

FOODFORTHOUGHT

SUMMER 2026

MEET ALBERT

Albert lived on the east side of the state for much of his life. After a long career of hard work, Albert retired and is living primarily on his Social Security benefits. He was struggling to keep up with the rising housing costs in his area, so he moved to Kalamazoo where he had been on the wait list for senior subsidized housing for nearly three years. "I am on 24-hour oxygen and don't drive or own a car," shares Albert. "It's been a lot of work being in a totally new city." Because his rent is lower in Kalamazoo, his SNAP benefits were cut. "I am having difficulty having enough food for the month. Most of the time my kitchen is pretty empty," Albert states. He asked about KLF's services and was thrilled to learn that he could have food delivered to his home. Once his delivery was scheduled, Albert said, "This will be a big help and hopefully carry me through to next month."



MEET INES

Summer has always been busy for Ines and her 8-year-old daughter. This summer, however, is extra busy because they recently moved into a new place with Ines' boyfriend and his two children who are 4 and 7 years old. Ines works full-time, and her boyfriend just started a new job, but it has been difficult during this transition. "Our housing deposit and first month's rent ate up most of our savings", Ines explained. "My boyfriend won't get his first check for a few weeks, and we are paying for childcare because the kids are home from school." Ines shared that they won't need assistance once her boyfriend's paychecks begin, but right now she only has \$17 dollars in her bank account. "Anything helps. We are so grateful."

MEET JODIE

When Jodie contacted KLF, she began by saying "I've never used any public services in my life, nor has my husband or any family members." Jodie continued sharing that she and her husband were both working full-time until she developed some significant health problems and was physically unable to continue working. To make up for lost income, Jodie's husband picked up additional hours and now works between 50-60 hours per week. Regardless, they are still struggling under the weight of her medical bills and other expenses. "With the additional hours, my husband's income is now just over the limit to qualify for SNAP or any other government assistance – we are just stuck in between," she said with frustration. Jodie's health issues require her to maintain a specific diet, one including fresh produce and high protein. When she learned that KLF could help with groceries, and her specific needs, she was very relieved.



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

A NOTE FROM JEN



Pride of Scotts Community Center



Angie & Dave Wilson, hosts of the Community Center's food pantry

In our work to end food insecurity, we do our best to be accessible to as many of our neighbors as possible. With Kalamazoo County spanning 576 square miles, community partnerships are essential to meet the need. For this newsletter, we spoke with Angie Wilson, from Pride of Scotts Community Center located in the small town of Scotts, on the impact of our partnership.

— Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director

Q: How did you become involved with Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes?

A: We've been partnering with KLF for about 3 years. It all came together when I reached out, set up a meeting with Nadina, and got approval to become a partner pantry. It was meant to be. Now we have the means to place a bulk order from their warehouse inventory and pick up that food each week.

Q: Tell us about the food pantry at Pride of Scotts. Who leads the operation?

A: Every Thursday we host the food pantry from 1:30-4:30pm. My husband, David, and I manage it by setting everything up like a grocery store. People can pick the items that work for them and having that choice is important. We usually have a good variety of foods and excellent produce. We manage the clean-up and paperwork too. It is a full day of work.

Q: What kind of impact does this partnership have for the Scotts community? How important is it for folks in your area to have access to fresh food items?

A: The people who visit our pantry - they appreciate it, they love it. You can tell it helps them out. Some people come by every week, and others visit only occasionally. It has a great impact on people, and sometimes it's the people you would never expect need the help. People are glad to be able to feed their families and choose from a variety of healthier foods.

Q: What other benefits have you found to working alongside Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes?

A: We love the people we work with. The staff at Loaves & Fishes are wonderful, and we all work well together. We've made other connections through the pantry too. Being able to help neighbors with yardwork, car problems, trading eggs and homecooked meals. Our granddaughter has gotten involved too, and it's been a way to teach community giving. We love it.



Did you know that **fruits** and **vegetables** are some of our most requested items?

Help make a difference by donating fresh produce!

KLF is glad to receive the extras from your garden, as well as fresh items purchased from a local store. Please keep us in mind when harvesting or stocking up at the market!

Donations can be dropped off Monday – Friday, between 8am – 4pm at 901 Portage Street in Kalamazoo. If you have a bulk donation, feel free to contact us to make arrangements!



FOOD BANK **VS** FOOD PANTRY

A **FOOD BANK** and a **FOOD PANTRY** are traditionally two different things. Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes is unique in that we are **BOTH**!



FOOD BANK:

- Procure, sort, store, and transport millions of pounds of food
- Distribute food to other agencies who provide front-line hunger-relief
- Work closely with farms, grocery stores, USDA, and wholesalers
- Serve large regions such as a county or multiple counties
- Rarely provide direct service to individuals
- Many food banks are associated with Feeding America, but can also be independent



FOOD PANTRY:

- An individual site or program distributing food directly to individuals and families
- Can operate as a grocery store, drive-thru, or mobile distribution
- Often serve a specific, localized community, such as a neighborhood, town, or school
- Secure food from food banks or community donations
- Connect clients to other basic needs
- Work with individuals of all ages and from all walks of life

111
LOCATIONS

KLF is the largest independent food bank in Michigan, distributing food through 111 Kalamazoo County locations.

10

We directly operate 10 pantries...

13

... and 13 mobile distributions.

17

We provide food and program guidance to 17 school-based pantries ...

16

... and 16 senior commodity sites.

26

Schools distributing Weekend Food Packs for kids ...

21

... and 21 partner agencies who operate their own food pantries.

8

Finally, we provide food to 8 partners who assist with targeted outreach to unhoused individuals.

OVER 10,000 CHILDREN AND TEENS FACE FOOD INSECURITY IN KALAMAZOO COUNTY.

When schools close for the summer, young people lose access to school meal programs. For some, these meals may be the only reliable source of healthy food that a child receives each day.

KLF prepares for increased demand each summer as families struggle to bridge this nutrition gap.

**JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST CHILDHOOD HUNGER.
GIVE TODAY. FUEL THE FUTURE.**



FOOD IS FUEL
Summer Campaign
Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes



Visit kzoof.org or
scan here to donate!

FOOD IS FUEL PIT CREW: KEEPING KIDS ON TRACK

The following companies are dedicated to fueling our future, kicking off our

FOOD IS FUEL CAMPAIGN FOR KIDS WITH A GENEROUS \$1,000 DONATION.

Like any good Pit Crew, these companies support the young people in our community with the tools they need to reach their full potential and to stay strong on their journey.



Allkins Family Foundation

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RIETH-RILEY

Dispelling Myths: Employment and Food Insecurity

WHY DON'T THEY JUST GET A JOB?

At KLF, we are often asked the above question when talking about our programs and the high demand for service. There are many layers to complex social issues, and the same is true for food insecurity.

In 2023, the USDA Economic Research Services issued a report illustrating that more than half of all food insecure households in the United States have at least one person employed full-time. Locally, we've found a similar trend – **48% of our clients report full-time employment**. When you dig deeper, having a job doesn't guarantee that your basic needs can be met, primarily due to the gap between household income and what families need to make ends meet.

LOW WAGES

Inflation outpacing wage growth is a significant reason why more employed individuals must turn to food pantries. Between May 2025 and May 2026, inflation (4.2%) was higher than the national average in wage growth (3.7%). This may seem minimal until you look back over the past few years and see this compounding trend, resulting in impactful gaps each month. When reviewing individual states, Michigan ranked 50th in wage growth at 0.14%.

UNDEREMPLOYMENT

Individuals experience underemployment when working in low-skill and/or low-paying jobs because they cannot get full-time jobs for a variety of reasons. It can also involve unpredictable work schedules that can result in significant income volatility. Underemployment is often found in the low-wage service industries, including retail, hospitality, and food service, where full-time hours are rare or fluctuating. Underemployment is also more common and long-term among women.

LACK OF BENEFITS

Employer-sponsored benefits can greatly impact the financial security and health of employees, both long-term and short-term. Depending on job type, industry, and employer size, between 20 – 60% of employees do not have health insurance or other benefits such as retirement plans, disability insurance, sick leave, and paid time off. Similar to underemployment, jobs in service industries are most likely not to offer benefits to their employees, creating more exposure to economic risk.



In Kalamazoo County, **25%** of households are considered ALICE – Asset-Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. ALICE households fall above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) but earn less than what is considered a bare-bones survival budget.

When combined with those below the FPL, 38% of Kalamazoo County households cannot meet the basic cost of living for the area, regardless of employment status.

Sources: USDA, WorldMetrics, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Brown School at Washington University, United for ALICE and MSU's Eli Broad School of Business

TRIBUTES

Generous donations made to KLF in someone's **HONOR** or **MEMORY**. Donations made 4/1/2026 to 6/31/2026.

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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.

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KALAMAZOO LOAVES & FISHES

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THURSDAY, SEPT. 17, 2026 | WMU FETZER CENTER | 5 - 7 P.M.



SUMMER 2026

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