

Food Pantry Network News

Midland County Emergency Food Pantry Network

Our Vision: "Always Food in Every Home"



August 2015

Fresh Fruit Added Monthly to Backpacks

The EFPN board decided to provide fresh fruit once a month for recipients of the Backpack Buddies Program. Fruits like apples or oranges that can "survive" in a backpack were selected. This added additional costs to the program, but it was felt having fresh fruit was important. The added fruit, which was purchased locally, was well received by school staff and recipients.

The start of the school year is the time for EFPN and our Backpack Buddies Program coordinator, Debra Ahn, to start planning on providing a weekend backpack of food to elementary school children who qualify to receive free or reduced price lunches. Last school year about 740 children in 12 elementary schools received this weekend supplement of food. All Midland County elementary school children will receive information regarding the Backpack Buddies Program with their start-of-school paperwork. Families who do not qualify learn how they can help support this program. Once the forms come back, Debra will work with the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan (FBEM) to determine the allotment of items for each school based on the number of participants. Each backpack contains kid-friendly, easy-to-prepare foods. Items included can be used for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and a snack. There is no cost for children, their families or schools to participate in the Backpack Buddies Program.

Deliveries begin in October and volunteers from each school pack the backpacks for their schools. Many children and their families have come to rely on this extra food for the weekend. One student remarked they were sad about having a break from school because there wouldn't be as much food in their home.

This summer we continued to pilot a summer backpack program. We provided food to around 30 low income Meridian Elementary School students. Funding for this was provided by the women's group of Sanford United Methodist Church as well as EFPN. EFPN also supported a backpack program at West Midland Family Center for 110 children. Both programs used the backpack of food as an incentive to encourage students to read during the summer months.

We would not be able to keep this program going without all the volunteers involved, including the staff of the Midland County Schools and community volunteers, and the financial support of many. Each filled backpack costs EFPN around \$2.50 per child per week. This is an increase in cost from previous years. We are projecting the cost of this program for the 2015-2016 school year will be around \$57,000.

The Backpack Buddies Program is a testament to many resources coming together to make a difference in the lives of our children. As Marian Wright Edelman, an activist for children's rights, said, "If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much."



Remembering Harry Smith

This spring we lost one of the founding members of EFPN, Harry Smith. Harry was there in the beginning in 1982 when this concept of forming a network of pantries to help people in need of food started to take shape. He became the secretary of EFPN when the network was established in 1983 and remained secretary until this year. If any of you have ever been a secretary for an organization, you will realize what a challenging role this can be. In addition to being secretary he was always willing to help in other areas. He and his wife Grace were faithful volunteers at the Christmas Men of Music concert which has made EFPN one of their beneficiaries for many years. Besides EFPN,

he volunteered with the Boy Scouts. He often hosted the EFPN board meetings at his church as we rotate our meeting site. When our current coordinator was hired and attended her first board meeting, Harry assured her that she would do a great job. She appreciated this very much. We are very grateful to Harry for all his years of service to EFPN but most of all for his kindness and gentle spirit that he brought to our organization.

Reflections

* A school social worker found out that a student had no food in their house. The social worker called EFPN and an appointment was made that day. The social worker told the student you will have food today. As the student turned away they quietly said "thank you" overwhelming the social worker.

* A teenager called to get help for the family. The parents were too embarrassed to call. They were on disability and just got their food benefits cut.

* A young man with terminal cancer was told to get his affairs in order. He called EFPN for food assistance for his family as well as a nutritional supplement for himself. Our coordinator listened to him for over an hour and tried to comfort him as he tried to deal with this news. Our coordinator continued to help the family after the man passed.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

* According to *Hunger in America 2014*, 79% of client households will purchase cheaper food, even if it's not the healthiest option to just get their family fed. This coping strategy has known risks for negative health outcomes.

* According to Feeding America, 13.1% of Midland County residents are food insecure. This translates to 11,020 people. Food insecure people are those who have limited access to enough food and the availability of nutritionally adequate food to sustain an active, healthy life for all household members.

* A person who received food from one of our pantries learned the pantry was running short on plastic bags. This person brought in some bags the next day because they were grateful for the help. They could not donate food, but they could at least help with giving plastic bags.

Our Pantries

EFPN has eight pantries located throughout Midland County. This is the second in a series of articles highlighting each of our pantries.

Spotlight on Wheeler Road Church of Christ Pantry



Wheeler Road Church of Christ (WRCC), located at 1123 E. Wheeler Street, has had a pantry for more than 21 years. It utilized a small closet that was part of the nursery area. Members supplied the groceries, and as needed, a bulletin message would alert the congregation to what items were running low. Demand for food was inconsistent and sometimes food would languish well beyond its expiration date. Thinking they could better serve those in need, they tried another program, a semi-annual give-away, to let the hungry know about the pantry. Boxes of food were given away along with clothing and household goods. Demand increased, and WRCC looked to increase space for setting up a more organized pantry. The pantry was moved to a space that used to be a “cry room” that was about 5 times larger than the closet. Canvas grocery bags were offered in the atrium that carried a tag naming specific food items. Members of the church would take the bags and purchase the items when they shopped for their own families.

The bags would then be returned with the items, and stocked in the pantry. WRCC was seeing a fairly consistent demand for food from their pantry, and needs were being met.

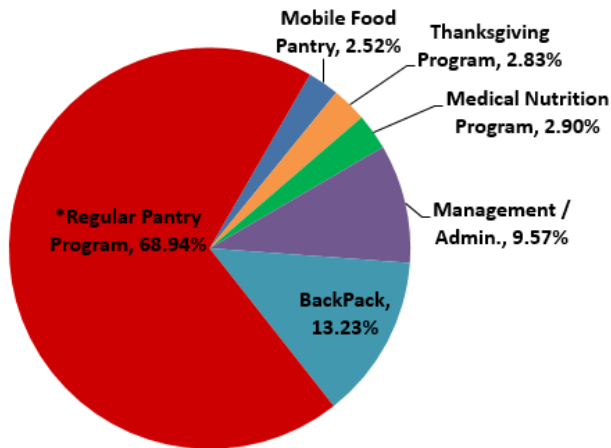
Several years ago, WRCC decided to explore how other pantries operated. In January 2011, WRCC became a member pantry of the Midland County Emergency Food Pantry Network (EFPN). The advantage to WRCC has been the use of the network screener that is the point of contact for those in need. The church office has limited hours, and having someone to take requests improves their efficiency. Another advantage is the ability to purchase food from the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan at a much lower cost. Food is still provided through the congregation with the grocery bag system. The pantry recently moved again to a room across the hall from the church office, again adding more space and shelving. They added a freezer and a refrigerator. WRCC is a client select pantry whereby clients select their own food. They are open on Wednesday evenings and they are the only EFPN pantry with evening hours. They currently serve up to three families per week. Clients are often invited to attend the potluck they have on Wednesday evenings. In addition to hosting the pantry, WRCC helps 10 low income families each Thanksgiving with a meal.



Meijer's Simply Give Campaign

EFPN has been selected again to be a beneficiary of Meijer's Simply Give program which runs July 19 through September 12. Customers need to purchase a \$10 Meijer Food Pantry Donation Card. Meijer will convert this card into a \$10 Meijer's food gift card which will be given to EFPN to help stock pantry shelves. In addition, Meijer's Corporation will make a contribution to EFPN. These cards are available at the check-out registers at Meijer's. We urge our supporters to purchase the donation card so that we can not only get the Meijer's gift cards you purchase but also the additional contribution from the Meijer's Corporation. There will be double match days on September 3 through September 5. On these days a \$10.00 donation will be worth \$30.00 because the Meijer's corporation will give an additional \$20.00. Pantry representatives use the money to purchase food items that are not donated or available from the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and the Meijer's Corporation, EFPN received around \$4200 in Meijer's gift cards during the spring 2015 campaign. In addition you can support EFPN through the Kroger's Reward Program and Amazon Smile. You can check on the details of these programs by visiting the EFPN website at www.midlandcountyeFPN.org or by calling our office at 989-486-9393.

EFPN Expense Break-Down



*This does not include expenditures made by individual pantries to buy food. Some also purchase their own gift certificates. Pantries have their direct supporters that allow them to purchase items locally, help them pay for gift certificates etc. Amount of support varies from pantry to pantry. The EFPN Network covers expenses the pantries cannot cover. We work to ensure all pantries can offer the same food options to our clients.

Emergency Boxes

When pantries are closed or a client will run out of food before they can get a pantry appointment, EFPN has emergency boxes available at a number of our pantry locations. Often church or family center staff are on hand beyond the pantry hours. The emergency box contains about 40 nonperishable items. Recently a person who was between jobs called for help with food. Our coordinator set this person up with an appointment for the next day. Our coordinator sensed something was wrong. She asked if the family had enough food for the evening meal. They replied they could make do with what they had. Our coordinator said "making do" was not good enough, so she sent this person to get an emergency box. The staff member decided to go into the pantry and add perishable items like meat to the emergency box.



The person was overwhelmed with her generosity and began to cry as did the staff member.

Thank You Local Businesses and Organizations for Recent Food and Fund Raising Events!

Aaron's Gifts from Home
Advanced Auto Parts
Aldersgate United Methodist Church
Blessed Sacrament Faith Formation
Chemical Bank
Dollar Daze
Dr. Daniel Clement
Dow High School Music Booster
Gavin & Associates
Girl Scout Troop 50721
Girl Scout Troop 50723
Grape Beginnings Winery
Hidden Harvest
Kroger
LaLonde's Market
Meijer's Simply Give Program
Midland Area Community Foundation Give Local Event
Midland Country Club
Midland Tennis Center - Dow
Corning Tennis Classic
National Association of Letter Carriers, Branch 2317
Temple Beth El
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
The Dow Chemical Company
Foundation Community Donor
Advised Endowment Fund

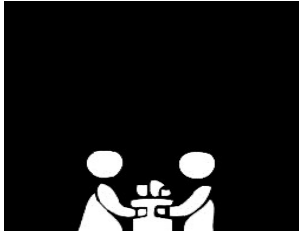
Senior Delivery Service Expands

For many years EFPN partnered with the Department of Human Services (DHS) providing food to low income homebound elderly clients during the winter months. DHS volunteers would deliver the food. The food came from our HELP Pantry at Memorial Presbyterian Church. The EFPN board decided that we would provide this service to these seniors year round and the DHS volunteer drivers agreed to deliver all year round. We also decided to partner with Senior Services to identify more low income homebound seniors who may be in need of food. This food is delivered by volunteers from Senior Services. We currently have a total of 19 seniors from the two agencies. Preparing the boxes of food rotates now between the HELP Pantry and the SAMS Pantry sponsored by St John Episcopal Church, the Wheeler Road Church of Christ Pantry and the Bullock Creek Outreach Pantry sponsored by Messiah Lutheran Church.

The DHS volunteer driver said that one of the recipients mentioned how much the food helps them and how much they appreciate getting the groceries each month. Another recipient was a 90+ frail elderly lady who watches the volunteers as they leave and blow kisses. She gave the volunteer a big hug and kiss and blessed the volunteer for bringing the groceries. Our volunteer drivers get to know these seniors and feel a loss when they no longer can live on their own or pass away.

We could not expand this service without all the pantry representative and their volunteers who assemble the food and get it packed and the volunteers who make these monthly deliveries traveling to parts of Midland County that they may not have known existed before they started this service. We also could not do this without the financial support and food donations from our supporters.

We received a note from Senior Services thanking us for spearheading the expansion of our homebound senior delivery service. Tina Podboy Laughner, Senior Services Volunteer & Community Outreach Manager said, "It is a great service for the older adults who have difficulty getting to the food pantry sites. Thank you all so much!"



Midland County
Emergency Food Pantry

P.O. Box 2521
Midland, MI 48641-2521

www.midlandcountyeftp.org

989-486-9393

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U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
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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 Railway Family Center

4839 N. Coleman Schools Drive • 465-2079

EFPN Warehouse

503 S. Saginaw Rd. • 486-9393

HELP Pantry

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

North Midland Family Center Pantry

2601 E. Shearer Rd. • 689-7770

SAMS Food Pantry

hosted by St. John's Episcopal Church at
503 S. 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

*If you know of anyone in need of food, please have them
call 989-486-9393*

UPCOMING EVENTS

FOOD COLLECTION AT MIDLAND BALLOON FESTIVAL



The Midland Balloon Festival will be held September 11-13 at the Midland County Fairgrounds, www.midlandballoonfest.com. As part of the event, attendees are asked to bring a nonperishable food item. There will be trucks on site to collect the food. Have fun at the Balloon Festival while helping your neighbors in need.

CROP HUNGER WALK

ENDING HUNGER ONE STEP AT A TIME



MIDLAND AREA CROP WALK

Church World Services will host their annual Crop Walk on Sunday, October 4. The start is at the Midland Center for the Arts. Registration is at 1:15 and the walk begins at 2:00. EFPN is one of the recipients of the funds generated locally by the Crop Walk.

MIDLAND COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA CONCERT

The Midland Community Orchestra will hold a concert on November 22 at 3:00 pm at Central Auditorium, 305 E Reardon. Attendees are asked to bring a nonperishable food item.. Please come and enjoy the concert while helping to stock the pantry shelves.