

FOOD FORTHOUGHT

LATE SPRING/EARLY SUMMER 2021



MEET DOROTHY

When it's time for her pantry appointment, Dorothy walks up with her small, wheeled cart. She greets our pantry staff by name, and they ask her how she has been feeling. Although we have offered to deliver her groceries, Dorothy always declines. "This is how I get my exercise!" Dorothy states when we offer to deliver her order. Dorothy lives alone, so she enjoys talking with the staff. As we help pack her cart, she shares a story about her niece and tells us about a show she has been watching. After chatting for a while, she cheerfully heads down the street pulling her groceries behind her.

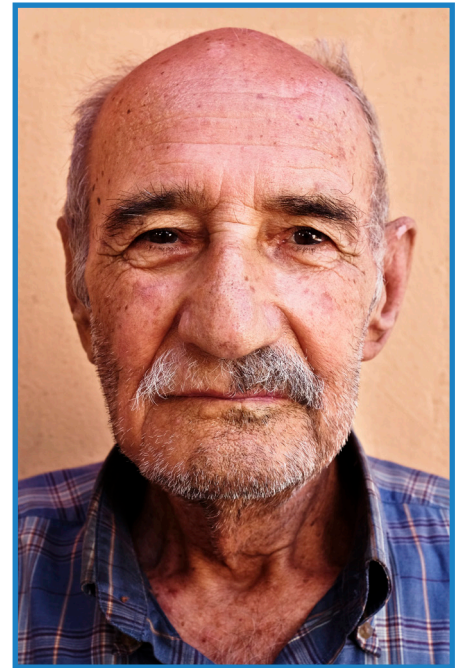
I've had to reduce my hours to part-time because we couldn't afford childcare during the week.

Our kids are too young to handle virtual school on their own.

- Shaina
Mother of Three
and KLF Client

MEET PAUL

Paul has struggled with a variety of medical conditions his entire life, including a recent stroke that has impacted his vision and balance. These challenges have affected his ability to work, and with his vision issues, he can no longer drive. For several years, Paul has lived in a local motel that rents long-term. He only has a mini-fridge and a microwave, so we pack specific items that we know will work for his situation. "I wish I could cook a gourmet meal, but that just isn't possible," Paul chuckles. We deliver his groceries to his motel when he needs them and, every time, Paul says "I can't tell you how much I appreciate this."



MEET SHAINA

Shaina pulls into one of our mobile food distributions at a local school building. She has heard of Loaves & Fishes before but didn't believe her family was eligible because both she and her husband work. "We could really use some help though," Shaina shares and then pauses before saying, "It's been a tough year." With three kids, Shaina has struggled to balance work and virtual school. "I've had to reduce my hours to part-time because we couldn't afford childcare during the week. Our kids are too young to handle virtual school on their own." We provide her with information about other KLF programs and tell her to call when her family needs help.



— A NOTE FROM JEN —

CHECKING IN WITH GINA NOWLING, DOUGLASS PANTRY COORDINATOR

You may remember that we spoke with Gina in December 2019 shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic descended on our community. Gina is the Coordinator of our pantry located within the Douglass Community Association. At this high-capacity pantry, Gina is used to the hustle and bustle that comes with helping dozens of families and individuals shop for groceries. While the pandemic forced all KLF pantries to adopt a curbside pick-up model last year, some locations are gearing up to reopen their doors for those who wish to resume in-person shopping. The Douglass Pantry is one of those locations, so we checked with Gina to get her perspective on how KLF pantries can best serve clients at their comfort level.

— Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director

Q: How has pantry service changed since the pandemic began?

A: We are doing curbside pick-up, which is great for the social distancing and capacity restrictions of the pandemic guidelines. Clients open their vehicle's trunk or hatch, and a KLF staff member loads the food order.

Q: What do you miss most about in-person shopping in the pantry?

A: I miss having meaningful conversations with people as they select their groceries. This personal touch isn't as possible with the curbside pick-up model.

Q: When in-person shopping resumes at select pantries, what additional steps are you taking at the pantry level to keep clients safe and healthy?

A: We will limit the number of clients in the pantry at any given time. Masks will still be required until the state mandate has been lifted for everyone. If someone does not feel comfortable with in-person shopping, we can bring a food order out to their car at that location.

Q: What are you most looking forward to most in the days ahead at KLF?

A: Prepping for in-person shopping to return at the Douglass Pantry this summer!



KLF's Douglass Community Association Pantry Coordinator Gina Nowling.

CURBSIDE PICK-UP OR IN-PERSON SHOPPING?

As the COVID-19 pandemic begins to slow, we are frequently asked if we will return to our in-pantry shopping model. We are currently surveying clients to see how they feel about both models. Feedback to date shows that many clients like the curbside pick-up model and would like it to continue. Others prefer the in-person shopping experience. While still in the discussion phase, we will most likely have some pantry locations that remain curbside pick-up while others return to a new and improved version of in-pantry shopping. We are currently working through the logistics of both and hope to have both options available in mid-July. **Want to voice your opinion? Fill out the survey link found in this newsletter.**



Desmond Allen and Leonardo Fernandez in KLF's warehouse.

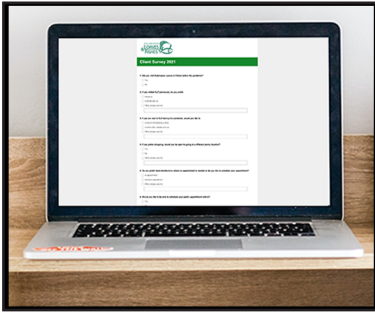
STAFF UPDATES!

Meet two of our new staff members! **Leonardo Fernandez** has recently been hired as a full-time Program Assistant. Leo has been cross-trained to help in the Call Center, the Melzer Pantry, and with home deliveries. Also joining the team is **Desmond Allen** who will help receive food shipments and make deliveries as a Warehouse Assistant.

Unfortunately, we must say goodbye to another Warehouse Assistant, **Sam Waldron**, who joined our team in the early days of the pandemic. Sam, who had been a volunteer previously, jumped right in as a staff member and has been an incredibly hard worker. Sam is leaving KLF to start a master's degree program. We wish him the very best and know he will be successful in all he does!



Sam Waldron assists at a KLF Mobile Food Distribution.



WE ARE LISTENING!

If you have received food from KLF, we would love your feedback! Please take a moment to complete a short survey at the link below, or scan the QR code to the right with your phone's camera:

[SurveyMonkey.com/r/T26XS79](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/T26XS79)

If you would prefer to have a paper copy sent to you or have the questions read to you, please contact us at 269-488-2617.

Thank you! Your feedback is a gift to us.



Looking for a way to help your community this spring? Consider hosting a neighborhood food drive!

Ask neighbors to drop food at a centralized location or set food out on their porch for pick-up on a specific date. Encourage little ones to get involved by decorating yard signs or posters for front windows.

Showcase your efforts on social media; your actions could inspire others to get involved. KLF will weigh your donations so you can share the total with participants!

Find more helpful tips at kzoolf.org/give-food

VOLUNTEER UPDATES

Volunteers have always been the mighty force behind our mission. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has made it difficult to accommodate large numbers of volunteers at one time. Although we never stopped having volunteers involved during the pandemic, our opportunities have been limited and fill up fast. If you are interested in volunteering, feel free to reach out to our Volunteer Coordinator, Ray Kuerth, at ray@kzoolf.org or 269-488-2617 x209 to discuss options. At the present time, possible volunteer opportunities include:

- Assembling non-perishable food boxes
- Assisting with mobile food distributions
- Helping with newsletters and mailings
- Drivers
- Receptionists

We try to accommodate requests, but again, our opportunities fill up fast! If you would like to help, but we do not currently have any open spots, consider hosting a food drive at your business, church, or neighborhood. With the cancellation of the National Association of Letter Carriers' Food Drive typically held each May, our food donations are much lower than normal for this time of year.



Volunteers assemble non-perishable food boxes at our warehouse on Portage Street in Kalamazoo.

MONTHLY GIVING COUPONS

GIVING COUPON:
JUNE
COUPON #208

Your donation helps feed kids who lose access to school food programs this month.

Donation Amount
\$ _____

Please send your contribution by June 11th.

Food Wish List: Healthy Snacks

GIVING COUPON:
JULY
COUPON #209

Summer is our most in-demand season. Your help is appreciated.

Donation Amount
\$ _____

Please send your contribution by July 9th.

Food Wish List: Canned Fruit



THE ONSTAFF GROUP
DOLLAR DRIVE-THRU

The OnStaff Dollar Drive-Thru will be held virtually this year. Although we welcome donations at any time, we will conduct a virtual campaign on **Thursday, August 5th**. Stay tuned for details!

WELCOME, BOB!

We'd like to introduce you to **Bob Stansifer, KLF's new Warehouse Director!** Bob joined our team in March and brings a wealth of knowledge to the table. He has spent the past 20 years in the warehouse/distribution industry dealing with food storage and packaging. There's no doubt that his global, national, and local contacts will be an asset to him in his new role as well as to the organization.

When Bob started at KLF, he was surprised by how many people are affected by hunger in our community. It wasn't until he was able to dive into the numbers that he was able to see the full scale of food insecurity in Southwest Michigan; it's a problem he hopes he can play a role in alleviating during his time working at KLF.

We encourage you to help welcome Bob to the team over the next few months if you're in the building. He's quickly becoming a familiar face for many of our warehouse and pantry volunteers.



DECODING FOOD SAFETY CODES



SELL-BY

Tells a store how long to keep a product displayed. This is not a food safety date.



BEST-BY

The date recommended for best flavor or quality. This is not a purchase or safety date.



USE-BY

The last date recommended for best flavor or quality. This is only a safety date on infant formula.



CODED

Packing numbers that appear on shelf-stable food. Not an expiration date. Date is used by product manufacturer.

UNSURE IF A FOOD PRODUCT HAS GONE BAD? TRUST YOUR SENSES!
If the packaging is rusty, dented, swollen, or open then toss it.

HUNGER AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

The "traditional" college student—being enrolled full-time directly after high school—is slowly becoming the minority. Most college students (71%) are considered "nontraditional". These students are often enrolled part-time, have full-time employment, have dependents, and do not rely on others for their financial well-being. The overall average age of a college student is 26, and at least 22% are caring for child dependents.

College meal plans are often too expensive for low-income students. Additionally, students reported that the most common reason for food insecurity was an unexpected expense such as a car repair or health issue affecting themselves or a family member. Students often must cut their hours at their jobs to focus on studying. Between these factors and the rising cost of education, many students are struggling to make ends meet.

Before the pandemic, it was estimated that approximately one-in-three college students experienced food insecurity. The pandemic has only increased food insecurity in students. Unemployment, the sudden closure of campus resources, loss in campus service support, and a lack of access to federal food assistance are many of the contributing factors. This has been especially true for international students who often have limited resources and were unable to return home due to pandemic closures.

Both the **WMU Invisible Need Project** and the **KVCC Valley Share Program** receive food support from Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes. Because transportation is often a significant barrier, KLF frequently delivers food directly to college students.



TRIBUTES Generous donations made in someone's HONOR or MEMORY. Donations made 2/1/21 - 4/30/21.

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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@kzoof.org.



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FOOD REQUEST LINE: 269/343-3663
P 269/488-2617 · F 269/343-3669
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

Whether it's one bag or one truckload, we are grateful for the produce we receive from local growers and gardeners!

DONATING FRESH FOOD IS EASY!

- PLANT** extra produce in your garden to donate to KLF.
- GRAB** extra produce at the store or farmers' market to donate to KLF.
- PICK** an extra bushel of fruit or veggies for KLF when you go picking with family and friends.
- ENCOURAGE** farmers and farm stand owners to donate surplus crops to KLF.

Need more information about making a regular fresh food donation? Contact Bob Stansifer at 269.488.2617 ext. 212.



LATE SPRING/EARLY SUMMER 2021

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KALAMAZOO LOAVES & FISHES IS A



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Jeff Herman, Warehouse Analyst

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