

Mission:
To provide a nutritious daily meal to the hungry of the area, as well as to provide a safe and sheltered place for social gathering.



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There is more long-term help here than you realize.

Matt and Robert are two Soup Kitchen guests. Both men had been living in the Men's Shelter, but Robert now has a job and his own apartment. I asked the men how they feel about the Soup Kitchen, and that question opened the flood gates.

They said, "There is more long-term help here than you realize. This welcoming place allowed me to have a semblance of normal." Both men started explaining that they had gotten to know each other by coming to have lunch in the Soup Kitchen, not by being in the shelter together.



Robert continued, "Now that I have my own place away from here, this is the first place I came back to." I asked them to tell me more about what the Soup Kitchen means to them. This is what they shared:

The Soup Kitchen offers the opportunity of help. It offers a good meal. The Soup Kitchen goes above and beyond, helping with little things like giving me a pen and paper, faxing a document for me, letting me use a phone and computers for free. The Soup Kitchen is consistent. I like to keep coming back here; it is a calm refuge for me. The Soup Kitchen always makes me feel welcome. It is like a vacation – a restful meeting place for people. I look forward to coming here. Robert said that the worst part about his new job is that he cannot get to the Soup Kitchen for lunch.

I teased Robert a little about that. Robert is a skilled tradesman, and he surely would have managed to get himself into a better situation without the Soup Kitchen. He said, "Yes, I would have gotten myself into a better place. But I wouldn't feel as good as I do now without the help I received at the Soup Kitchen."

Both men asked me to thank all of you donors and volunteers who keep the Soup Kitchen alive and well so it can help the next Matt and Robert.

I second that big thank-you. We could not run the Soup Kitchen without the dedicated volunteers and donors who make it possible to open our doors every day.

— Merry Stover
Executive Director

Welcome Julee Laurent



Julee Laurent came to the Soup Kitchen as a volunteer with her church in 2012 and has volunteered off and on through the years with her son Iggy. Together Julee and Iggy have held canned food and pasta drives for the Soup Kitchen. In 2018, with a desire to deepen her involvement with the Soup Kitchen's Mission, she joined the Board of Directors. Julee heads up our marketing, and through that work sends out press releases, designs our graphics and printed pieces for events and social media, while also helping re-establish our online and traditional media presence. Julee also serves on the City of St. Joseph Planning Commission, works with United Way and owns her own multimedia marketing and PR agency called Think Tank Media.

"To volunteer at this level with the Soup Kitchen has been a blessing. There are many factors that can change in a person's life economically, socially, or emotionally that can put them in a position of need without much warning. People get laid off, lose benefits they relied on, or a tragedy happened that left them devastated and unable to afford food. Helping feed those who are hungry, struggling, or in a position where they just need a meal is the most basic human kindness we can give. That is why I am proud to be on the Soup Kitchen board of Directors. They have been doing this work for decades, and I'm happy to be a small part of it."

Hunger can affect people from all walks of life. Many Americans are one job loss or medical crisis away from food insecurity – but some people, including children and seniors, may be at greater risk of hunger than others.

What Hunger Looks Like in Michigan

In Michigan, 1,414,700 people are struggling with hunger - and of them 356,930 are children.



People facing hunger in
Michigan
are estimated to report needing

\$678,813,000

more per year to meet their food needs.

The average cost of a meal in Michigan is \$2.81. Data from Feeding America's [Map the Meal Gap 2016 study](#). [Learn more >](#)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Michigan

Charitable programs are unable to fully support those struggling with hunger. The combination of charity and government assistance programs are necessary to help bridge the meal gap.

SNAP, formerly food stamps, provides temporary help for people going through hard times - providing supplemental money to buy food until they can get back on their feet.

In Michigan,

34.9%
of households receiving
SNAP benefits have
children

\$2,069,172,718
distributed through
SNAP generated
\$3,517,593,621
in economic
activity*.

*Economists estimate that every dollar a household redeems through SNAP generates about \$1.70 in economic activity.

20th Soup Bowl at Kelly's a Huge Hit!

On Sunday, March 10 all the lanes were filled with some of the greatest people helping to raise funds to feed the hungry of our area. And if you've never seen people having such a great time, you ought to. Not everyone who rolls a ball in our event has a high average, but their hearts are all about playing the game that day.

Awards! Team Spirit- Coach's Bar and Grill, Best Team Theme- Petroleum Jelly (Tosi's Waitresses,) Bowling- 1st Place- The Screwups, 2nd Place- Team Amber Fleisher, and 3rd Place- Tosi's Restaurant. 50/50 winners Ken Clark and Bill Gibson donated their winnings back to the Soup Kitchen. If anyone out there thinks their supporters can beat that, I want to hear from you!

A very special thanks to our pizza provider, Silver Beach Pizza. Your pizza does as much to fill the lanes that day as anything else we do! Get ready for Soup Bowl 2020 -- we'll see you in March.



1st Place
The Screwups

2nd Place
Team Amber Fleisher

Best Team Theme
Petroleum Jelly (Tosi's Waitresses)



3rd Place
Tosi's Restaurant



Spirit Award!
Coach's Bar and Grill



8th Annual Harbor Shores Golf Scramble

On Monday, June 10, we'll be holding another fundraiser for the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen. You and three friends will be participating in a great contest on a great course, for a tremendous cause. Our cost for 18 holes and dinner has gone up \$5.00. It's now 145.00 per player (still one of the best deals around!) Play starts at 1:00 sharp and dinner and prizes are at 6:00 under the tent. If you'd like to get a sign-up sheet mailed to you, please contact kcgast@yahoo.com.

SOUP KITCHEN DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

The Soup Kitchen is a non-profit, 501c(3) organization. Our mission is to feed a nutritious meal to the hungry. Donations to The Soup Kitchen are deductible to the full extent of the federal law. Please consult your tax advisor for further information on the tax benefits of your generous donation.

FEEDING AMERICA WEST MICHIGAN

Churches are automatically eligible to purchase food at 17 cents (or less) per pound, including food in #10 cans, from Feeding America West Michigan, 1488 E. Empire Ave., Benton Harbor. Unlike other organizations, churches are not required to be a 501c(3). Please think about shopping there first.

For more information, contact Feeding America Manager, Rich Glista at 269-926-2646.

MATCHING GIFTS PROGRAMS

The Whirlpool Corporation matching gift program matches personal contributions of \$50 and up with dollars from the Whirlpool Foundation. Full-time, salaried and hourly U.S. Whirlpool employees and retirees are eligible. Please, if you are eligible for matching gifts, please take that opportunity. Private foundations must distribute five percent of the value of their net investment assets annually. As for most things involving the IRS, it is a bit more complicated than that, but 5% is close. So you are not imposing by requesting a matching gift. You are helping to direct money that they must donate. Because of your support, the Whirlpool Foundation is always one of our top five revenue sources. The Soup Kitchen office can email you the matching gifts form.

The Thrivent Choice® program is a charitable grant program that allows members to recommend where Thrivent Financial distributes a portion of its charitable grant funds each year.

Eligible members invited to direct Choice Dollars can recommend where Thrivent should distribute some of its charitable funds among thousands of enrolled 501(c) (3) nonprofit organizations, including The Soup Kitchen Inc. Visit Thrivent.com/thriventchoice or ask your representative for more information.

HOW YOUR EFFORTS HELP THE U.S. ECONOMY

As you may have read in previous issues of the Soup Kitchen's newsletter, many of our guests work at least part-time (if not full-time) dispelling many of the unfortunate stereotypes of years gone by. A recent Bureau of Labor statistic is that slightly over 5% of the workforce may still be classified as "working poor"--meaning that in spite of their job, their household income remains somewhere below the threshold of poverty. AND HERE'S HOW YOU'RE HELPING: as more people become gainfully employed (paying rent, utilities, and other essentials) your donations to the Soup Kitchen help many to meet their basic financial needs by guaranteeing them a hot, nutritious meal each day. It's both a gift and a "lift" that means so much to so many who've passed through our doors over the years. Without your help, outcomes could have been very different. So on behalf of our guests, thank you & please keep up the good work!

Note the article on page 1 of this newsletter about Matt and Robert. If you've contributed to the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen in the past, this article was written for you; you made this happen.

BOARD MEMBERS:

Les Ashmore	Julee Laurent
Sharon Austin	Rob Romano
Rob Burgess	Alex Schaeffer
KC Gast	Andy Takacs
Debbie Gillespie	Chris Woodruff

Thank You for all you do!
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SOUP KITCHEN PRESENTATIONS

**We would be honored to present The Soup Kitchen story to your organization.
Please call today to schedule a time and date: 925-8204.**