

2009

Food Pantry Network of Kent County:
Annual Report

“Ensuring No One
Goes Hungry”



ACCESS of West Michigan Food Pantry Network of Kent County Annual Report for 2009

2009 was an unprecedented year. Michigan, along with much of the rest of the nation, experienced the greatest economic downturn since the depression. Kent County's unemployment rate is over 15% and the Department of Human Services reported a 20% increase (43,633) in food assistance cases. Food pantry services did not increase as much as expected, though we have experienced increases greater than 10% each of the last several years. Those pantries whose services increased served people who lived primarily in rural and suburban areas, indicating that the "new poor" may be finding their way to pantries for the first time. Of all pantries, The Salvation Army Booth Family Services "all-county" pantry experienced the largest increase in services provided (19%).

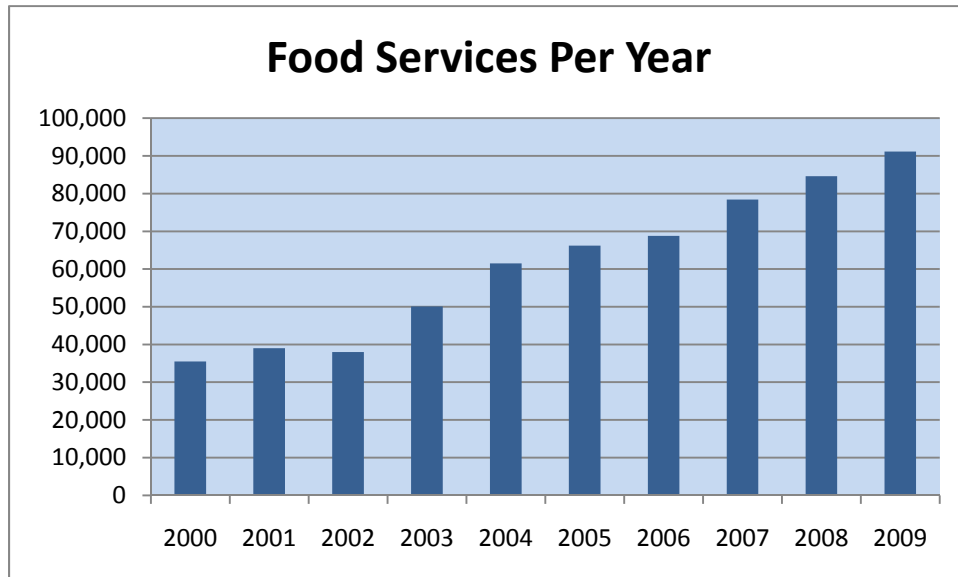
Holiday Giving Network food basket requests decreased about 5% from last year's all time high. We matched over 7500 applicants to providers. Management of toy registration was moved to the toy providers this year. All but two of the Pantry Resource Centers continued to take toy applications. Basket providers were also down slightly as some previous donors were unable to donate this year.

We are grateful for increased resources which allowed us to expand capacity throughout the Pantry Network. Utilizing *Essential Needs Task Force* (ENTF) funds (administered by the *Grand Rapids Community Foundation*), \$160,000 was provided through ACCESS for freezers, coolers, a hi-lo, a van, shelving and increased staffing that enabled pantries to serve all who came to them. Additional funds were provided directly to pantries. ENTF also partially funded the ACCESS Food Stamp Outreach worker. We added the Unemployment Office (UIA) as an outreach site. The worker assisted with 500 applications at the UIA office and pantry locations.

Other resources included \$50,000 in federal stimulus dollars (administered by the *Heart of West Michigan United Way*) that ACCESS received to purchase food for pantries over the summer months. The annual County Wide Food Drive, *TV 13 Food for Families*, and Care Week drives collected over 250 tons of food. Two new major events, *TV 8 Christmas in May* and *Rivertown Crossings Mall's 10th Anniversary* food drive, further helped to support the pantry network by bringing in large amounts of food and personal care items. We are pleased to note that *United Way 211 "Unmet Needs Report"* notes that only 1% of food calls were unmet this year, indicating that we were able to achieve 99% of our goal!

In 2009, the network of nearly one hundred food pantries, including the eleven Pantry Resource Centers, provided 91,134 food services to 19,505 unduplicated households. Food services include mobile food services, commodities food, formula, supplemental food, and special health referrals through the Nutritional Options for Wellness (NOW) program. Total food services increased 7% from 2008. Pantries provided a total of 176,917 multiple services for food, clothing, holiday baskets and other referrals (a 6% increase) to 500,887 individuals. Included were 281,148 adults and 219,739 children. Nearly 1/3 of those clients coming to pantries visited for the first time.

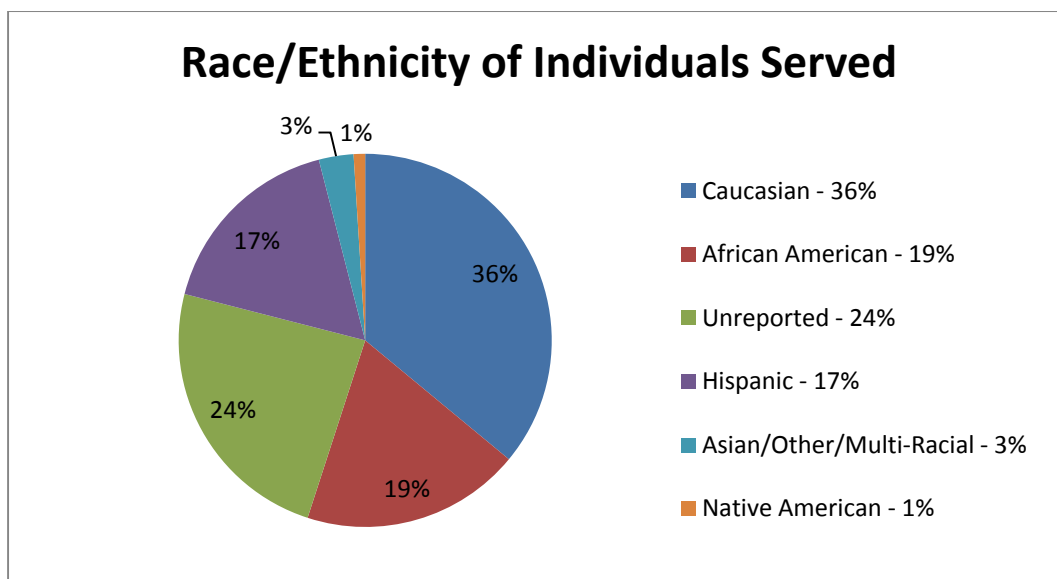
The following chart shows food services provided for the past ten years.



Demographic Information

The largest percentage of households served is single parents with minor children (20%), followed by singles (19%), and then couples with minor children (17%). Family size for all reporting pantries averages three members per household.

Those utilizing food pantries three times per year or fewer make up 79% of all households served. Of all households, 59% visit once, 12% visit twice, 8% visit three times and 8% visit more than seven times. Those who visit often have significant barriers that prevent them from increasing their income. Pantries served 6,078 new, unduplicated, households.



Pantry Resource Center Highlights

Baxter Community Center: Baxter Marketplace was truly blessed this holiday season with many wonderful donations from organizations, individuals and churches. This is an indication of our community's generous giving.

Byron Community Ministries: Household sizes have increased dramatically as adult children are moving in with parents. They continue to be thankful for strong support from their churches and community as they witness God's hand in leading this ministry.

John Knox Pantry: At the end of last year, it was questionable if the pantry could continue to operate after June. Due to the generosity of many individuals, businesses and churches and a grant from ENTF, they were able to remain open and even purchase a new van. God works in many ways and has provided the food, support and faithful volunteers to enable them to carry out their mission.

North End Community Ministry: NECM has two client choice pantries serving over 750 families per month. Partnering with Spectrum Health, the Nutritional Options for Wellness (NOW) pantry serves an average of 20 families each month and is researching how to improve the selection of food choices to add more fresh and higher protein products.

North Kent Service Center: The demand was even greater this year but NKSC was able to meet the need with the help of the surrounding northern communities of Rockford, Cedar Springs, Sparta, Sand Lake, and Kent City. The ENTF grant allowed them to increase capacity through equipment expansion. They were truly blessed and able to assist 10,685 families.

Northwest Pantry: They expanded hours this summer in order to serve more clients. A satellite support pantry was started in Comstock Park to help clients in that area save on gasoline. Meijer's gift card program assisted with food pantry purchases and holiday basket needs. God continues to bless the pantry with volunteers, financial contributions and food donations.

South End Community Outreach Ministry: In 2009, SECOM had an increase of 6,550 individual services compared to 2008. Their infant Pantry took great steps toward child development, offering parent and child activities, healthier eating option and much more! They hope to offer more client services in 2010.

The Other Way Ministries: TOW food pantry seeks to advocate for their neighbors by viewing each one who comes to them as a gift to their community, a voice to be listened to and a heart that needs to know Jesus. We are all in need together.

The Salvation Army Booth Family Services: Serves anyone in the county and is open 5 days per week. The pantry served 4,692 households (13,454 people). They also provide clothing, household items, emergency utility shutoff assistance and homeless prevention assistance from their East Fulton location.

United Church Outreach Ministry: UCOM has focused on improving clients services through expanded pantry hours and efficiency training. Homework House serves over 150 students each semester. Their Spanish financial skills program graduated over 150 people. Clients are encouraged to build self-esteem and marketable skills by volunteering in all programs.

Westminster Pantry: Received a large contribution which was used to purchase additional freezers and refrigerators. The pantry also increased contributions made in memory of deceased members.

Thanks to our Partners!

Pantry Resource Centers and Neighborhood Support Pantries continue to bless our community by providing comprehensive and compassionate services to thousands in Kent County.

Pantry Donors, including individuals, congregations, schools, businesses and community agencies, provide the support we need to sustain this essential basic safety net for our neighbors.

Feeding America continues to provide major quantities of cost effective food resources to many hunger fighting agencies, which allows us to maximize our resources and serve more families.

GRACE Hunger Program and the annual Hunger Walk recruits over 1,000 partners to walk together and raise thousands of dollars for international and local hunger relief efforts.

The Grand Rapids Press, WCSG Radio, Mercantile Bank, Two Men And A Truck, Kentwood Packaging, and Spartan Stores provide unique and valuable support for the annual County Wide Food Drive which involves over 1,000 volunteers and collects nearly 90 tons of food.

WZZM TV 13, along with Spartan Stores, provides major sponsorship for the 13 Food for Families summer food drive, collecting over 250,000 pounds of food in one week!

Wood TV 8 provides creative sponsorship of the "Christmas in May" personal care items drive.

Kent County Essential Needs Task Force provides leadership, coordination, and vision in developing a community-wide response to community hunger issues.

United Way 211 makes timely and helpful referrals to pantries and other community resources to thousands of people each year and administered the stimulus funds for the Pantry Network.

Kent County Department of Human Services (DHS) funds the Food Stamp Outreach Program, provides ENTF leadership, and gives incredible support for our community's most vulnerable residents year round.

It is with deep appreciation that we acknowledge and thank our many hunger-fighting partners in Kent County. Together, we have risen to the challenge of responding with hope and compassion despite an extremely challenging time. May God richly bless you and the people we serve in Jesus' name.

Marsha DeHollander
ACCESS Program Director