



THE SOURCE

Higher Costs Leave Cupboards Bare

Over that last two years, food banks across the country have seen a drastic increase in the number of people needing food assistance. Now we are seeing another surge in need. In fact, **nearly 10% of American households have reported they “sometimes” or “often” do not have enough to eat**, according to data from the most recent Census Household Pulse Survey.

Current inflation rates are causing substantial price increases in food, fuel and housing expenses. For many Americans, these costs make up about 30 to 40% of the monthly budget, but for low-income families, these costs may be closer to 60% of their monthly income. When prices go up, these families simply don't have enough to make ends meet.

The Food Bank of Eastern Michigan works diligently to bridge the gaps and provide emergency assistance to anyone who finds themselves facing hunger. Many of those in need are working multiple jobs, some full-time and some part-time, while also dealing with higher costs.

Bringing Nutritious Meals to Children

When school is out for the summer, families with children may find themselves in a more difficult position. **There are nearly 13,000 children in our service area who face hunger on a regular basis.** These kids rely on school meal programs to keep them well-nourished throughout the school year. **The Food Bank's Summer Feeding Programs provide support for families and nutrition for kids by partnering with schools, churches and community organizations to provide summer meals for children and their families.** This includes our “Summer on the Run” program which delivers meals directly to apartment complexes and neighborhood parks, making nutrition more accessible when school is not in session.



Providing Assistance for Senior Citizens

Here in eastern Michigan more than 16,000 senior citizens are food insecure, meaning they regularly do not have enough food to meet their nutritional needs. Elderly community members often have higher medical bills and are usually on a fixed-income, however more than 50% of those seeking food assistance have incomes above the federal poverty line and are still struggling to obtain enough food. When the cupboards are bare and the income for the month has been spent, many senior citizens find themselves turning to food pantries and soup kitchens to provide the meals their budget does not. **Each month the Food Bank packs and distributes over 400 senior boxes that provide pantry staples, snacks and personal care items to elderly people in need.**



WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE?



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Partners In Fresh Produce



Honoring Our Volunteers



Building A Sustainable Hunger Relief Network

Visit [FBEM.org](https://fbem.org) for more information!

Partners in Fresh Produce

The Food Bank remains committed to providing essential nutrition for our neighbors in need. **As part of this commitment, we work to distribute more fresh foods each year, including produce, dairy products, meat and other proteins.** A significant amount of the produce we distribute each year comes directly from farmers who partner with the Food Bank. In 2021, the Food Bank distributed more than **10 million pounds of fresh produce and over 3.3 million pounds** came from the harvests of our generous farm partners!

As a producer of some of the greatest onions in our state, Nate Van Den Berg, owner of **Van Den Berg Farms** in Imlay City is more than happy to do his part in the fight against hunger. His farm provides the Food Bank with all their No. 2 onions. No. 2 produce, also known as “seconds” or “culled” produce is product that is perfectly safe to eat, but may be unmarketable to mainstream stores due to an abnormal size or shape. Rather than dispose of this produce, our farm partners trust the Food Bank to get it into the hands of those who need it most.

At Van Den Berg Farms, their donations are motivated by a charitable need to give. “For us, we’re just glad that we can help provide some low cost food back into the community through the Food Bank. We feel blessed to be able to be part of that.” **The Food Bank is so grateful for the Van Den Bergs and all our amazing farm partners who provide free or reduced-cost fruits and vegetables for distribution throughout eastern Michigan.**



Honoring Our Volunteers

The Food Bank recently honored the volunteers and in-kind donors who worked with us regularly in 2021. Many of these esteemed partners have been offering their time and talents to the Food Bank for several years and we wanted to formally acknowledge their continued and valued support. Attendees enjoyed brief comments of gratitude, a delicious lunch and some trivia entertainment.

Each year the Food Bank relies on thousands of volunteers to assist in our warehouse; sorting and packaging food for distribution. **One volunteer can sort enough food to feed 355 people in just one hour!** Our volunteer program was greatly depleted due to pandemic related restrictions in 2020 and 2021.



We are now working to rebuild a reliable group of volunteers who have a passion for fighting hunger and providing support to our neighbors in need.

We need YOUR help! Volunteer opportunities are available on a daily basis for both groups and individuals. Our Volunteer Coordinator, Keri Brack, works with corporations, community organizations and civic groups and provides opportunities for team activities that are fun and leave participants feeling good about giving back. **If you, your family, or a group from your business would like more information about volunteering at the Food Bank, please contact Keri at kbrack@fbem.us**

Building a Sustainable Hunger Relief Network

In 2020, the Food Bank received a transformative gift from philanthropist and author MacKenzie Scott. A portion of this funding is being used **to support the infrastructure and capacity of our partner agencies through an internal grant program.** By increasing the capacity of our partners, our network improves its ability to provide resources to our neighbors and close the meal gap in Michigan.

In the first round of this new initiative, the Food Bank received 88 applications from our hunger relief partners. After a thorough review of all requests, **67 partner agencies were awarded funds** which will allow them to acquire the tools and equipment needed to enhance their outreach and services in their communities. Here are some of their stories:

The Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center in Flint received grant funds from the Food Bank. Daniel Martinez, the Director of Rehabilitation Services said, “We had a stove that had broken burners and a steam table with only 2 working bins. They were both so old we couldn’t even get them repaired anymore. The Food Bank’s grant opportunity came at great time. We prepare **3 meals a day, 7 days a week** and **this equipment was truly a blessing** when we needed it the most.”



The East Side Soup Kitchen in Saginaw, prepares **550 meals per day** to serve to those in need. With their grant, they purchased an industrial mixer along with mixing paddles, muffin tins, cookie sheets, a vegetable dicer and other cooking equipment. Executive Director, Diane Keenan, recounted “You should have seen the looks on the cooks faces! This grant was such a blessing. **This equipment will increase the efficiency and safety of our kitchen and we are sincerely grateful.**”

Church of Christ (LICA) is one of the churches in Lapeer that provides a soup kitchen once per week, pantry, and pop-ups during the spring to fall. **They are in the process of developing a pantry on their property.** They have obtained two fridges already from the agency capacity grant and are waiting on additional cooling units. The grant they received from us is part of a larger project and is expected to be complete this summer.



Our partners at **Valiant Ministries** in Croswell were able to purchase a much-needed forklift to assist with their distributions they hold at least once per month. As you can see, the new equipment brought big smiles to their team!

Caseville pantry received funding to assist with website development. The project has been completed and is now live. Amy, their Pantry Lead said, “I’m so excited to get this project off the ground and so thankful to the FBEM for the grant to make this happen.”

