

FOODFORTHOUGHT

LATE WINTER/EARLY SPRING 2025



MEET BRITTANY

Brittany first visits KLF with her suitcase in hand, appearing both agitated and tired. “I am fairly new to Kalamazoo,” she shares. “This was supposed to be a fresh start, but I am having trouble landing on my feet.” Brittany states that she moved to Kalamazoo for a new job, but the position fell through at the last minute. She was counting on the money from her first paycheck to put a deposit on an apartment. Without those funds and a paystub to show employment, she is unlikely to find a rental anytime soon. While she is looking for work, she has been sleeping outside or with people she meets who offer a couch for the evening. KLF staff provide Brittany with food that doesn’t require cold storage or cooking and gives her a list of resources in Kalamazoo County that can help her get settled.

MEET KAIDEN

Kaiden connects with KLF via email stating, “Please forgive my email as I’m embarrassed to call to schedule a pickup. I’m emotional about asking for help right now.” Kaiden continues to share that he lost his job several months prior and has been living off withdrawals from his 401K, which is nearly depleted. “I am a single father of four daughters and a lifelong resident of Kalamazoo.” Kaiden shares that he has never received food from KLF before and can’t believe he is at the point of asking for assistance. “It would help my daughters a ton while I try to find work.” Kaiden’s daughters are 15, 10, and 7-year-old twins.



MEET LILLY

Lilly is a single mother of two young boys. She was mostly making ends meet, even though some months there was very little money left. On May 7, 2024, however, everything changed. Lilly and her two children were displaced from their apartment after a destructive tornado charged through Portage. While her family was physically unharmed, the roof was torn off their apartment and most of their possessions were destroyed. “We literally lost everything,” shares Lilly. Finding a new place to live proved to be difficult. “We finally found someone to rent to us after being turned down by about twenty places because my income was too low,” Lilly continues. Unfortunately, the cheapest place she could find was still \$350 more per month than her previous apartment. This upheaval and change have been difficult for everyone, especially for Lilly’s son that has a disability and does best with consistency. “We just really need help right now,” Lilly states. KLF schedules a home delivery for Lilly and her family, making notes of the food items that work best for her son. Lilly expresses her gratitude for the delivery option, “My car is broken down right now, and it may be a few months before I can come up with some way of fixing it.”



While the client stories featured above are true, their names and images have been changed for anonymity.

A NOTE FROM JEN

For this newsletter, we spoke with our Associate Director, Greta Faworski. Greta has been a member of the KLF team since 2014. She oversees fund development, marketing, volunteer management, and program services. We asked Greta about the challenges and opportunities facing KLF throughout 2025.

— Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director



L to R: Jim VandenBerg, Randi DeSantis, Greta Faworski, and Abby VandenBerg celebrate the success of the Maple Hill Holiday Parade.

Q: Food and monetary donations are essential to keep KLF operational. Has KLF been able to secure enough donations to meet the growing demand for service?

A: Our community is incredibly generous. Ranging from a neighborhood lemonade stand to corporate grants, people of all ages and walks of life support the KLF mission. In addition to monetary gifts, we received food donations last year that, in total, were valued at nearly \$1 million dollars. That's the beauty of KLF. For over 40 years, it has been about neighbors helping neighbors through rocky times.

The challenge we face is that demand for food assistance is outpacing the growth in food and monetary donations. **In the past two years, our service numbers have increased by 56% while our**

revenue increases, on average, 3-4% each year. Our team makes little adjustments that allow us to meet the growing requests for food assistance, including reviewing the core food list and changing quantities slightly so we can still serve everyone who reaches out with the inventory on hand.

Q: You have been at KLF for over 10 years. What changes have you seen in regard to donations and volunteering?

A: Over the past 10 years, there has been an increase in donors using non-traditional giving methods, including donations from IRA accounts, donor advised funds, and stock. Monthly giving has also significantly increased because it offers the ability to budget charitable giving throughout the year. Donors can set up recurring monthly donations through credit card, direct debit, PayPal, or bill pay. We accept donations through all of these giving methods and are happy to provide donors with the opportunity to give in a way that makes sense for them.

Volunteers are the mighty force behind our mission and the bedrock on which KLF was founded. We have amazing volunteers who support our work, contributing not only helping hands, but also bringing joy and inspiration to our work. However, it has become increasingly difficult for us to find volunteers who can help on a recurring basis and, consequently, we have created additional staff positions to fill in the gaps.

Q: How can someone get more involved at KLF?

A: Taking a tour is a great place to start. Nearly everyone who walks through our doors discovers that KLF supports the community in ways they didn't even realize. There is a place for everyone who wants to get more involved, whether it's through food and fund donations, volunteering, or advocacy for our work. Reach out today — we would love to talk to you!



For more information about **donating** to KLF or setting up a tour, contact **Greta at 269-488-2617 x208** or greta@kzoolf.org



For more information about **volunteering**, contact **Jillian at 269-488-2617 x209** or jillian@kzoolf.org



DID YOU KNOW?

96% of KLF's funding is secured from local individuals, businesses, faith-based organizations, and foundations.



Abonmarche Byce
"CAN-struction"



DeNooyer
Automotive Family



K'zoo Folklife Organization



Caliber Collision



CORT Furniture



Thank You!

We appreciate the steadfast generosity and support from our volunteers, donors, and community partners!



WMU Women's Golf Team



Volunteer Halloween Fun



First Congregational Church



National Credit Union Association



Greenleaf Hospitality Group



Maple Hill Holiday Parade



Nulty Insurance



KC Feeds Kzoo



KAMSC



KC Feeds Kzoo Planning at KLF



AmeriCorp Volunteers



Pfizer



KC Feeds Kzoo at West Main Harding's



College Hunks Helping with Food Drive Pick Ups



Tillers International Fall Harvest



Pactiv Evergreen



Service Express



Picking Up Victorian Bakery Donations



Kalamazoo County Farm Bureau Doe Derby



Welcome to the Team

We are pleased to announce new additions to our staff and Board of Directors



Josiah Taylor (JT)



Ben Hietala and Reese Light



Seth Miller



Matt Galletti



Mickey McMahon

Josiah Taylor, Ben Hietala, and Reese Light are our newest **Warehouse Assistants**. In this role, Josiah, Ben, and Reese help deliver orders to pantry sites and mobile food distributions. They also assist with unloading food deliveries and preparing pantry orders. On the Services team, we welcomed **Seth Miller, Matt Galletti, and Mickey McMahon** as our newest **Program Assistants**. Seth helps in all program areas, including conducting home deliveries throughout Kalamazoo County. Matt and Mickey are busy in our Melzer and Douglass pantries, the Call Center, and the walk-up client door. We are excited to have these individuals as part of the KLF team!

Four individuals have recently joined our **Board of Directors**. This dedicated, skilled group of individuals will provide fresh insight and valuable input as we look to the future. Our newest members include **David Gibbs** (First National Bank of Michigan), **Jim Miller** (Cornerstone Technologies), and **Chase Imberger** (Gasaway Investments). **Kim Labadie** (Mercantile Bank) also rejoined the Board of Directors after a brief hiatus.



David Gibbs



Jim Miller



Chase Imberger



Kim Labadie

With Deep Gratitude

We would like to express tremendous appreciation to several board members whose terms expired at the end of 2024 or who had to step away due to other commitments. **Herb Boyer, Morgan Rogalke Scime, Emily Turner Hollman, Mary Marshall, and Carrie Nicholson** were actively involved at KLF during a transformational time in our organization's history. We deeply appreciate their time, valuable input, and dedication to this volunteer leadership role and our community.



HELP FEED KIDS THIS SUMMER

KLF is looking for individuals to help us raise funds for our **Food is Fuel Campaign for Kids** this summer. Without access to school meals, many children and teens face food insecurity during June, July, and August.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? HERE ARE SOME IDEAS:

- Create a fundraiser on social media
- Host an event where guests bring a donation
- Collect donations from your team, book club, service club... wherever you gather!

Fundraising tips and graphics will be available soon on our website. Please contact **Greta at 269-488-2617 x208 or greta@kzoolf.org** if you are interested in supporting our summer campaign for kids!

2024

At a Glance

Food Distributed at
97 Different Locations



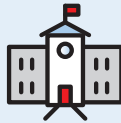
Grocery Pantry Program

194,170 food orders provided (13% increase)
11,068 unduplicated households (9% increase)
38,738 unduplicated individuals (9% increase)
2,712 new households registered (2% increase)
12,971 home deliveries



Mobile Food Distributions

167 food distributions held at 10 locations
13,919 recipients



School-Based Program

33,197 weekend food packs distributed
at 23 schools in 6 districts

1,800 students served monthly
at 15 school-based pantries



Partner Agency Program

40,351 individuals served through pantries or
congregate meals at 20 community agencies



Targeted Outreach

8,285 outreach packs distributed,
primarily to the unhoused

350 commodities boxes delivered monthly,
on average, to low-income seniors

TOP 25

Food Drives in 2024



During 2024, our generous community held over 400 food drives to benefit KLF! Food drives, as well as individual and corporate food donations, provide us with much needed items that are often too expensive for us to purchase. Here are the top 25 food drives* held in 2024 by total pounds:

Kalamazoo Central High School	31,405
Pactiv Evergreen (both locations)	24,944
Western Michigan University Greek Life	8,050
First Presbyterian Church	2,905
Kalamazoo County Farm Bureau	2,745
Rollerworld	1,924
Abonmarche Byce	1,599
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	1,578
St. Ambrose Catholic Church	1,120
Seelye Auto Group	1,073
CORT Furniture	1,052
Advia Credit Union	1,012
True Leaf Cannabis Shop	863
Ascension Borgess	828
Oakland Hills Condominiums	815
Zion Lutheran Church	776
Pinefield Condominiums	724
Westwood Christian Reformed Church	697
Menards	691
Edward Rose & Sons	688
Prab, Inc.	667
Bell's Brewery	658
North Park Reformed Church	630
Metro Toyota	586
Affordable Moving Kalamazoo	584

*Does not include the National Association of Letter Carriers' Food Drive, Community Gardens, or store/farm donations.



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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

<p>SAVE THE DATE!</p>  <p>KALAMAZOO VALLEY CROP WALK Sunday, April 27, 2025 Trinity Lutheran Church</p> <p>Registration begins at 1pm with a 2pm kick off! 25% of all funds raised will be shared with KLF; the remaining funds support global hunger-relief initiatives. Visit crophungerwalk.org/kalamazoomi for more information.</p>	 <p>NALC STAMP OUT HUNGER® FOOD DRIVE Saturday, May 10, 2025</p> <p>Simply leave your donation of non-perishable food in a bag near your mailbox, and your letter carrier will do the rest. Follow KLF on Facebook or Instagram for volunteer opportunities and updates!</p>	 <p>KALAMAZOO HOT DOG WALK Friday, May 23, 2025</p> <p>Registration for this fun annual event begins April 11th! Details will be available on social media and at hotdogwalk.com.</p>
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YOUR SUPPORT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE. DONATING TAKES SECONDS AT KZOOOLF.ORG

LATE WINTER/EARLY SPRING 2025

CONNECT WITH US



KALAMAZOO LOAVES & FISHES IS A



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269.488.2617

- Tim Bachman, Warehouse Coordinator
- Jillian Bryant, Volunteer Coordinator
- Mike Cattell, Program & Delivery Assistant
- Greta Faworski, Associate Director
- Leonardo Fernandez, Lead Pantry Coordinator
- Matt Galletti, Program Assistant
- TBD, Program Assistant
- Tiffanie Head, Program & Delivery Assistant
- Kristen Heggie, On-Call Administrative Coordinator
- Ben Hietala, Warehouse Assistant
- Holly Hulfish, Office Manager
- Ibrahim Yahya Ibrahim Ismail, Bilingual Program Assistant
- Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director

- | | | |
|-------------|--|-----|
| EXT. | Larry Kelly, Program & Delivery Assistant | 219 |
| | Katie Kozlowski, Bilingual Program Assistant | 221 |
| 217 | Brian Koenigsknecht, Senior Warehouse Manager | 214 |
| 209 | Alisha Lewis, Program Logistics Coordinator | 219 |
| 219 | Reese Light, Warehouse Assistant | 217 |
| 208 | Erin Lowe, Dev. & Communications Coordinator | 206 |
| 222 | Nate Mattson, Financial Controller | 207 |
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| 219 | Humza Rahman, Program Operations Manager | 210 |
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| 217 | Shymeria Stone, Program Assistant | 221 |
| 224 | Josiah Taylor, Warehouse Assistant | 217 |
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| 213 | Nadina Williams-Barrett, Senior Program Manager | 218 |

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For corrections, mailing updates, or to change how your newsletter is delivered (via USPS, email, or both), please contact **Erin Lowe at 269.488.2617 ext. 206** or **Erin@kzoolf.org**.

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Christina Williams

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