



Sack Supper Sentinel

The Newsletter of Kids' Food Basket

Volume 6, Issue 3 - December 2009

Attacking Childhood Hunger

MISSION STATEMENT:

We exist to ensure that children in our community don't go to bed hungry.

Childhood hunger hurts. It denies dignity, lessens human energy, erodes community stability and impairs the potential of children to achieve. **To break this cycle of hunger, Kids' Food Basket of Grand Rapids is committed to providing healthy, tasty, efficient and cost effective sack suppers to children who are nutritionally at-risk.**



As a community based volunteer organization, our volunteers, ages 5 to 95, come from all walks of life to give their time, talent and treasure to end hunger amongst our children. We seek to provide life sustaining meals to those in need and to silence the pain that hunger brings.

Local Companies Have Fun While Supporting Local Kids

When feeding over 2,000 children every school day, Kids' Food Basket (KFB) depends on the generosity of local businesses and service organizations. Golf outings and other team-building events are a great way to have fun while attacking childhood hunger in Grand Rapids.

KFB is one of the favorite charities of the **Golden K Kiwanis of Grand Rapids**. This senior service group has been supporting KFB through their popular golf outing for five years. This year, Judge Sara Smolenski golfed and emceed the event at Scott Lake Golf Course, which raised over \$6,800. The members support the outing by actually golfing in it, which is impressive since their average age is 80 years. When asked about the quality of golf, Golden K Kiwanis board member Bonnie Nawara said, "We always have some pretty low scores. They give me a run for the money every year."

Trigo Hospitality held its annual golf outing in September at the Thornapple Pointe Golf Course in Grand Rapids. The event included managers and team members from its local Pizza Hut, Panera Bread, and Sonic Drive In franchises. Marketing Director Brian Campbell said that it was an easy decision to support KFB. "Many of us have children and it really hits home to hear about kids in our community going without essential things," said Campbell. Trigo Hospitality was proud to present KFB with a \$3,000 check.



After hosting golf outings for 20 years, the **Campbell Group** decided to break tradition. The insurance agency organized a "BBQ Extraordinaire" for insurance carriers and other business partners. The event included a classic barbecue feast as well as a modified dunk tank, chipping contest, miniature golf course, and a hole-in-one contest in and around their building. Each activity required a charitable donation, matched by Campbell. Over \$3,000 was raised for KFB. Executive Administrator Judy Rigsby noted, "We greatly value the services Kids' Food Basket provides for at-risk children in our community."

Every June, **Williams and Company** hosts a free golf outing for over 140 school administrators and business managers at the breathtaking St. Ives Golf Club in Stanwood. The company donates the proceeds from the outing's 50/50 raffle to KFB. When added to the money raised by the company's staff at Christmas, which are matched by owner Rich Williams, the gift tops \$1,000. Office Manager Judy Kooistra said, "When it comes to supporting KFB, Rich's heart is in the right place, even if his golf ball is always in the trees."

If you would like to learn how your company or service group can support Kids' Food Basket, please contact us at kidsfoodbasket@kidsfoodbasket.org, 616-235-4532, or contact KFB's Founder, Mary K. Hoodhood at 616-363-2777.

Remembering our Friends

This past year, Kids' Food Basket lost four dear friends who were tireless champions and supporters of its work to provide food insecure children with nutritious sack suppers.

Carrie Rosen was one of the original volunteers when Kids' Food Basket started packing sack suppers in 2001. She found KFB through the community service work of Congregation Ahavas Israel in Grand Rapids. Not only was she a dedicated weekly volunteer for 8 years, she initiated contact with the Kent County Medical Society Alliance. Their charity ball, which will be held February 6, 2010 at the Cascade Country Club, will benefit KFB. "Carrie was committed, dedicated, and a truly genuine and loving person. We will miss her dearly," said KFB executive director Bridget Clark Whitney.



"My Mom was an active volunteer with many Grand Rapids organizations. From sewing costumes to making sack suppers, applying for grants and planning events, she gave her time and financial support while working hard behind the scenes to help the groups and community she cared deeply about. I'm sure I'm not the only one who thought she was an amazing role model. She was especially concerned with fighting hunger in Grand Rapids and she would have been very happy to know that so many of the donations made in her memory went to Kids Food Basket." said Carrie's daughter, Sheri Rosen.



At 97, Mildred Slagh may have been among the oldest KFB volunteers, but she was one of its most vital supporters. Mildred was a volunteer her whole life who witnessed the needs of others as a registered nurse. She first heard about KFB through her son Jon and his wife Pam. She began supporting KFB and continued to help when she moved to the Sentinel Point Retirement Community. She arranged for the chapel to donate to Kids' Food Basket and she got the other residents to decorate hundreds of paper sack supper bags. According to Jon, "She encouraged all her other children to get involved. We all continue that support to this day. KFB was very important to my mother."

Patrick O'Brien, DDS was KFB Founder Mary K Hoodhood's longtime friend as well as her dentist. He was an avid outdoors man who sadly passed away unexpectedly. He was a great supporter of KFB for the past 7 years. He always attend the Feast for Kids event and purchased tickets for other to attend as well. Dr. Pat was a great champion of Kids' Food Basket in the Grand Rapids community.



Eric Reynolds, executive chef at Evergreen Commons in Holland, was always a big part of Feast for Kids. The gourmet benefit dinner is hosted every year at Noto's Old World Italian Dining by the American Culinary Federation's (ACF) Grand Rapids Chef's Association. As VP of the ACF, Chef Eric was a vocal supporter of Feast for Kids and KFB. When Chef Eric began to struggle with his liver disease, KFB joined an effort to support him and his family.

Elan Nutrition Partnering with Kids' Food Basket

A few years ago Elan Nutrition experienced tremendous growth managing to pull ahead of their competition; therefore their senior management team decided that it was time to give back to the community. A selection committee was formed and research began to find a partner. "We researched several organizations but wanted to find a group that was a good 'fit' for us" said Liz Margosian, Senior Documentation Specialist - employee of Elan Nutrition and active volunteer at Kids' Food Basket.

"We wanted a tie to nutrition as well as to have an impact in our community." After mentioning her project to a friend, Liz stumbled upon Kids' Food Basket. "The minute our committee started reviewing KFB's mission and their challenges, we knew we found just the right 'fit' for Elan. Nutrition, kids, community ... this was a place where we could make a difference" says Margosian.

Elan has been partnering with KFB for nearly 4 years!! Margosian says that "It is just amazing to see how everyone in the organization has come up with ways to help. Someone is always stepping into my office with an idea for a fundraiser or a donation for KFB."



Elan Nutrition has not only been very creative with their juice box drives, trail mix mixers, decorating sack supper bags, breakfast buffets, bake sales & ice cream socials, but all have been very successful. "When we partnered with KFB they were only making 900 sack dinners a day, sadly the need is up to over 2,000 per day but Elan and our employees are committed to helping KFB any way we can" comments Liz.

This past October, Elan hosted their bi-annual Supplier Day event. This year, not only were the suppliers invited to this event, but Kids' Food Basket was as well. The senior management team decided to challenge the suppliers to support the KFB mission – attacking childhood hunger in Grand Rapids. The suppliers took the challenge to heart and generously gave over \$13,000, equaling over 14,444 sack suppers!!

Way to go Elan team and Suppliers!

Volunteers are the Core of Kids Food Basket!

Autumn has come and brought a flurry of activity here at KFB. The number of sack suppers we are able to assemble each day has increased by almost 30% since last school year. Our volunteer hours have increased to meet this need and in October we recorded 2,460 volunteer hours, a record for KFB! Our Kids Helping Kids program has been an important part of this effort. Over 25% of the volunteer hours were provided by children under the age of 18. During September and October we saw almost 700 children volunteer through KFB to help provide sack suppers to food insecure children in our community. This growth has been made possible by the amazing army of volunteers that continue to support the growing need in our community. Volunteers, you are truly the core of everything we do at KFB!

In this season of gratitude and abundance, we are thankful for the fruits of your labor, for your willingness to branch out and embrace change, and for your dedication to fighting childhood hunger.

What Do You Get??

What do you get when you mix Kids' Food Basket and two of Grand Rapids finest chefs?? You get a combination of innovative and tasty ideas that attack childhood hunger!! Chef Kevin Vander Meer (Michaels & Associates) and Chef Bill Koehl (Wolff Group, Inc.), both members of the incredibly supportive American Culinary Federation Greater Grand Rapids (ACFGGR), discovered KFB almost two years ago and have been providing their time and talents in some of the most amazing ways to help wipe out childhood hunger amongst our local children. You can find the duo in their KFB corporate chef coats at almost every Kids' Food Basket event that involves food. The chefs' spend countless hours creating menus, contacting vendors to get food donated and preparing meals for events including volunteer appreciation day, Connect with KFB events and Youth Advisory Board meetings. Both chefs are also highly involved with the ACFGGR who host the annual Feast for Kids fundraiser. Over the past six years, the Feast for Kids has raised enough funds to provide over 130,000 evening meals for local food insecure children!

Thank you Chef Kevin, Chef Bill and the ACFGGR. Kids' Food Basket appreciates all you do to help us appreciate our volunteers, community partners, friends and staff and all of your efforts to help ensure that kids in GR don't eat lunch as their last meal of the day. Chefs, we can't thank you enough, you are truly making a difference!!



Right to Left - Chef Bill, Mary K Hoodhood, Chef Kevin - 2009 Feast for Kids

Healthy Bodies / Healthy Teeth



Jane Berkey
Operations Manager

Our sack suppers provide fresh fruits and vegetables for healthy minds and bodies. In addition, promoting good dental health is also important.

Kids' Food Basket provides tooth brushes and toothpaste in the "break" bags that are given out

at the beginning of each vacation. We have been told by teachers that these are often the only toothbrushes their students have.

You can help support this endeavor by:

- Donating new kid size toothbrushes and travel size toothpaste
- Making a monetary donation to use for the purchase of these items
- Contact your dentist to see if he or she is able to help with the procurement of these items

Call Jane, KFB Operations Manager, at 235-4532 if more information is needed.

Wish List Items

- 100% fruit juice boxes or pouches
- cracker paks
- granola bars/nutri grain bars
- 100% vitamin C fruit snacks
- sandwich size ziploc baggies
- extra large sandwich bags or 8# bags found at warehouse store

Thank you to the more than 100 weekly and substitute drivers who have stepped up as we continue to increase our sack supper distribution!

We truly appreciate your time and dedication to make sure that more than 2,000 sack suppers get delivered on time each weekday!

We are still in need of weekly drivers on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays to pick up empty delivery bins from different schools in the morning for about an hour. Any size vehicle will work. It's relaxing and a great way to help support Kids' Food Basket!

We are also looking for someone to pick up bananas on Mondays and Wednesdays sometime in the morning. Call Austin at 235-4532 or email austin at ustin@kidsfoodbasket.org for more details if you are interested in any driving opportunities.



Austin Roelofs
Program Assistant

Current Needs:

☉ KFB is looking for community organizations or businesses to help with juice box drives and off site projects. Detailed links to these projects can be found on our web site (www.kidsfoodbasket.org) under the get involved tab. These projects are great because they help Kids' Food Basket with necessary food resources, are very hands-on, enjoyed by volunteers of all ages and are greatly appreciated!

☉ Hunger Takes Flight 2010 is under way! We are looking for school and youth groups who are interested in participating in this exciting Kids Helping Kids event. Contact Kathie at kathie@kidsfoodbasket.org or 235-4532 for more details.

☉ We are excited to have some of our Upward Bound high school students working with the children we serve to facilitate off-site re-packing projects. These projects provide our kids with the opportunity to get involved in their community and serve others through Kids Helping Kids. We are looking for community partners to assist our Upward Bound team in providing this exciting opportunity. Contact Kathie for more information at 235-4532 or Kathie@kidsfoodbasket.org.



Every time a child gets a sack supper, we hear "thank you." That is because elementary school children in Kent County are grateful. They are also smart: They realize that behind each sack supper, there is a face – a volunteer or a donor who cares enough to make this opportunity possible.

By eating the meals, or "sack suppers", they thank the thousands of volunteers, donors and friends who enable KFB to grow along with the growing need.

These free evening meals are vital to the success of our community. Food insecure children are more susceptible to illness and obesity and are more likely to face growth and development problems. As you know, money is tight in Michigan. Families are stretching their dollars further. In some cases, meals are skipped. These sacrifices can threaten the futures of our community's young and vulnerable children.

Kids' Food Basket fills this need by providing free meals to over 2,080 children in 19 schools across Grand Rapids. We have begun our seventh school year of providing sack suppers for food-insecure children in Kent County. We know from the last census (2005-2007) that 18,471 children (ages 6-11) were living in poverty in Kent County. In all likelihood, that number has increased due to the downturn in the economy, particularly in Michigan, over the past two years. In tough economic times, families often turn to the community for help. If you are a food insecure child, you rely on a parent to fill that need. KFB is unique in that it works in tandem with school staff to assess a child's need and to ensure that those children who might otherwise not have a meal at night are nourished.

Through our work, which is only possible because of the generosity of the community, KFB served 341,642 sack supper meals during the 2008/2009 school year. That number is rapidly growing. We've also made improvements to our services. Our sack supper meals are now healthier than ever. We've become very aware in the past year of the increased importance of including healthy food. Lunches now include such items as apples, bananas, berries, snap peas, grape tomatoes, and carrots. The sack suppers we provide children every school day represent at least one-third of their nutritional intake. The Produce for Better Health Foundation reports that most kids need to more than double their current intake of fruits and vegetables. Kids' Food Basket has become an important source of these fruits and vegetables, including a fresh fruit, fresh vegetable, and 100% fruit juice drink box with a sandwich and healthy snack in every sack supper.

Carlos De la Cruz, Summer Program Coordinator for the Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Dept. – Southwest Community Campus (old Franklin School), saw firsthand this summer the importance of sack suppers in the lives of kids.

"For many of the more than 150 kids in our program there is no food at home," said Carlos. "With sack suppers from Kids' Food Basket, they are assured that they will have something to take home to eat before going to bed."

We learned through a survey of elementary school teachers that boys and girls look forward to the sack supper delivery every school day. Letters from students tell us, "Thank you for the food and juice. The food makes my mouth water." Another writes, "Thank you for taking your time to make the sack supper."

Here are a few observations from others who know intimately the needs of children:

"Parents are so appreciative, especially in this economically struggling community. Thanks for providing this program."

---School nurse

"YOU DO NOT NEED TO ASK WHICH CHILD IS HUNGRY because you can see it in their eyes and their actions. They are less attentive in school and this shows on their grades and test scores"

---Teacher

Thank you for supporting Kids' Food Basket. Without your generosity, Kids' Food Basket's volunteer drivers would not be able to greet smiling faces at the end of each school day, and ensure them with a healthy evening meal. We know that times are hard and many very worthy organizations seek your support. Without you and our fabulous volunteers, we would have not hope of serving 2,300 children by June 2010.

We thank you. Our children thank you.

With warm regards,

Bridget Clark Whitney
Executive Director

P.S. You are always invited to visit us! Come and see how Kids' Food Basket works and understand what it takes to make a difference in the lives of nutritionally at-risk children. For an individual or group introduction, please contact Kids' Food Basket at 235-4532 or kidsfoodbasket@kidsfoodbasket.org.

P.P.S. Want to support KFB with a financial gift that provides more meals? You can easily double the impact of your support by sending in a matching gift (see reverse). Thank you for your generosity!



Attacking Childhood Hunger in Grand Rapids

www.kidsfoodbasket.org

Matching gift opportunity from a wonderfully generous donor. Grand Rapids is truly an amazing community! We are excited to tell you that an anonymous donor has stepped forward to donate \$10,000 dollars to Kids' Food Basket if other donors will match the funds. A donation in any amount to help match this donation would be greatly appreciated. If you are sending a check, please mark "matching funds" in the memo. Donations can be sent to Kids' Food Basket, 1203 Butterworth SW, Grand Rapids MI 49504. This incredibly kind gift is being made to fund evening meals for one of the schools on KFB's waiting list. Thank you in advance for your generosity and willingness to help KFB grow.



*Bridget Clark Whitney
Executive Director*

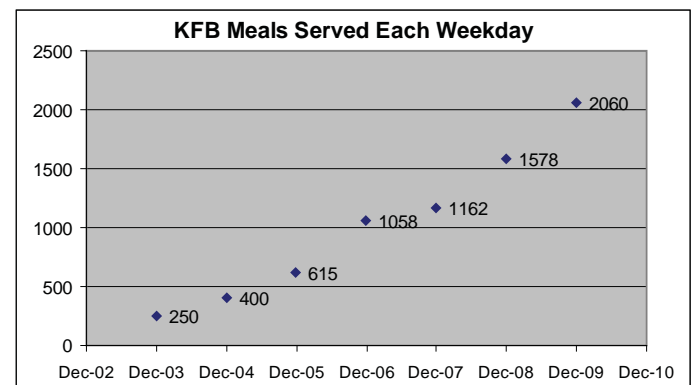
Your donation makes a huge difference! Without your help, lunch could be their last meal of the day.

Fast facts about Kids' Food Basket

- KFB's school year goal is to provide 2,300 evening meals to food insecure children by June 2010. This would reflect a 40% increase in services since June 2009.
- Food insecurity: what is the scope of this problem? In the US: According to a 2006 report by the USDA, 12.6 million children are living in food insecure households. That is 17.2% of all children living in the United States. In Michigan: A study done from 2003 to 2005 by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) found that in Michigan, 11.5% of households are food insecure and 459,304 children live in poverty. In Kent County: Kent County reported 18,471 (34.6%) children ages 6 – 11 living under the federal poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau 2005 – 2007).
- KFB served over 341,600 evening meals last fiscal year (08-09) to kids who are food in-secure.
- 13 Kent County elementary schools remain on a waiting list for sack suppers.
- KFB provides 800-1,000 calories from five food groups in each sack supper.
- One fresh fruit and one fresh vegetable are included in each sack supper along with a meat/cheese sandwich, 100% fruit juice box, fruit cup or pudding cup and healthy snack such as trail mix.
- KFB has over 1,500 volunteers from age 5 to 95. About 80 volunteers work at KFB 6 days each week.
- KFB does not receive any government funding and is not a United Way agency; therefore, all funding is received from caring individuals, families, churches, businesses, civic groups, corporations and foundations.
- KFB serves children who attend schools or summer park programs where 80% or more of students live at or below the poverty level.
- Children are provided with extra food in each Friday sack lunch to provide for weekend nutritional needs.

A look back through the years...

I am encouraged to report to you that KFB is moving into the new year serving 2,080 meals each weekday in response to the rising poverty levels and food insecurity in our community. While reviewing the numbers of children we serve, I took a moment to reflect on past December numbers. Looking at the growth was a poignant reminder of how your generosity has helped KFB amplify its response to the rapidly growing need.





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May your holidays be filled with love, peace and health. Wishing you the best for 2010.
The Kids' Food Basket Staff