



**Ever** more



# Annual Report 2010

**FEEDING  
AMERICA**  
West Michigan Food Bank



## To our **ever**-caring community

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*Nothing endures but change, the philosophers say. Here at the Food Bank, we've heard those words echo profoundly this year. The year-end retirement of John Arnold, our long-term leader, has marked an end to one chapter of the Food Bank, and set the stage for the next phase of fighting hunger.*

*As our local economy has continued to struggle, we have found the need to provide emergency food assistance as strong as ever. Again in 2010 we detributed nearly 25 million pounds of food to agencies from Houghton to Benton Harbor. We hear stories of need and appreciation of support in nearly every community we serve. Hearing these stories and seeing the faces of those seeking help are what keep us focused and energized throughout the year.*

*In this past year we have also had some key milestones to celebrate: Our mortgage on the main warehouse in Comstock Park was paid off. We opened a much-needed new warehouse in Benton Harbor. Also, we launched a website dedicated to supporting our 1,300 anti-hunger agencies, as well as other milestones noted in this report.*

*Finally, late in the year, after John Arnold announced his retirement, the Board of Directors set out to find a new leader: one who embraces the Food Bank's mission and who has the proven skills to steer us through the turbulent forecast ahead. We found that leader in Ken Estelle, a former Rockwell Collins executive. Ken has a stellar business track record and, even more important, a passion for feeding people.*

*Nothing endures but change? We beg to differ. Hunger also endures. But so does the Food Bank's spirit—through the resounding determination of thousands of donors, hundreds of agencies, dozens of staff members and legions of volunteers.*

*This is the West Michigan spirit, too: The never-say-die refusal to let good food go to waste—or to let our neighbors go hungry.*

Kevin Begin, President of the Board

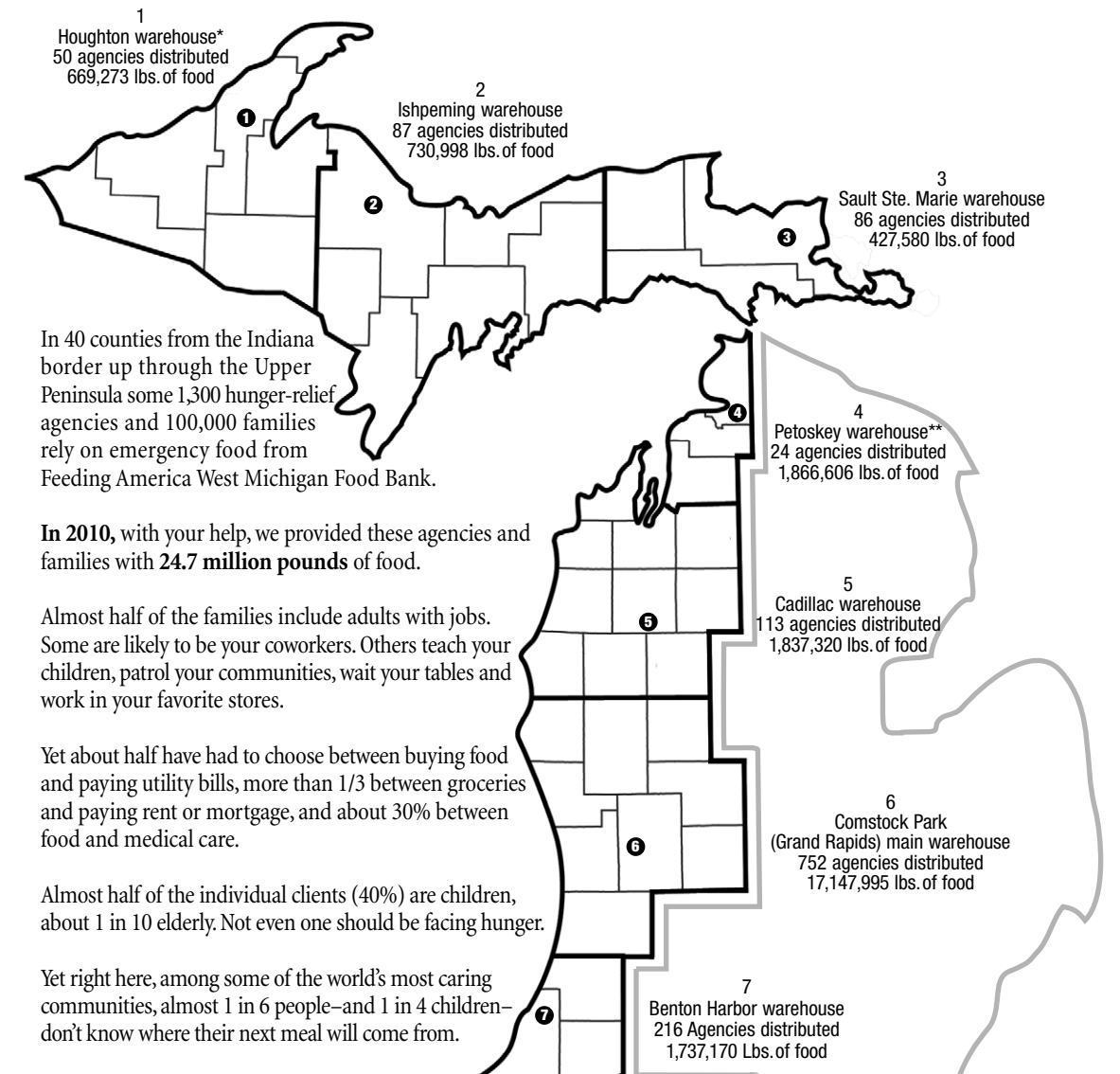
Ken Estelle, Chief Executive Officer



## An **ever**-growing need



### Your Food Bank reclaims and distributes surplus food in one of the nation's hungriest regions.



In 40 counties from the Indiana border up through the Upper Peninsula some 1,300 hunger-relief agencies and 100,000 families rely on emergency food from Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank.

**In 2010**, with your help, we provided these agencies and families with **24.7 million pounds** of food.

Almost half of the families include adults with jobs. Some are likely to be your coworkers. Others teach your children, patrol your communities, wait your tables and work in your favorite stores.

Yet about half have had to choose between buying food and paying utility bills, more than 1/3 between groceries and paying rent or mortgage, and about 30% between food and medical care.

Almost half of the individual clients (40%) are children, about 1 in 10 elderly. Not even one should be facing hunger.

Yet right here, among some of the world's most caring communities, almost 1 in 6 people—and 1 in 4 children—don't know where their next meal will come from.

*Learn more about where the food comes from and the agencies that help distribute it—inspiring stories in their own right—in the following pages.*

\*Warehouse space provided by Western U.P. Food Bank, an affiliate regional agency  
\*\*Warehouse space provided by The Manna Project of Petoskey, an affiliate regional agency

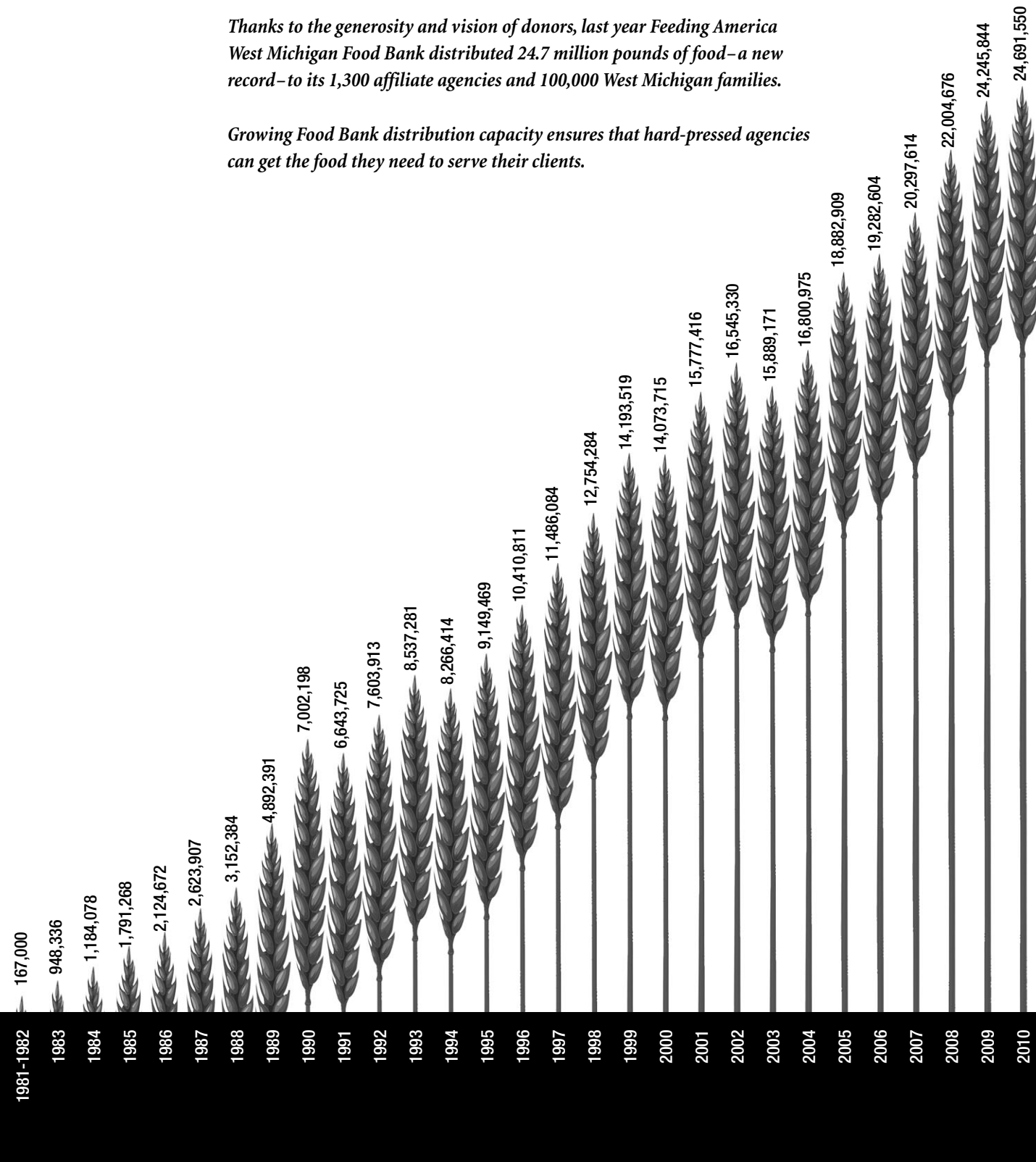




## Ever-increasing capacity

Thanks to the generosity and vision of donors, last year Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank distributed 24.7 million pounds of food—a new record—to its 1,300 affiliate agencies and 100,000 West Michigan families.

Growing Food Bank distribution capacity ensures that hard-pressed agencies can get the food they need to serve their clients.



Good Food, Good Life



## Ever-amazing donors



Perhaps the most eye-opening (and least known) facts about your Food Bank is that we distribute surplus food—good food that would otherwise go straight to landfills.

This high-quality food comes from generous farmers, manufacturers, distributors, stores and restaurants. (See the list of our largest 2010 donors, at right.)

### Good food needs to be eaten.

These donors can't sell this food for various reasons, none of which reduces its quality. Farmers have bumper crops. Manufacturers have package misprints. Wholesalers have transportation problems. Restaurants and stores over-order.

Although it's simpler just to toss surplus food, our donors call us instead. We pick up the food as needed, or they divert their trucks to one of our seven warehouses.

**Big variety, high standards.** The donated food includes tons of fresh produce, meats, dairy, frozen goods and other perishables, along with longer-lasting foods. Donors count on us to sort, store, pack and send it all out safely, in keeping with all industry recalls and in accordance with the highest professional, state and federal standards.

Local agencies count on the donated food to be not only safe, but also affordable. It's important to note, we do not charge agencies for food. Instead, a pennies-per-pound "Shared Maintenance Fee"—about 1/10 of the food's retail value—partly offsets our fuel, fleet maintenance, utilities and other warehousing costs.

**Good food to give?** If you're a farmer, manufacturer, distributor, retailer or restaurateur who'd like to learn more about donating surplus food, contact Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank at 616.784.3250 or visit us online at [FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org](http://FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org).

As a donor, you can take pride in meeting the urgent needs of communities where you do business—and in helping slow the rapid growth of landfills there.

Also, it's important to note that good-faith food donations are exempt from liability under Michigan and U.S. "Good Samaritan" laws. State and federal tax exemptions are also available.

### Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank Largest Product Donors of 2010

Walmart/Sam's Club	2,295,491
Quaker-Tropicana-Gatorade	1,238,329
Spartan Stores	1,216,082
Country Fresh Dairies	846,091
Coca-Cola	719,278
Nestle	718,646
Kraft	613,543
ConAgra	551,776
General Mills	532,388
Gordon Food Service	497,443
H.J. Heinz Co.	341,388
Dannon	321,896
White Wave Foods	284,206
Hillside Orchards	277,625
Kelloggs	272,449
Hearty Fresh Produce	262,167
Marker Farms	261,533
Litehouse	235,951
Sysco	186,128
Abbott Nutrition	180,977
Welch Foods Inc.	177,423
Pearson Foods Corporation	173,051
Pepsi Cola Co.	144,015
Superior Sales	140,966
Van Solkema Produce	140,332
CVS	120,489
Boar's Head Provisions	118,318
Heald's Valley Farms	114,695
Twin City Foods	113,244
Request Foods, Inc	104,792
Woodwyk Casey, Inc.	101,285
Total pounds donated	13,301,997

Hundreds more companies, organizations, and individuals donated an additional 11,573,526 lbs. We greatly appreciate every pound, every donation and every donor!



## Ever-vital volunteers



What would the Food Bank do without its volunteers? Well, we couldn't do nearly as much.

In West Michigan orchards and fields, volunteers pick (or "glean") about 20,000 pounds (10 tons!) of fresh, donated produce each year.

In our warehouses, they sort, pack and label 3.6 million pounds of food yearly—about 15% to 20% of our entire inventory.

Every year, Food Bank volunteers donate about 22,000 hours – saving the Food Bank about \$433,400\* – the equivalent of more than 1,500,000 meals!

\*Source: "State Values for Volunteer Time," www.IndependentSector.org

## Ever-important connections

As noted on page 3, Food Bank food reaches hungry families through 1,300 local hunger-relief agencies. These agencies include food pantries, "soup" kitchens and shelters. Most are run by faith-based organizations. In fact, 84% of pantries, 71% of kitchens and 49% of shelters served by the Food Bank are affiliated with West Michigan churches and other religious groups.

The vast majority of our agencies rely extensively on volunteers. Three quarters of the pantries have no paid employees at all.

These dedicated local workers constantly assess their neighborhoods' emergency food needs, seeking to keep up with demand that changes—and often grows—weekly. Feeding America West Michigan meets their needs almost immediately through a 24/7 online ordering system. (See the article "Ever-Ready Assistance," below.)

Feeding America West Michigan is by far the most important and affordable of food for these agencies, accounting for **67% of the food distributed** by local pantries.

## Ever-ready assistance

For many years, agencies have been able to order weekly from Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank. Two years ago, we launched our 24-hour online ordering system.

In 2010, we introduced our full-service, Agency Website at [www.FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org/agencies](http://www.FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org/agencies). The site not only allows round-the-clock online food orders, but also publishes important, immediate information for agencies (recent food recalls, for instance) and their clients (such as how to get and where to use Michigan "bridge cards," which are now used instead of food stamps).

The Agency Website also helps agency organizers with online forms, requirements and guidance. It provides ready reference on food safety and training (which the Food Bank also provides). And it offers important news on legislation and laws that affect agency operations.

It all helps local leaders run their agencies more efficiently, allowing them more time to help feed their neighbors.



## Everlasting impact

Your support of Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank sends good food to 1,300 local food pantries and other hunger-relief agencies, which in turn provide emergency food to 100,000 hard-hit West Michigan families. Here are some of those families' real stories.

### Ever - appreciative artists

Why do most people know so little about hunger in our region? Artist Rick Beerhorst of Grand Rapids knows two reasons: shock and shame. Although he's now a successful, full-time fine artist, Rick well remembers standing in line with his bride at a local food pantry. "I remember thinking, 'Wait! We don't belong here! I have a master's degree from a Big 10 university!' I was afraid volunteers from our church would see us."

But as he stood there, Rick realized he had much in common with others around him. "Like many people, we had been comforting ourselves with the idea that we were different. But looking around, we realized, at that moment, we were all poor together. We were neighbors suddenly hit by hard times. And I remember thinking, 'Never mind my master's degree. My real education is just beginning.'"

Today Rick, his wife Brenda and their children are some of the Food Bank's most active supporters. He looks back on his time in the food pantry line as a blessing. "Yes, we received food that day but, even more, we received wisdom. And that is truly precious and hard to find."

### Ever affirming faith

No one ever thought Laurie would need help from a food pantry—least of all Laurie herself.

Married for 28 years, mother of three and grandmother of six, Laurie was accustomed to counting her blessings. Her husband had full-time work. She had steady part-time employment and volunteer work she enjoyed—including work at a food pantry. Life was good.

Then her husband's car crashed—and so did life as she knew it.

Although her husband survived, he couldn't work. Her part-time job didn't pay enough. They couldn't afford, but couldn't sell, their home. Bills piled up. Groceries and money ran out simultaneously.

Laurie turned to the food pantry at Buist Community Assistance Center in Byron Center (which our Food Bank helps stock). "I had volunteered in pantries, but I had never had to ask for food," she says.

"Suddenly I realized that, as a volunteer, I had judged food pantry clients. I had had wrong thoughts about them," she recalls, her voice breaking. "And all those thoughts came back to me."

But the staff at the Buist pantry changed her outlook. "They made me feel so comfortable. I didn't feel they were thinking 'that poor thing.' They were just loving and kind."

Today, Laurie's husband is working again, and "it's getting to where we can catch our breath," Laurie says. She looks back on her Buist pantry experience as "one of the biggest blessings the Lord has given me. It increased my faith. It opened my eyes."



# Ever aboveboard



In 2010, for the **third straight year**, Charity Navigator gave Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank its **highest, four-star rating**. This “Exceptional” designation means that Feeding America West Michigan “consistently executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way . . . and outperforms most charities in America.”

Charity Navigator, America’s best-known charity rating organization, uses data-driven analysis to determine which organizations are most worthy of public trust. *Forbes*, *Business Week* and *Kiplinger’s Financial* magazines, among other trusted sources, have acclaimed the agency’s methods and evaluations.

In keeping with those high standards, here are our financials for Fiscal Year 2010.

