

Mobile Pantries

# Mobile Pantries go into high gear against hunger.



Mobile Pantries

  
**FEEDING  
AMERICA**  
West Michigan Food Bank

## SUDDENLY “FAST FOOD” TAKES ON A WHOLE NEW MEANING.

In a perfect world, food would go from food banks to people faster than it could spoil.

But in the real world, a truckload of ripe fruit can roll into our warehouse late on Friday—hours after food pantries have made their pick-ups that week. Sometimes we get more perishables than our affiliated pantries can store. And some communities that desperately need food pantries don't have them.



That's why we created Mobile Pantries. Inspired by a beer truck, these refrigerated delivery vehicles first hit the road here in 1998. Since then, they've distributed about 60 million pounds of food.

Today, our Mobile Pantries deliver 8.6 million pounds of food per year in high-need parts of our service area.

And, inspired by ours, more than 115 other U.S. food banks now have Mobile Pantries too.

# How Mobile Pantries reduce hunger, food waste and costs in our region.

*The Food Bank reclaims surplus food from growers, manufacturers, truckers, stores and restaurants. Most of those goods (about 24.5 million pounds a year) are regularly shipped to more than 1,300 food pantries, soup kitchens and other hunger-relief agencies in our 40-county service area.*

*But, as needed, another 8.6 million pounds go directly to hungry families via our Mobile Pantries—a quick, easy, inexpensive way to help meet our region's fast-growing need.*

## **How we roll.**

Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank drives the truck where the food is needed.

At a pre-arranged site, a host agency—such as a local church or service organization—distributes the goods directly from the truck.

Local folks who need food gather at the site, notified by the local agency. The agency makes a measurable impact on community hunger—without having to transport or store any products.



## **What we bring.**

Each load includes 5,000 to 10,000 pounds of groceries, typically including fruit, vegetables, dairy products and baked goods, plus non-perishable staples we have on hand.

That's about four days' supplemental groceries for 100 to 200 families. It's always a varied assortment, and made up of seasonal produce and other high-quality groceries we have on hand.

When the truck arrives, host agency volunteers set up tables and load them with product. Clients walk around just as they would at a farmers' market, selecting the goods they can use.

Our goal is for every family in need to walk away with about 50 pounds of groceries their household will use. This ensures that very little, if any, of the product will go to waste.

## **What you need.**

Any church or other 501(c)(3) non-profit organization can sign up to arrange a Mobile Pantry visit. You don't need an established food pantry, or even a building.

In fact, you can just "borrow" a parking lot for an afternoon. Many schools and churches will be happy to let you use theirs on a day when they have no scheduled events.

We'll ask your local agency for just enough to cover our fuel, truck maintenance, driver and other staff costs, which we'll figure in advance based on what you need.

Typically, each distribution costs about \$450 to \$800—not bad for a three—or four—day supply of groceries for 100 to 200 families!

## **How to host a Mobile Pantry.**

Once you book a Mobile Pantry visit, it's a good idea to send announcements to local schools and churches. See if the schools will send leaflets home with children.

You'll need about eight folding tables, plus about a dozen volunteers to set up and staff them.

Your volunteers will also help unload the food, direct traffic, answer questions and make sure the site is clean afterwards.



To learn more call Nancy Ullrey, Jude Smith or Nancy Watson at (616) 784-3250.

To schedule a Mobile Pantry visit call Jerry Knapp at (616) 784-3250.

Or send any one of them an email, using the person's first name and last initial and the domain name [FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org](mailto:FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org) (for example, [nancyu@FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org](mailto:nancyu@FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org)).