

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

LATE WINTER/EARLY SPRING 2021



MEET TYRUS

Tyrus attended one of KLF's recent food distributions at a local school building. "I heard about this event from my kid's principal," said Tyrus when checking in. "We could use some help right now, and this is really convenient for us." Tyrus went on to share that he has lost a lot of work due to COVID and, with the kids learning virtually, they've spent more on food and childcare. "I know we will get back on our feet soon. But this is a big help for sure!" Our staff loads grocery items in Tyrus' trunk, and he heads home.

I am on chemotherapy right now.

I don't want to be a burden, but I am unable to eat dairy...

- Suyin
Student, Chemo Patient,
and KLF Client

MEET SUYIN

When Suyin first contacted KLF, she indicated that she was a master's degree student with limited income and would appreciate some food assistance. Shortly after she picked up for the first time, Suyin contacted us. She was concerned because she couldn't use all the items. "I am on chemotherapy right now," Suyin shared "I don't want to be a burden, but I am unable to eat dairy right now." We told Suyin that it was no burden, and we asked her more about the foods she could tolerate during her treatment. Next time she needs assistance, her food will be customized to what she needs most. "Thank you," Suyin responds. "My schoolwork and treatment can be a lot. This is a relief!"



MEET BRIAN

Brian reached out to KLF and asked, "I've heard you do home deliveries of groceries. Is this really true?!" He went on to explain that his wife and two daughters were in desperate need of food assistance but didn't have any transportation right now. It's been frustrating for Brian to know that there are resources available, but the barrier of transportation keeps this assistance just out of reach. After scheduling Brian for a delivery later that day, he responded, "You have no idea what this means to me and my girls!"



– A NOTE FROM JEN –

WE BID FAREWELL TO DAVE HAFER, RETIRING SENIOR WAREHOUSE MANAGER

On March 12th, Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes bid farewell to longtime staff member and Senior Warehouse Manager Dave Hafer. Dave came to KLF in October of 2010 as a volunteer; one year later he was hired on as a Warehouse Assistant. While nearly everything about his position changed during his tenure, he says that one thing has remained constant: KLF's dedication to clients.

Over the years, Dave helped KLF foster connections with hundreds of agencies, farms, and grocery stores to keep our pantries stocked and food distributions bountiful. He was instrumental in securing fruit and vegetable seedlings each spring so clients could plant their own gardens. Dave developed a system to glean produce and other items from the Kalamazoo Farmers Market during warm weather months. He also played a key role in KLF's acquisition of a flash freezer for our Repack Room. Even with retirement in site, Dave didn't hesitate to take on extra responsibilities when staff transition left us short-staffed.

There is no doubt that Dave will be sorely missed by all at KLF. We hope you'll join us in bidding him thanks and good fortune in what lies ahead. — *Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director*

Q: Describe how you have seen KLF evolve over your tenure.

A: When I first started volunteering, we were at the Alcott location. It was small, cramped, and cold (or hot, but never at the right time). Our present facility has room to adapt to meet the changing needs of our clients. We've been able to form additional partnerships with other agencies and food banks to improve food distribution in the community.

Q: How have the food procurement partnerships you've fostered over the years shaped the way KLF functions today?

A: We have been able to build connections with additional agencies, including the State of Michigan, to receive more donated food. We also continue to look for local growers who can help us provide more fresh produce to our clients.

Q: What will you miss most about working at KLF?

A: The dedication of the staff and volunteers.

Q: Any final parting words?

A: I am very thankful to all of the people I have encountered. My life has truly been changed by my experiences at KLF.



*Retiring Senior Warehouse Manager
Dave Hafer.*

WELCOME AND THANK YOU

We are pleased to welcome two new members to our Board of Directors! **Joshua Schultz** is the Vice President of Commercial Banking at First National Bank of Michigan. Prior to joining the Board, Josh had a long history of volunteering with Loaves & Fishes. **Chad Koller** is CEO of Skywood Recovery Center, a residential treatment facility. Chad's background in mental health will be a true asset to our Board. Welcome Josh and Chad!

We also said goodbye to several long-time board members as their terms have expired. A special thanks to **Rob DeWit**, **Jason Heystek**, and **Martha Betke** for all your time, expertise, and heartfelt dedication to our mission.



Josh Schultz



Chad Koller

You stood steady at the helm during some tremendous organizational growth and change.

Thank you!



Do you know someone who may need help with groceries? Maybe you have a friend who is interested in volunteering with a local organization this year? Tell them about Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes!

'Like' and 'Share' KLF social media posts, **encourage others** to sign-up to receive our newsletters, or **host a virtual food/fund drive** to help stock pantry shelves! A little effort can help fight hunger in our community in BIG ways.

Thanks for spreading the word!



Left to Right: Samantha Mann, Jay Steeb, Humza Rahman, Larry Kelly, Seth De Los Santos, Jeff Herman, and Suzi Secondi.

Jay Steeb and **Samantha Mann** were brought on board as Services Assistants in Fall 2020. They are both cross trained to work in the pantry, the Call Center, and the home delivery program. **Humza Rahman** and **Larry Kelly** were hired in February 2020 as Services Assistants as well. Although primarily assigned to the home delivery program, Humza and Larry also help in the pantry when needed. All four are great additions to KLF and bring lots of new energy!

Although not new to KLF, **Seth De Los Santos** is new to the Services department. He was recently promoted from Warehouse Assistant to Melzer Pantry Coordinator. Seth joined KLF in March 2019 and has been a great help in the warehouse and at Mobile Food Distributions. **Jeff Herman** has moved from the Services department to the position of Warehouse Analyst. In this position, Jeff will review warehouse logistics, develop procedures to maximize efficiencies, and integrate new program elements. **Suzi Secondi** has been promoted to Warehouse Manager and will use her talents to oversee the daily operations of the KLF Warehouse. Suzi joined the KLF team in May 2020.



SPRING EVENT UPDATES

There will be no National Association of Letter Carriers' Food Drive this spring. Consider hosting a neighborhood food drive!

We won't host a Community Celebration this year due to COVID-19, but hope to resume the event next year.

MONTHLY GIVING COUPONS

GIVING COUPON:
MARCH
COUPON #206

Give from the heart!
Your generosity will have an immediate impact.

Donation Amount
\$ _____

Please send your contribution by April 2nd.

Food Wish List: Canned Fruit

GIVING COUPON:
APRIL
COUPON #207

Help breathe hope into a new season for someone else by making a donation.

Donation Amount
\$ _____

Please send your contribution by April 30th.

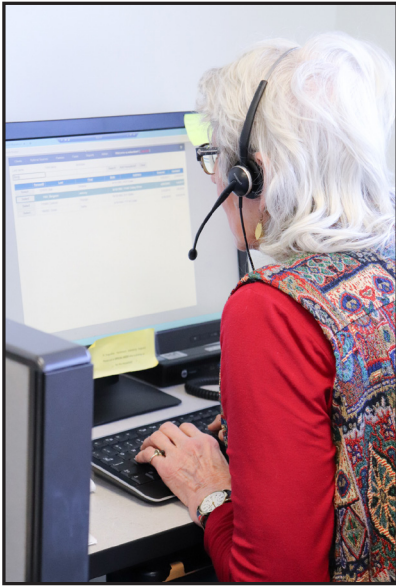
Food Wish List: Canned Tuna

Top 10 Food Drives

September 2020-January 2021

- Kzoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority**
3012 lbs
- CRB Consulting Engineers**
1711 lbs
- Western Diversified Plastics**
1362 lbs
- St. Michael Lutheran Church**
1244 lbs
- Milwood Middle School**
1169 lbs
- Ashton Farms Neighborhood Children**
1093 lbs
- First United Methodist Church**
1084 lbs
- Hillside Middle School**
984 lbs
- College Panhellenic Council/IFC WMU**
885 lbs
- Prince of Peace Lutheran Church**
708 lbs

In addition to these organized food drives, we had an outpouring of generous food donations from individuals, community gardens, and grocery stores. Thank you!



SELF-DECLARATION OF NEED

Allowing clients to access our food programs through **self-declaration of need** is an important first step in providing equitable service. Hunger is a multi-faceted issue, and we're better able to meet each client's unique needs when we don't have stringent eligibility requirements. From the grandparents who have suddenly found themselves caretakers of grandchildren to the working mom who has been furloughed due to the pandemic—oftentimes our clients face unforeseen situations that don't allow them to wait to qualify for federal or state food programs because they're in need of help right now. When you are feeling overwhelmed and anxious, even the smallest barrier can seem enormous. At the end of the day, feeding people is KLF's primary concern and where we spend our energy.

Since March 2020, we've provided

84,956

four-day food orders to clients.

Left: A KLF Call Center volunteer helps a client set-up a same-day pantry appointment for groceries.

HUNGER AND HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is a complex and multi-layered issue. A roof over one's head is something we tend to take for granted but, when it is not attainable, it complicates many aspects of life. Though Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes has always supported individuals who are homeless or in transitional housing, this past year provided the opportunity to dig a lot deeper and assist those individuals and families in a more customized way.

For more than three years, we have regularly connected with local homeless encampments to identify needs and make food deliveries. We are currently working closely with Integrated Services of Kalamazoo, Open Doors, Healthy Babies Healthy Start, and Urban Alliance to support residents to meet multiple needs at the same time. For example, there was a recent effort to move community members to the Knights Inn to get them temporarily off the street during cold winter weather. This collaborative, inter-agency assistance allows for residents to access multiple services simultaneously, including regular access to food.

For KLF, food is a basic human right. One major complication of properly serving individuals and families in transition is the lack of cooking facilities or cold storage for perishable food. Thanks to weekly visits by key KLF staff, we have gotten a great deal of feedback regarding the food that is most desired and most useful. Non-perishable food that is ready-to-eat with high levels of protein and calories, such as canned ravioli or hearty stews, are items that typically work well. Smaller, more frequent food packs make more sense for some residents due to storage issues. What we have learned the most from our experiences is that each situation is unique. It is important to listen, learn and serve as a connector to other non-food related community resources.



Bill Brown, KLF Delivery Coordinator, sets up a food storage area at the Knights Inn.

WELCOMED AND NEEDED FOOD DONATIONS

The items below work well for those in transitional housing, and also for children who need easy-to-make meals.



Protein Drinks

Pop-Top Stews/Hearty Soups

Granola or Protein Bars

Trail Mix

Juice Boxes/Bottled Water

Beef Jerky

Fruit Cups

Ready Meals/To-Go Lunch Kits

Pop-Top Canned Meats



CONNECTING WITH FAMILIES

With Kalamazoo Public Schools operating on a virtual model, our 12 school-based pantries have been closed since last March. Since that time, we've worked closely with Communities in Schools of Kalamazoo (CIS) to figure out alternative ways of supporting families with food insecurity. Several CIS Coordinators have frequently picked up food orders and delivered them to families. CIS and personnel from different Kalamazoo County schools have helped spread the word about KLF programs to their students and families. Yet, we felt we could do more. So we took the show on the road! Since November we've been rotating Mobile Food Distributions at school buildings throughout the county. Distributions have occurred at Kalamazoo Central HS, Loy Norrix HS, Phoenix HS, Comstock HS, Linden Grove MS, Spring Valley Elementary, Prairie Ridge Elementary, and Lincoln Elementary. These extra distributions have proven to be excellent outreach events by providing both food and information to families who hadn't visited KLF prior. We plan to continue these school distributions through the summer and will re-evaluate for the 2021-2022 school year. Once scheduled, school distributions are posted on our Facebook page and kzoolf.org.



Volunteers set-up for a mobile food distribution at Phoenix High School.



Reusable bags are filled with groceries and ready for delivery.

ONE YEAR ON THE BOOKS!

On March 17, 2020, KLF launched a service model to address the needs of the community during a global pandemic. It's hard to believe it has already been one year! Since last March, KLF has:

- o Adjusted to a curbside, pickup model at pantries
- o Served 1,546 new families
- o Launched a home delivery program that has served over 4,000 households
- o Provided over 84,956 four-day food orders
- o Held 112 Mobile Food Distributions serving over 10,100 households, including two each month at schools throughout the County
- o Worked closely with over 25 partner agencies and pantries to provide emergency food boxes and packs on a regular basis
- o Supported the basic needs of individuals who are homeless and/or in transitional housing by providing over 2,300 food packs and connecting them to additional resources in the community

FEDERAL AND STATE PACKAGES FIGHT HUNGER

In an effort to help those struggling to make ends meet during the pandemic, federal and state economic stimulus packages are providing a plethora of food resources to families. The ebb and flow of these benefits have impacted the demand for KLF services throughout the pandemic. While we've recently seen slow periods, we anticipate an increase in need this summer as some government assistance programs phase out.

The benefit changes include, but are not limited to, the following:

SNAP

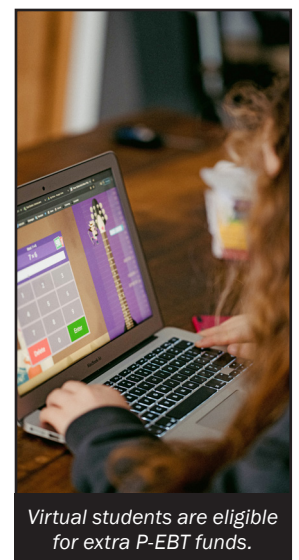
- o 15% increase to the maximum SNAP benefits until September 30, 2021
- o Increase of about \$25 per person per month
- o Expands eligibility to college students

P-EBT

- o Virtual students eligible for free or reduced meals in schools will receive extra P-EBT funds. These are retroactive to September 2020 and will continue through June 2021. In districts that provide free and reduced for ALL students, like KPS, every student will receive these benefits.

UNEMPLOYMENT

- o \$300 per week federal unemployment subsidy that ends September 6, 2021.



Virtual students are eligible for extra P-EBT funds.

Generous donations made to KLF in someone's HONOR. Donations made 11/1/20 - 1/31/21.

Heather Abood & Family
E. Joy Highhouse

Father Albert
Rosemary Barnum

Erin Alderman
Hannah Ramsey

John Allen & Kyle Keiser
Rick & Mary Halpert

Kelly & Jordan Alvey and Family
Samuel & Nancy Alvey

Amy Anderson
Norman Goodling

Mike & Susan Anderson
Rick & Mary Halpert

Jenny Argue
Nancy Anderson

Griffin Ashby-Wade
Vicki Ashby

Lochlan Ashby-Wade
Vicki Ashby

Kalan Ashby-Wade
Vicki Ashby

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Joan B. Atwell
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Marianne Andreach

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Su Bibik

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Kathleen & James Chenoweth

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Tanya Kyles

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Richard & Barbara Baker

Christmas
John & Connie Williams

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Karla Close

Samantha Close
Karla Close

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My Grandson Bryce
Linda Draper

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Joan Osborn
Andrew & Kelsey
Erin & Kenny
Lauren & Curt Smith
Scott & Shirlyn
Stephanie & Charlie

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Sarah Paar
John Fink & Zaide Pixley

Greg & Jean Pardee
Don & Kathie Raklovits

Jason & Tori Pardee
Don & Kathie Raklovits

Steve & Andrea Parker
Carol & Miles Scharfenberg

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Zaide Pixley & John Fink

Kathy & Dale Peerbolte
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For corrections, mailing updates, or to change how your newsletter is delivered (via USPS, email, or both), please contact Mandakini Brophy at 269.488.2617 ext. 206 or Mandakini@kzoolf.org.



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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



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Your support has made our work possible throughout the pandemic.



LATE WINTER/EARLY SPRING 2021

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201 Bob Stansifer, Warehouse Director
214 Jay Steeb, Program Assistant
213 Sam Waldron, Warehouse Assistant
217 Nadina Williams-Barrett, Comm. Engagement Manager

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