued to share that his refrigerator had stopped working unexpectedly, and his family lost most of their perishable items. "I saw a used fridge for sale that I can probably afford after I get paid this week. We have a big cooler that I keep refilling with ice, but it would probably work best to get food I don't have to keep cold." KLF staff pulled together food items for Corey's family of five and told him to come back if he needed help restocking the new fridge. "Thank you – you guys made my week by helping us out," Corey stated as he balanced his grocery bags on his handlebars and rode away.

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



A NOTE FROM JEN

KLF is successful because of the support and generosity of our community. At our main facility on Portage Street, we serve around 1,500 clients each week with the help of many volunteers. Volunteers assist in all areas of operation, including our pantry, warehouse, Call Center, and Client Door. **For this newsletter, we connected with one of KLF's regular volunteers, Annette Kushner.**

— Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director

Q: How long have you been involved with KLF? What led you to volunteer?

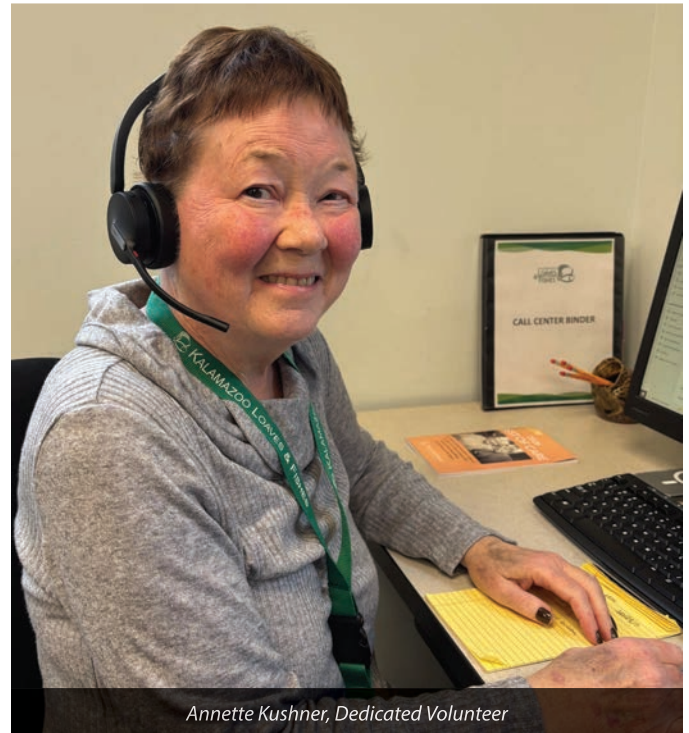
A: I've been volunteering for about three years now. I believe that everyone should have food, no questions asked. Food is part of life. We all need healthy food and nutrition. I've always liked feeding people and cooking for friends and family. You could say food is my love language. KLF is great because they provide food support without barriers.

Q: You've assisted in various workspaces within our facility. What's it like to help in different areas?

A: I love working in the Call Center because it's a way to connect with clients, and it provides a snapshot of our community – older folks, young people, diverse situations, and people who are reaching out for help for the first time. Working in the Melzer Pantry is astonishing because of how many people are served. When working with other experienced volunteers, things operate like clockwork. KLF has been a good fit for me. I've always felt welcome, and I appreciate the culture here.

Q: KLF has an area for walk-up clients, caseworker pickups, and food donations. What is it like to volunteer in this area?

A: There is a lot of variety. In just one afternoon, you're likely to receive food donations, serve clients with unstable living situations, and help large families with a grocery order. Serving everyone with respect and dignity is first and foremost.



Annette Kushner, Dedicated Volunteer

Everyone is facing unique challenges, and if we can bring some ease to their situation, it is worth my time.

Q: Volunteering is a great way to give back to the community. What other benefits have you found in volunteering?

A: It keeps me active! If I was not volunteering, I would not be moving or lifting as much as I am. Connecting with the staff, clients, and other volunteers is fun. It is incredible to work with such a variety of people, and we're all working together to make our community a better place.

GIVING CIRCLES: COLLECTIVE IMPACT

A giving circle brings people with shared values together to discuss and decide where to make a pooled gift. Members can be co-workers, friends, family, or simply neighbors interested in giving back. Giving circles can be any size; nationwide or local. Each group member agrees to donate a specific amount to a charity selected. This allows group members to multiply their impact, connect with other community members, and have fun while making a difference.



KLF was honored to be selected as the Guys Who Give Q1 2026 Charity.

Two giving circles in Kalamazoo County include **Guys Who Give** and **Women Who Care**. Both groups operate in a similar manner. At a quarterly meeting, local charities are nominated, and one charity is selected by the group. Each member agrees to contribute \$100 to the chosen charity.

Each group strives for at least 100 members, but both have many more. A different charity is selected each quarter.

To learn more about **Guys Who Give**, visit www.guyswhogive.org/chapters/kalamazoo-county-mi.html.

To learn more about **Women Who Care**, visit www.grapevine.org/giving-circle/A9AtnPA/Women-Who-Care-of-Kalamazoo-County.

FIGHT HUNGER YEAR-ROUND!



Food insecurity impacts our community 365 days a year.

Establishing a monthly gift is an easy way to make a tremendous impact on an on-going basis.

- ▶ Set up a gift via credit card, PayPal, or direct debit from your bank account at kzoolf.org. You can also establish a recurring payment via check from your financial institution.
- ▶ Support the community in a convenient, yet very effective way.
- ▶ Budget your charitable giving throughout the year.
- ▶ Provide KLF with a stable, continual source of revenue.
- ▶ Help people year-round, especially when donations are low, but need is high.

For more information, please contact

Greta Faworski

at 269-488-2617 x208 or greta@kzoolf.org.

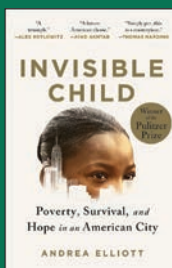
▶ LEARN MORE ABOUT HUNGER AND POVERTY

READ



There is No Place for Us: Working and Homeless in America

Brian Goldstone



Invisible Child: Poverty, Survival, and Hope in an American City

Andrea Elliott

WATCH



Poor Kids and Born Poor
PBS Frontline



The Working Hungry and Food, Insecure
workinghungry.org

LISTEN



Throughline: The Roots of Poverty in America
NPR



Voices to End Hunger
Apple Podcasts



Dispelling Myths:

OBESITY AND FOOD INSECURITY

We recently received an anonymous call from a community member who was upset to see the KLF home delivery van at their neighbor's house. The individual was calling to alert us to suspected fraud because their neighbor "couldn't possibly be hungry because they are so overweight".

While we appreciate this individual's concern, there is a significant link between obesity and food insecurity, especially for individuals who have limited access to affordable, nutritious food.

There are several factors why obesity may co-exist with food insecurity:

ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

Healthier food options, including fresh produce and lean proteins, are typically more expensive. In low-income areas, they are often less available and overshadowed by highly processed food that is cheaper and heavily marketed. These processed food choices, while cheaper, are also calorie-dense and high in sugar, fat, and refined carbs. They lack essential nutrients which not only leads to health problems but also can cause an individual to gain weight.

FEAST OR FAMINE

When someone is food insecure, they lack reliable access to quality nutrition. This inconsistency in food access can cause skipped meals, eating very little throughout the day, and overeating when food does become available. The human body reacts to this pattern by storing fat in preparation for future periods of scarcity.

IMPACT OF STRESS

It's well-known that chronic stress can have a negative impact on health. Food insecurity by itself causes chronic stress and is often accompanied by the stress of poverty, housing insecurity, health conditions, and environmental safety. Stress raises cortisol (a hormone) in the body, which can lead to increased appetite and weight gain over time. When cortisol is high, individuals are often drawn to comfort foods that are high-calorie and nutrient poor.

LOW PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Exercising is not everyone's favorite activity, but in low-income households, it may be a challenge for other reasons. Poor nutrition can cause health conditions which hinder physical activity. Individuals in low-income households often work multiple low-paying jobs which can leave them with little time or energy for exercise. In some areas, neighborhood safety is a considerable concern, restricting adults and children from going outside to exercise and play.

On the surface, the connection between obesity and food insecurity is indeed a paradox.

However, this connection has been widely studied and confirmed. Obesity affects population groups unequally, with higher rates of obesity among those living in poverty, in under-resourced communities, and in families that have immigrated and/or have experienced racism.

Sources: Michigan State University Extension, 2023; National Institutes of Health, 2022; USDA Food and Nutrition Services, 2025.

**CLIENTS REPORTED
THAT FOOD ASSISTANCE
FROM KLF:**

Increased Access
to Fresh Produce

42%



Decreased
Stress Levels

58%



Surveys were administered in summer 2025 to 654 clients utilizing KLF's Grocery Pantry Program.

TRIBUTES

Generous donations made to KLF in someone's **HONOR** or **MEMORY**. Donations made 2/1/2026 to 3/31/2026.

IN HONOR

Lincoln Buttery

John & Jane Buttery

Our Children

& Grandchildren

Rev. Linda & Dr. Frederick MacDonald

Sandi Doctor

Janet Tagett

Judith M. Harris

David Harris

Kalamazoo Civil War Round Table

Roxanne & Jim Frey

Annie Miles

Ann Kroupa

Parchment Pantry Volunteers

David & Sandy Rozelle

Tim Redmond

Integrity Fiber

Jack & Roy Ann Smith

Donna & Jay Emerson

Scott Werner

David & Beth Cook

IN MEMORY

Dick & Ann Anson

Paul & Joanie Rahn

Priscilla Ather

Kim Ross

Cal Baxter

Kathryn Smith

Marshall Beachler

Ms. Charlotte Hubbard

Raymond C. Becker

Priscilla Becker

Kathy Breese

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Mary Lou Rohwer

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James & Vickie Schaper

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Nick Carlin-Voigt &

Marin Henderson-Posther

Elaine Cosby

Kathryn & Dennis Dahl

Daniel & Mary Dombos

Sarah & Chris Gearinger

Howell Parfet Schau PLC

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John Lopatka & Marie Reilly

Frederick Oslager

Mary Elizabeth Peterson

Maija Petersons

Steve & Robin Pollens

Maurice & Cathleen Possley

David & Mary Jo Reilly

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David Gross & Tracy Martin

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Marlin Gerber

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Bill & Ellen Kozar

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Lori Klutts

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Chris Magnan Poliski

James Magnan

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Kevin McCall

Beth McLaren

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Kimberly Melvin

Martha & Jon Betke

First National Bank

of Michigan

John & Mary Gardner

Shannon Gorsky

Hope College Delta

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Tara Marion

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Brian & Kathi Cleland

Joyce DeNooyer

Susan & Tom Hill

Andy & Jack Hopkins

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Nanette & Jack Keiser

Sandra Rose

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Marja Wisser

Gretchen Clark

Joyce Draper

Kalamazoo Pediatric

Dentistry

Jeffrey & Judy Smith

Correction!

In our *Late Winter/Early Spring 2026* newsletter, we unintentionally omitted **TruVista Wealth Advisors** from our **Top 30 Food Drives in 2025** list. They collected 845 pounds of food during their holiday season drive.

We apologize for the error!



Promoting a Hunger-Free Community Since 1982

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WWW.KZOOOF.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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

THE NALC'S STAMP OUT HUNGER FOOD DRIVE IS SATURDAY, MAY 9



Donation Tips

- Check your mailbox for a bright yellow bag! Put your donation in this bag and set it by your mailbox. Your letter carrier will pick it up on May 9th.
- Donations should be sealed, labeled, and unopened. Glass items can sometimes break when mixed in with all the other donations.
- We can utilize donations a year past the 'best-by' date.
- Donations will be collected rain or shine! An extra plastic bag can help protect food donations from rainy weather.

Our Wish List

- Special diet items including gluten-free, sugar-free, and low-sodium
- Shelf-stable or non-dairy milk
- Protein shakes and bars
- Microwaveable meals
- Snacks
- Canned soups and meats
- Cooking oil
- Boxed meal kits

Thank you for participating in this nationwide food drive! We couldn't do it without you!

SPRING 2026

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(269) 488 - 2617

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 Tim Bachman, Senior Warehouse Assistant
 Jillian Bryant, Volunteer Coordinator
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 Leonardo Fernandez, Lead Pantry Coordinator
 Matt Galletti, Program Assistant
 Tiffanie Head, Program & Delivery Assistant
 Kristen Heggie, Admin & Training Coordinator
 Ben Hietala, Warehouse Assistant
 Holly Hulfish, Office Manager
 Jacques James, Program & Delivery Assistant
 Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director
 Larry Kelly, Program & Delivery Assistant

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 Alisha Lewis, Program Logistics Coordinator
 Reese Light, Warehouse Assistant
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 Nate Mattson, Financial Controller
 Matthew Miller, Program Operations Manager
 Seth Miller, Program Navigation Coordinator
 Katharina Padilla, Bilingual Program Assistant
 Suzi Secondi, Inventory Manager
 Shymeria Stone, Program Assistant
 Nadina Williams-Barrett, Senior Program Manager

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