

Food Pantry Network News

December 2011



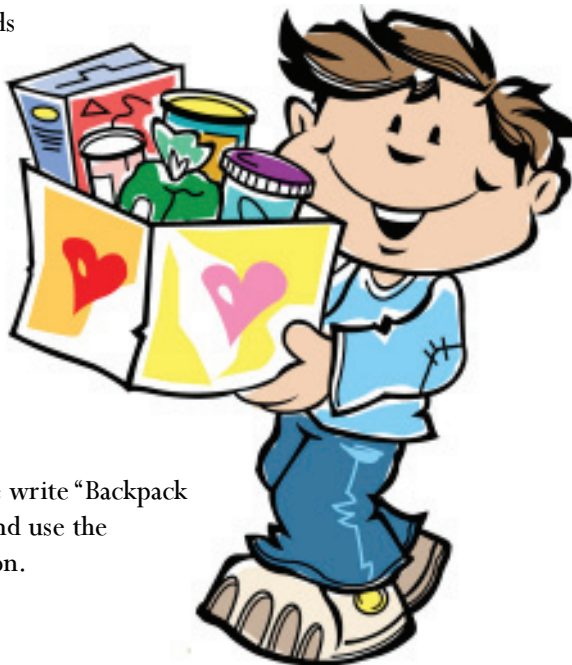
Backpack Buddies Receives Big Boost as Need Explodes

We are excited to announce a significant grant that was awarded to the Backpack Buddies program this fall. In September, the Trustees of the Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation awarded a grant of \$25,000 to be used to support this incredible program. Backpack Buddies is available to all Midland County public elementary schools. This covers the Bullock Creek, Coleman, and Meridian school districts as well as the Midland city district.

Each Friday, a student who qualifies for free or reduced lunch and who is registered for the program with the EFPN receives enough food to cover about six meals over the weekend. This program is designed to ensure that these children have food over the weekend so they return to school on Monday morning ready to learn. Food is obtained from the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan at a cost that allows us to feed each child for just over \$2 each weekend, for 31 weekends over the school year.

The grant from the Gerstacker Foundation is very timely and is definitely needed this school year. While the 2010-11 school year saw us average about 630 per week, this school year we are already serving over 700 students on a weekly basis. Because of this generous gift, we will be able to cover one-half of the program costs for the year.

If you wish to support this program, please write "Backpack Buddies" in the memo line of your check and use the enclosed envelope to mail your contribution.



MI Tax Credit Final Year

In case you missed the news, 2011 will be the final year to claim the Michigan Tax Credit for donations to food banks. Checks made to the Midland County EFPN qualify as a food bank. The write-off for a cash donation to a food bank in 2011 will be a 50 percent tax credit for donations up to \$200 for individuals (\$100 credit), or up to \$400 for couples filing jointly (\$200 credit). The budget passed this year eliminates future credits so that donations in 2012 and beyond will only qualify for the standard charitable deduction allowed. Please consider the extra tax advantages when making a decision to contribute to EFPN this year.

Whom Have You Helped?

A family took in a homeless cousin until he could get out on his own.

A mom needed Ensure for her daughter who suffers from anorexia.

A single mom lost her job and needed food help for her son who had the flu.

A grandmother, who gained custody of her two grandsons when her daughter went to prison, needed help once a month until she could get adjusted to the change.

Midland County Emergency
Food Pantry Network
P.O. Box 2521
Midland, MI 48641-2521
www.midlandcountyeftp.org
989-374-0955

SUGGESTED FOOD & SUPPLY DONATIONS

Breakfast Foods: biscuit & pancake mix, syrup, hot & cold cereals

Beverages: drink mix (iced tea, fruit punch, etc.), powdered milk, juice, hot cocoa, coffee, tea

Proteins: beef stew, peanut butter, tuna

Starches: mac & cheese, pizza mix, pasta, rice & potato mixes, Hamburger Helper

Canned Goods: canned fruits & vegetables, soup, canned meals, tomato & spaghetti sauces

Accompaniments: catsup, mustard, salad dressing, jam/jelly, crackers

Desserts: gelatin mix, pudding mix, cake & brownie mixes, cookies

Special Diet: low-salt, low-sugar, sugar-free items

Personal Care: bar soap, shampoo & conditioner, shaving supplies, toilet paper, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrush

Baby Needs: diapers & wipes, diaper ointment, baby food, non-expired formula, baby shampoo & lotion

Housekeeping: dish detergent, laundry detergent, cleaning supplies, paper towels

New Elevator

Thanks in part to a grant from the Midland Area Community Foundation, Sanford Food Pantry volunteers can serve clients more easily, using the new elevator installed at Sanford United Methodist Church. Previously, food from the church's basement pantry had to be wheeled up a sloped sidewalk behind the church and around to the parking lot where clients waited. Volunteers who have used the new elevator are deeply appreciative.

Annual Thanksgiving Give-Away Supports 400+ Families

In what has become an annual ritual, Dean and Elaine Tobey led a slew of volunteers to gather and distribute complete Thanksgiving meals and more the weekend before Thanksgiving. Each year the Midland County EFPN supplements the donated goods received with gift certificates for recipient families that can be used at local food stores to purchase a turkey for the thanksgiving meal.

This year over 400 families, primarily from a list provided by DHS, were invited to receive this gift of food. Nearly 100 volunteers participate in gathering, sorting, and repackaging supplies at Aldersgate United Methodist Church to feed those who otherwise will not experience a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. A comparable meal to feed 10 people runs just under \$50, with a 16-pound turkey alone costing nearly \$20.

Because of the donations from many in the community, including Hidden Harvest which provided over 500 pounds of potatoes, we are able to provide this meal for a cost of about \$25 per family.

If you wish to support this program, please write "Thanksgiving Program" in the memo line of your check and use the enclosed envelope to mail your contribution.



Wheeler Road Church of Christ Open for Evening Service

Wheeler Road Church of Christ recently joined with the seven other pantries in the network and has been exploring ways to increase its service to the hungry. After some discussion, two decisions were made that have increased the number of clients sent to their pantry two-fold.

The first decision was to distribute the food and personal items through a system called "U-Pick." Rather than simply having a bag or box full of food items packaged by volunteers, each family is allowed to select the items that like, want, or need directly from the pantry shelves. The interesting thing, as HELP Pantry at Memorial Presbyterian Church has learned during their time of operating under this system, is that "U-

Pick" customers tend to take less than the number of items that they are allowed during a traditional pantry visit.

The second, and perhaps more significant measure, was the pantry's decision to be open during evening hours. This decision has already become popular with several clients, especially those who are identified as the working poor among us.

Thank you, Wheeler Road Church of Christ, for your creative delivery of goods to help those who hunger.

Need for Food Assistance on the Rise

The Michigan League for Human Services (MLHS) recently released its Economic Security Bulletin. The report showed the unemployment rate dropped in 82 of Michigan's 83 counties in the first quarter of 2011, compared to the first quarter of 2010. (Ontonagon was the only county that did not show a drop, increasing instead from 16.9 to 18.0 percent). But despite the improvement in employment, the need for food assistance is rising. The MLHS reports that every county in the state saw an increase in the need for food assistance.

- Statewide, there was a 15.5 percent increase in the need for food assistance when comparing the first quarter of 2010 with the first quarter of 2011.
- Midland's change in unemployment rate Q1 2010 vs. Q1 2011 showed a decline of 2.1 percent.
- The number of households on the Food Assistance Program Q1 2010 vs. 2011 saw an increase of 14.9 percent from 5,309 to 6,099 households.
- The percent of Midland County's population receiving Food Assistance Q1 2010 vs. Q1 2011 rose from 13.3 to 14.4 percent.



Successful Year for Mobile Food Pantries

Mobile Food Pantries completed another successful year. With this year's final mobile food pantry occurring on October 12 at the West Midland Family Center, the Midland County EFPN, along with Messiah Lutheran's Fill the Cup campaign, helped feed more than 2,000 families this year at 10 give-away events.

The food give-aways cost \$600 each, and we thank our sponsors for this year's programs: Thrivent Financial Services, Blessed Sacrament Church, Messiah Lutheran Church, Midland Lions Club, Coleman Lions Club, Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church, St. John's Episcopal Church, the Ziegler's, and one anonymous donor. These MFPs were hosted at several locations throughout the county, including Midland Civic Arena, Coleman United Methodist Church, Trinity Lutheran Church, Blessed Sacrament Church, St. John's Lutheran Church, Eagle Ridge Church of God, Floyd Church of God, and both North and West Midland family centers.

To volunteer, please contact Jim Ostler at jimbarbo32@sbcglobal.net. To sponsor a MFP, please contact Thayre Talcott at thetalcotts@sbcglobal.net.

MIDLAND COUNTY EFPN LOCATIONS

*Please call before delivering
food & supplies to pantries*

Bullock Creek Outreach Pantry

at Messiah Lutheran Church
1550 S. Poseyville Rd.
(corner of Gordonville Rd.)
835-7143

Coleman Food Pantry

at Coleman City Hall
465-6961

HELP Pantry

at Memorial Presbyterian Church
1310 Ashman St.
(please use Allen St. entrance)
835-6759

North Midland Family Center Pantry

2601 E. Shearer Rd.
689-7770

SAMS Food Pantry

at St. John's Episcopal Church
405 N. Saginaw Rd.
631-2260

Sanford Food Pantry

at Sanford United Methodist Church
2560 N. West River Rd.
687-5353

Wheeler Road Church of Christ Pantry

1123 E. Wheeler Rd.
835-8559

West Midland Family Center Pantry

4011 W. Isabella Rd.
832-3256

Recent Successes

The annual Feinstein Challenge resulted in \$74,804 in reported contributions in March and April (cash donations plus \$1 credit per food item donated). A special thank you goes to Mien Ahrs who shared her love of cooking with her friends and neighbors. Mien held a traditional Vietnamese cooking class. She also hosted a dinner for 45 of her neighbors, asking attendees to make a donation to the EFPN. Mien and her neighbors raised \$1,840!

The ReMax-led "Feed the Need" food drive resulted in 1,284 items being distributed to the pantries within the EFPN!

The U.S. Postal Carriers' food drive in May provided 7,182 donated items (over 15,000 pounds of food)!



**Midland County
Emergency Food Pantry Network**

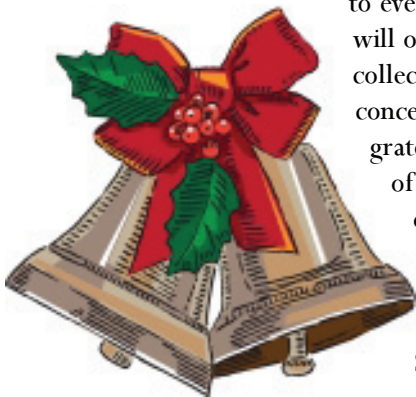
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www.midlandcountyeftp.org

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Men of Music Concert Benefits the Hungry

The Midland County EFPN is once again the recipient of proceeds from the Men of Music Annual Christmas Concert to be held at the First United Methodist Church on Main Street in Midland. This year's concerts will be held on Sunday, December 4 at 2:00 and 7:00 p.m. EFPN volunteers will help at the event by serving as ushers. The concerts are open to everyone. A free-will offering will be collected during the concert. We are grateful to be a part of this fantastic community event to help celebrate the holiday season. See you there!



989-374-0955

New Telephone Number

We now have a telephone number! To reach the Midland County EFPN "office," call 989-374-0955. Calls go directly to voice mail and are checked on a regular basis. We still encourage those in need of food to dial 211, but we can also assist those who call this number directly. If you have questions about a network project or program, where to drop off food, or how to volunteer, you may call this number or contact us through our website at www.midlandcountyeftp.org and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

989-374-0955