

FOODFOR THOUGHT

SUMMER 2024



MEET KAYLIAH

“We are struggling greatly,” shares Kayliah when she called KLF to schedule an appointment. A mother of four young children, Kayliah is a stay-at-home mom, and her husband works a full-time, first shift job. When scheduling, she expressed interest in KLF’s home delivery program. “We have one vehicle, and it is used for my husband to get to work every day.” Kayliah expressed gratitude for the delivery option, stating that without it, they wouldn’t be able to access any food assistance programs in the community because of transportation barriers.

MEET JOSEPH

After Joseph’s first visit to a KLF pantry, he shared feedback with staff members via email. “This program is saving our lives. I live on disability. Can’t hardly walk or breathe.” Joseph continues to share that he initially didn’t want to call KLF because he felt shameful asking for help. But after a long time of skipping meals and eating unhealthy food because it was inexpensive, he decided to reach out. “No shame. Gave me a couple bags of greens and vegetables. Some other basics. We are so grateful. We will have dinner tonight. I did not ask to get sick. At least as I transition slowly to the other world, we will be less hungry.”



MEET LAUREN

Lauren is a mother to three children ages 11, 5, and 2. She reached out to KLF and shared her challenges finding quality daycare options that have openings, are available when needed, and are affordable. “We are between daycares, and I am not able to work without a sitter,” states Lauren. “Their father works, but his shifts are canceled if there are any wet or cold weather conditions.” Lauren’s husband doesn’t get paid when shifts are canceled. This unpredictability, along with Lauren being unemployed until she finds a sitter, makes it very difficult to pay all their bills. Getting grocery assistance from KLF helps Lauren’s family stay afloat.



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

A NOTE FROM JEN

*Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes' network of pantries allows our organization to serve clients throughout all of Kalamazoo County and its neighboring communities. Located between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, the Richland Pantry, housed at the First Presbyterian Church in the village square, provides a convenient and reliable site for food assistance. We spoke with Pantry Coordinator, **Paul Gobble**, about his experience managing the pantry and its importance for the Richland and Gull Lake area.* — Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director

Q: When did you become a Pantry Coordinator and what was that experience like?

A: I began managing the pantry in early 2020 just before the COVID-19 pandemic. The world stopped for a few weeks, but our pantry was one of the first to bounce back. We were very fortunate that the local Rotary group offered grant support for food insecurity programs. We requested supplies like grocery carts, signage, and traffic cones. Because of the support from the Rotary, we were able to transition to a curbside pantry model. After that, we sensed that our clients were eager to get back to in-person shopping at the pantry, so we worked quickly to get back to the usual operations when it was safe to do so.

Q: What impact does food insecurity have on a small village like Richland? Do you serve clients from nearby locations like Plainwell, Hickory Corners, or Augusta?

A: It's been a learning experience over the past few years. The pandemic made the need for food assistance rather severe, and since then it's brought more attention to food insecurity in our community. It can be overlooked at times, but we also see an increase in need when school is not in session, with the loss of school lunches. There is a clear and consistent need for support.

Thankfully, many people are familiar with Richland, as there is major traffic from commuters, students, and athletic teams. This makes our location accessible and en-route for lots of folks. Being positioned between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek allows us to serve people from all over the greater Kalamazoo County area.

Q: Currently, the Richland Pantry is open three days per week, including one day with evening hours. What works well, and what are the challenges when offering a variety of appointment times?

A: We are so fortunate to have a good, strong group of core

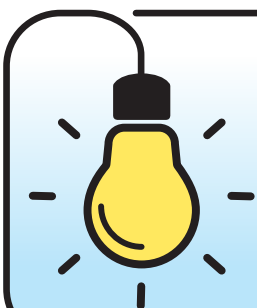


Paul Gobble, Richland Pantry Coordinator

volunteers from First Presbyterian Church. The church also provides an excellent space for the pantry. KLF does a great job of keeping our shelves stocked, but at times we see our stock dwindling during a busy week. With the evening hours, we can support families that find it hard to visit during working hours. The need from our community is constant, and we would like to be able to increase our capacity in the future.

Q: What would you suggest to someone looking to support KLF's pantry network? Do you have specific needs at this time?

A: Food donations provide variety to the pantries and allow us to offer specific items that families are seeking. We can never have enough boxed breakfast cereal. Snacks like crackers and cookies are also requested frequently. In the fall and winter seasons, canned soups are popular and always appreciated. For those who have the time, volunteering is another helpful way to support the work.



DID YOU KNOW?

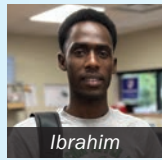
During the summer months, vendors at the **Kalamazoo Farmers Market can donate remaining produce to avoid food waste and support the community. KLF sends its truck to pick up these donations every Saturday at the end of the market.**

A Few Hellos and One Goodbye

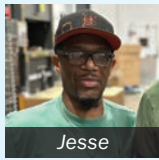
We are excited to introduce several new members to the KLF Staff and Board of Directors!



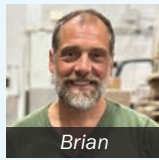
Katie



Ibrahim



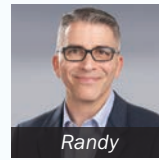
Jesse



Brian



Jeff



Randy

Katie Kozlowski is a new Bilingual Program Assistant, helping with daily program delivery and supporting our Spanish speaking clients. **Ibrahim Yahya Ibrahim Ismail** has also joined the team as a Bilingual Program Assistant, supporting the program team and our Arabic speaking clients. Both Katie and Ibrahim have brought a wealth of social service experience to KLF and have quickly become important members of the staff.

Jesse Bankston is our newest Warehouse Assistant. In his role, Jesse prepares warehouse orders, delivers food to our program partners, and assists with inventory management. Jesse has jumped right in and is making a positive difference already. Also joining the warehouse team is **Brian Koenigsknecht**, our new Senior Warehouse Manager. In this newly created role, Brian will oversee all aspects of the KLF Warehouse, including procurement, vendor relations, inventory management, and effective warehouse logistics. Brian brings many years of warehouse

management and community-focused work experience.

Brian's role replaces our previous Procurement & Inventory Manager, **Jeff Herman**, who left KLF in April. Jeff joined us during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and assisted in nearly every role of the organization during the four years he was with KLF. Thank you for all your hard work, Jeff!

In June, **Randy Ott** became a member of the KLF Board of Directors. Randy is the Senior Director, Academic Collaboration of Merze Tate College at Western Michigan University. After several months assisting our Resource Development Committee, Randy was excited to become deeper involved with KLF at the board level. His work with higher education and his military background brings an important perspective to our organization.

We're thrilled to have these friendly and skilled individuals join our mission. **Welcome to the team!**

MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS

KLF's Mobile Food Distribution Program provides supplemental food items at ten sites throughout Kalamazoo County. An appointment is not required to attend a mobile food distribution. Visiting a KLF mobile distribution does not count as a pantry visit, and our clients are welcome to visit any distribution site.

Stay in the know about all upcoming mobile food distributions by visiting our website. View, share, or download a 6-month calendar of scheduled food distributions by scanning this QR code with a smartphone camera.

Available in English and Spanish, the calendar can be found at kzoolf.org/mobile-food-initiative



IRA CHARITABLE ROLLOVER

The Pension Protection Act of 2006 allows taxpayers age 70½ or older to transfer up to \$100,000 annually from their IRA accounts directly to charity without first having to recognize the distribution as income. The IRA charitable rollover has proven to be very popular with taxpayers and beneficial to charities.

KLF is happy to accept gifts directly from IRA accounts.

To learn more, contact **Greta M. Faworski, Associate Director**, at 269-488-2617 x209 or greta@kzoolf.org today!

RURAL FOOD INSECURITY

As of 2022, 15% of rural households nationwide are experiencing food insecurity, up from 11% previously.

— United States Department of Agriculture

Traveling through the Michigan countryside in the summer months, you may notice tall corn fields, fresh blueberry stands, and asparagus for sale. While these are wonderful offerings, ironically many residents of these communities are struggling to provide enough food for an active and healthy lifestyle. This is food insecurity, and it is on the rise in rural areas across the United States.

As of 2022, 15% of rural households nationwide are experiencing food insecurity, up from 11% previously. This rate of increase was nearly two-thirds greater in rural areas than in metropolitan ones, according to data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Factors that contribute to this issue include distance from and availability of grocery stores, lack of transportation, and low wages or underemployment. Additionally, people of color in rural areas are more likely to face hunger due to long-term inequalities affecting food access.

In small towns, grocery stores struggle to offer healthy selections at a reasonable price while remaining profitable. As a result, rural families are often forced to choose between higher prices and low-quality foods. This becomes a recurring problem when reliable transportation is unavailable, and public transit is nonexistent.

Anti-hunger programs that increase access to nutritious foods are a means to provide relief for rural communities. Federal programs like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and WIC (Women, Infants, Children) provide benefits to those struggling with food insecurity. Free school meals also help bridge the gap when available.

However, we know that these initiatives may not address the need for some families. KLF programs, such as the Mobile Food Initiative and Partner Agency Program, aim to reach rural communities outside the cities of Kalamazoo and Portage. Currently, KLF distributes food through programs in Galesburg, Augusta, Vicksburg, Parchment, Comstock, Schoolcraft, Fulton, Climax, and Scotts. KLF also provides home deliveries to rural areas when transportation is a barrier to nutrition.

Sources: United States Department of Agriculture, Feeding America.



*Thank You
for another great year!*

Donations to the annual Letter Carriers Food Drive help support Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes, the Salvation Army, and Portage Community Center. Many thanks to volunteers and our partners at Advia Credit Union, United Way of South Central Michigan, Lindsey Dedicated Services, and Crown Equipment. Last but not least, we extend our gratitude to the dedicated Letter Carriers and Staff from NALC Branch 246!

TRIBUTES

Generous donations made to KLF in someone's **HONOR** or **MEMORY**. Donations made 4/1/2024 to 5/31/2024.

IN HONOR

Jean & Rod Balazs' Anniversary

Louise & Robert Balazs
M. Suzanne Knecht
Joseph and Loretta McHugh

Susan Beute

Harvey Beute

Julio & Winnifred Forbes Family

Robert & Candis Warner

Arnold F. Hentschl, DVM

Matthew Early
& Mary Hentschl-Early

Jean & Don Johnson

Heather Kakabeeke

Kalamazoo Civil War Round Table

Roxanne & James Frey

Pamela Knowlton

Julie Knowlton
Steven Knowlton

William Mann

Deborah Davis

Bridget Rohs

Elizabeth Rohs

Becky Schmitt

Joe Schmitt

Patricia Schrum

Amy & Mike Schrum
Scott Schrum

Pat J. Shiley

Jean Schultz

Jack & Roy Ann Smith

Donna Emerson

Kalamazoo Syrian Refugee Families

Karen Ann Klott

Scott & Matthew Williams

Lawrence & Jodine Bogdas

IN MEMORY

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Katie Smith

Marshall Beachler

Ms. Charlotte Hubbard
Mary Norris

Lori Ann Bell

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John Biljum

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Maggie Binns

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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.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!



KLF prepares for a 5-10% increase in service demand during the summer, with August being our busiest month of the year. Every donation to our Food is Fuel Summer Campaign helps children have adequate fuel to reach their full potential. As you consider a gift this summer, please know that:

- **KLF serves over 800 people each day** through our pantry network, home delivery program, and mobile food distributions
- In the past year, **our service numbers have increased by 39%**
- Since 2021, **KLF has experienced a 150% increase in food costs**
- Knowing that many kids are preparing their own meals during the summer, KLF provides easy-to-cook, kid-friendly foods for families who need it

Thank you for your support and generosity! Visit kzoolf.org to donate today!

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE. DONATING TAKES SECONDS AT KZOOOLF.ORG

SUMMER 2024

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KALAMAZOO LOAVES & FISHES IS A



STAFF/BUSINESS OFFICE

269.488.2617

- Tim Bachman, Warehouse Coordinator
- Jesse Bankston, Warehouse Assistant
- Jillian Bryant, Volunteer Coordinator
- Mike Cattell, Program & Delivery Assistant
- Greta Faworski, Associate Director
- Leonardo Fernandez, Lead Pantry Coordinator
- Heather Hageman, Program Assistant
- Tiffany Head, Program & Delivery Assistant
- Kristen Heggie, On-Call Administrative Coordinator
- Holly Hulfish, Office Manager
- Ibrahim Yahya Ibrahim Ismail, Bilingual Program Assistant
- Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director

EXT.

- 217 Larry Kelly, Program & Delivery Assistant 219
- 217 Katie Kozlowski, Bilingual Program Assistant 221
- 209 Brian Koenigsknecht, Senior Warehouse Manager 214
- 219 Alisha Lewis, Program Logistics Coordinator 219
- 208 Erin Lowe, Dev. & Communications Coordinator 206
- 222 Nate Mattson, Financial Controller 207
- 221 Humza Rahman, Program Operations Manager 210
- 219 Suzi Secondi, Warehouse Manager 211
- 221 Shymeria Stone, Program Assistant 221
- 224 Myah Van Til, Program Navigation Coordinator 201
- 221 Allison Triplett, Program Assistant 221
- 213 Nadina Williams-Barrett, Senior Program Manager 218