



## A Benevolent Community

BY MARCIA SZUMOWSKI,  
CASEWORK SERVICES DIRECTOR

Imagine learning that your father has died over 550 miles from Grand Rapids. Perhaps the average person could hop in the car, or make some sort of travel arrangements so they can be there with the rest of the family. Now, imagine that you have no vehicle and your only income is from disability payments. This dilemma presented itself this week for a Heartside resident. There are no agencies in our area who could assist with travel costs...but when there are needs like this, we are blessed with the generosity of congregations in our community. After meeting with this man, several churches contacted Access OSM caseworkers who were able to verify, with the funeral home, that this was a valid request. Our caseworker stayed late to get the bus voucher faxed over to Greyhound for an early departure.

We are so blessed to live in a community where strangers care enough about those in need to help support benevolence ministries.

## MYTH-BUSTING CAMPAIGN

BY MARSHA DEHOLLANDER,  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

The Michigan Department of Human Services has launched a campaign to dispel some current myths regarding the many Michigan residents that received assistance from a state welfare program this past year. Here are a couple of examples:

### Myth #1: Welfare recipients are a drain on the system

Fact: The average family receiving assistance is a single parent with two children who typically receive help for less than two years. The parent probably works part-time earning minimum wage. The family may live on \$700 - \$800 a month between part-time income and benefits. This places the family at about 50% of the federal poverty income guideline, which is \$1,474 a month for a family of 3.

### Myth #2: Welfare is full of fraud and no one's doing anything about it

Fact: The federal Government Accountability Office estimates that for every \$1 in food stamps, about 1 cent is obtained fraudulently. The Michigan DHS' Office of Inspector General expanded the department's fraud prevention efforts. They were able to recoup \$4.90 for every \$1 spent on investigating fraud and were recognized by the US Dept. of Agriculture as first in the Midwest region for new fraud claims, claims recouped and total disqualifications.

One fourth of Michigan residents received assistance from a state welfare program in 2009. It is likely nearly all of us know of a friend, neighbor or family member who may be among that number. We are grateful for these safety net programs that are providing essential services for so many of our neighbors in this difficult economic time.

Source: FRAC News Digest; April 20, 2010

Want to receive this newsletter by email? Sign up online!  
For details on dates, more information or questions, please contact Access at 616-774-2175

Access of West Michigan serves God in our community by providing working solutions to hunger and poverty through Hunger Response • Casework Services • Poverty Education



[www.AccessofWestMichigan.org](http://www.AccessofWestMichigan.org)

## Meet The Board

### Dave Brinza, Access Vice President

#### *Where do you work and what do you do?*

Goodwill Industries, COO is my title. I basically run all of the retail stores, facilities and IT.

**Favorite vacation spot:** Glen Arbor, Michigan

**Favorite movie:** Hunt for Red October

**Favorite book:** Angels and Demons

**How many years have you served on the Access board?** 2 years

**Why did you choose to serve on the Access board?** Access offices are in the same building as Goodwill and Bruce

and I worked together over the years. He asked me to join and even though I worked with Bruce I didn't know what Access did and I thought I could contribute in a small way to make the organization successful.

**What has been the most rewarding thing for you in the time you have served?** To experience the amount of impact Access had during the recession period on the community. I'm also very impressed with the talented and diversified staff.

**In your opinion, why should people support Access?** Any non profit will have to collaborate to survive and Access is the collaborator of pantries and congregations. They not only understand poverty and hunger, but they have created a model that combines forces of multiple organizations which

creates efficiencies which supports the community to a level greater than if the organizations stood on their own. They are a model of the future.

**Please let us know anything else about you that is interesting or that you would like to share:** I'd like to talk about my step kids that I inherited a couple of years ago when I married Jacky. Chris is at Texas Tech master program studying meteorology and he was chosen to be on the Vortex 2 team which is a federal program to study tornados. Yes, he chases tornados! Sarah is in New Zealand studying abroad and her area of study is speech therapy. Mike was just commissioned as an officer in the Navy and will be spending the next 37 months in Japan on a mine sweeper boat. Needless to say, we are living exciting lives through them.

## “Providing a Place at the Table” The First Access Gala

BY LINDSY GRIFFIS,  
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

The Access First Annual Fundraiser Gala was a night to remember! Along with the reveal of our new brand, we shared photos and videos of the many people who join us around the table fighting hunger and poverty. National Recording Artist, Shawn McDonald, played captivating music while sharing his personal story of poverty and encouraging us to see the potential in everyone. It was truly a night to celebrate the good work that can be done when people, congregations, nonprofits, agencies and businesses work together to make a difference.

We are overwhelmed at the support we received from partnering organizations and friends. This event could not have happened without your support. We are convinced that we have the best partners and donors we could ask for. Because of you, Access raised over \$22,000 above expenses to help fight hunger and poverty, and the support keeps coming in. These funds will be put directly into our Hunger Response, Casework Services, and Poverty Education programs. Thousands upon thousands of individuals will be assisted because of your help. We cannot express our appreciation enough. Thank you to everyone who made this night so special.



## Pantries Growing Their Own Food

The need for healthy and nutritious food in the pantries is becoming more of a priority these days. WZZM takes a look at a local effort to start a garden to support a food pantry. “Fifty tomato plants last year produced almost a thousand pounds of produce for the garden.” Take a look at the article online, available through the Access Blog.

[www.AccessofWestMichigan.org](http://www.AccessofWestMichigan.org)

## ONLINE POLL RESULTS:

Which of the following do you think is more important?

Out of 91 total votes,

79% said:

Fighting the root causes of poverty  
(72 votes)

21% said:

Relief for those who are suffering in poverty (19 Votes)



## Caseworker Corner

BY MARCIA SZUMOWSKI,  
CASEWORK SERVICES DIRECTOR

### Kent County Disaster Response Plan

Just as your family needs to develop its own, individual safety plan, the faith community has come together to determine the tasks and responsibilities of how to meet the long-term needs in the event of a major disaster.

As much as we would like to think we are all safe and secure from any major disaster, we also know that we should have a plan in case we are faced with a crisis. It just doesn't work to create a plan while you are dealing with the stresses of disaster. (Remember when everyone wanted to offer clothing, supplies, etc right after Hurricane Katrina and there was just so much dropped off, centers were not able to go through it all?) While we all want to jump right in to help as soon as we see a need, it has been proven that the best plan is to sit and wait until you are given some direction. In Kent County, Access, GRACE, and CRWRC have been working out details of how best to respond to a local disaster. For a brief summary that you can print up and put in your Congregation Disaster Plan File, please check the following link. <http://accessofwestmichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/disasterresponsecover.pdf>

Basically, these organizations have worked out a 'chain of command' for how the faith community will respond. Initially, all disaster response will come from existing community and government resources. Once government agencies meet the initial emergency, there may be a need for local groups to step up and provide extended support. Access, GRACE, and CRWRC will meet and determine how best to coordinate long-term recovery efforts and serve as an information clearing house. Needs will be announced in the media, denominational leadership and individual congregations. If supplies are needed, a drop off site will be announced—please wait until an announcement is made before gathering any items.

If your congregation would like to be proactive and ready, you can contact the Red Cross (616-456-8661) and register your facility as a shelter site, or have volunteers participate in emergency response training.

We all pray that we will never have to put this plan into action, but isn't it a relief to know that there are groups out there meeting, planning, reviewing and revising how we can best respond to a major disaster in Kent County?!

*“It just doesn't work to create a plan while you are dealing with the stresses of disaster.”*

# Our Place

Today we bring many programs and services to the table. But most of all, we provide a place for the community to act—for those with resources and talents to interact and problem-solve with the big issues of poverty and people in need. We have been working diligently over the past year to update our branding and give a new face to Access. We are very excited to launch our new brand look and tagline which is, "Providing a place at the table."

Our services fall under three initiatives:



## Hunger Response

Working to eliminate hunger in the community.



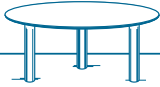
## Casework Services

Helping congregations effectively respond to human needs in the community.



## Poverty Education

Educating the community on the realities of poverty and how to respond.



## Access of West Michigan *Providing a place at the table*

These three initiatives represent the three legs of the table in our new logo. If you are interested in eliminating hunger and reducing the impact of poverty in our community, we welcome you to sit with us at the table. Without you as partners and friends, we would not be able to respond to the many needs in our community.

Access would like to thank our Brand Advancement Committee for their time, effort, and input over the past year regarding our new look, as well as a special thank you to Rachel Hyde for partnering with Access through her artistic and graphic design talents.

A SAMPLING OF OUR FRESH LOOK: LETTERHEAD, OVERVIEW BROCHURE, WEBSITE, RESOURCES BROCHURE



### Access Board

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*President*  
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*Vice-President*

Dean VanBruggen,  
*Treasurer*  
Martha Boks,  
*Secretary*

Mary Clark-Kaiser,  
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Randy Osmun  
Frank Siegel

Monica Sparks  
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## Resource Center News

BY EMMA ROSAUER,  
HUNGER RESPONSE DIRECTOR

Chatting with Sarah Boluyt in the community waiting area of Northwest Resource Center felt comfortable. It seemed more like a living room than a waiting room to me and I absorbed my surroundings as we talked; mellow green walls, soothing accent colors, festive table décor, an alcove dedicated to entertaining children, and tables and chairs set up to facilitate community conversations. The set-up of the waiting area not only allows pantry patrons to feel comfortable as they pass the time, it also allows Sarah and her Assistant Director Waverly Knight to take advantage of the leisurely atmosphere by conducting client interviews in the waiting area. Sarah disclosed that, “When you’re sitting across a big desk from someone it feels like business, it makes the individual feel like you’ve got the authority and power and it’s intimidating for them.” Sitting beside a client and protecting their privacy is conducive to a personal, two-sided, and respectful interaction. Individuals tend to open up more and see Sarah as a friend who can be confided in rather than as an imposing authority.

But it’s not only the waiting area that provides a homey, welcoming atmosphere. The entire pantry process at Northwest is relational. The moment an individual walks in they are greeted by a friendly smile and clear direction. Upon entering the waiting area they are offered coffee and interaction by a volunteer. When ready to interview and receive food they are guided along and assisted by a personal shopper who explains the process and helps select food and pack it.

The full cart is rolled out the door by yet another kind volunteer and the individual is again given a smile as they leave the resource center. There is no room for any person who enters to feel intimidated, anxious, or unwanted. Sarah beams as she talks about her volunteers and their commitment to the community as they build relationships with the neighbors that come in. They make sure to take time to sit and sip coffee with the individuals in the waiting area, and they are always ready to pray with anyone.

Northwest is truly focused on the needs of their neighbors as they reach into the northwest neighborhoods of Grand Rapids. One exciting initiative is an aerobic work-out program that Sarah conducts three days a week after Resource Center hours. She opens the program to anyone and invites clients to participate. Sarah takes the opportunity to build relationships with the neighbors that join her for the work-out and in doing so she also successfully promotes healthy lifestyle choices.

From work-out routines to a comfy “community living room,” Northwest is a client-centered ministry and functions as a beacon of light to empower the community it serves.



THE NORTHWEST FOOD PANTRY IN ACTION

# The Access CONNECTOR

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[www.AccessofWestMichigan.org](http://www.AccessofWestMichigan.org)

Access of West Michigan  
750 First Street NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504



## Access of West Michigan

Providing a place at the table

### Access Staff

Bruce Schlanderer, *Executive Director/CEO*  
Marsha DeHollander, *Program Director*  
Lindsay Griffis, *Development Director*  
Emma Rosauer, *Hunger Response Director*  
Nicole DeVries, *Poverty Education Director*  
Marcia Szumowski, *Casework Services Director*  
April Oglesby, *Caseworker*  
Jan Stine, *Office Manager and Caseworker*  
Jeni Berndt, *Food Stamp Outreach Coordinator*  
Shelly Helmus, *Communications Coordinator*

### Contact Information:

Access of West Michigan is located in  
The Goodwill Hartley Center  
750 First St NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
Phone: (616) 774-2175  
Fax: (616) 988-8714  
Office Hours: Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm

# CALENDAR

\*  
Wednesday, 7.7.10  
1:00pm  
**Poverty  
Simulation**

This simulation will  
be held at Davenport  
University.

\*  
Tuesday, 8.24.10  
7:00pm  
**OSM Workshop:  
Benevolence 101**

This workshop will  
be held at Sherman  
Street Church. Please  
contact [caseworker@  
accessofwestmichigan.org](mailto:caseworker@accessofwestmichigan.org)  
for more details.

\*  
Tuesday, 9.21.10  
6:00-8:30pm  
**Poverty  
Simulation**

This simulation will  
be held at Davenport  
University.

\*  
Saturday, 10.9.10  
**County Wide  
Food Drive**

\*  
Tuesday, 10.12.10  
1:00pm and  
7:00pm  
**OSM Workshop:  
Benevolence 101**

This workshop will  
be held at Keystone  
Church (655 Spaulding  
Ave SE, Ada). Please

contact [caseworker@  
accessofwestmichigan.org](mailto:caseworker@accessofwestmichigan.org)  
for more details.

\*  
Tuesday  
11.9.10  
12:00pm  
**OSM Workshop:  
Safety**

This workshop will be  
held at Fifth Reformed  
(2012 Griggs St SE).

\*  
Thursday  
11.11.10  
9:30am-12:00pm  
**Poverty  
Simulation**

This simulation will be  
held at Aquinas.

### Want to Volunteer?

Are you looking for  
a great volunteer  
opportunity?

### Access could use your help!

We send out various  
mailings throughout the  
year, and we are hoping  
to create a list of willing  
volunteers to help us  
prepare these mailings!  
If you're interested or  
have any questions,  
please contact [shelly@  
accessofwestmichigan.org](mailto:shelly@accessofwestmichigan.org)  
or 774-2175 x9.