

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.



The Benton Harbor
Soup Kitchen

Learn about
the Benton Harbor
Soup Kitchen.
Read all the newsletters.
Donate any time.
www.soupk.org

A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION • 269-925-8204 • Winter 2025 EDITION

New Equipment and Spaces!



Our new freezer is next to the kitchen door. It is twice as the size of the old one. One of the Fire Inspectors commented on how nice it looks.



This is a small part of our new storage room.



Members of Saron Lutheran Church making sack lunches in the Red Lotus Nutrition kitchen.



This is an unfinished restroom door in the dining room. We will have to move that large roof support post that is in front of the doorway. We must do several more door installations before we can paint.



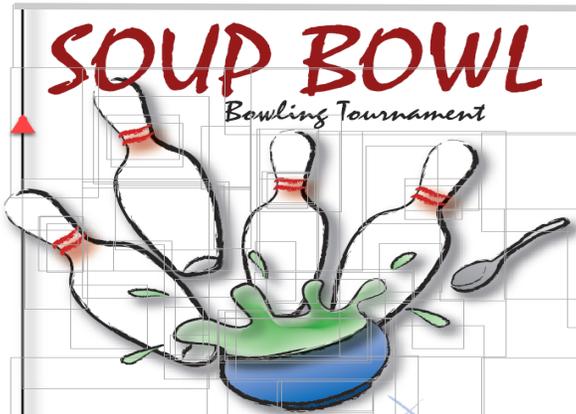
We have moved from one small window on Oak Street to windows on the world on Main Street.

"You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you."

Bistro Benefit Dinner—Sunday, January 25



Enjoy winter luxuriously at The Bistro on the Boulevard 's annual Soup Kitchen Benefit dinner. The holiday rush will be only a memory, but here's something fun to do when nothing else is going on. And as usual, all proceeds will benefit the hungry in our area. Our thanks to the Bistro for doing this. Look for a Soup Kitchen mailing with details to go out immediately after Christmas.



GILLESPIE SOUP BOWL

Sunday, March 22nd, 2026

Sunday, March 22 is the annual Gillespie Soup Bowl at Strikers Bowl in Saint Joseph. Lots of prizes and free pizza from Silver Beach Pizza, with all proceeds feeding the hungry. Sign-up information will be available in early February. As usual, we might sell out, so watch for the announcements!

EUCHRE! Tourney

Sunday, February 1st, 2026



On **Sunday, February 1**, the Livery in Benton Harbor is graciously hosting our annual Euchre tournament to benefit the Soup Kitchen. *There's no football that Sunday, one week before the Super Bowl, so get your game together and enjoy the fun, prizes and free Liv-ery pizza.*

Invites will be emailed and on-line sign-up will begin just after Christmas. Hope to see you there! Catch the link on Facebook or our website, www.soupk.org. Cost is \$40 per team member. Doors open at noon; play starts at 1:00. See you there!

Gifts to the SOUP KITCHEN are TAX DEDUCTIBLE

The Soup Kitchen is a non-profit, 501(c)(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.

GIFTS of STOCK SHARES :

The Soup Kitchen can accept direct donation of stock shares. Please email m@soupk.org for more information.

**The Soup Kitchen
has attained Guidestar's
Platinum Seal of
Transparency, the
highest level ranking.**

Platinum
Transparency
2024

Candid.

SOUP KITCHEN PRESENTATIONS

We would be honored to present The Soup Kitchen story to your organization. Please call 925-8204 or email m@soupk.org to schedule.

The Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen is made possible by our volunteers, donors, and supporting organizations.

The Soup Kitchen is staffed by volunteer groups of all types. Most groups donate the food for their day at the Soup Kitchen. Volunteers contribute over \$450,000 worth of work every year.

Without all of you, we could not feed people every day.

Serving Groups:

- 1st Source Bank
- Andrews Korean SDA Church
- Berrien Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
- Christ Lutheran Church
- Christian Reformed Church of St Joseph
- Coloma United Methodist Church
- EXP Realty Group
- First Congregational Church, St. Joseph
- First Presbyterian Church, Benton Harbor
- Friends of Soup Kitchen
- Glendora Lutheran Church
- Highland Avenue SDA Church
- Kiwanis of St Joseph and Benton Harbor
- Michigan State Police
- Moms With A Mission
- Napier Parkview Baptist Church
- Pathway
- Pioneer Memorial Church
- Saron Lutheran Church
- Scottdale United Methodist Church
- Second Baptist Church
- St. Augustine of Canterbury Church
- St. Bernard's Parish
- St. John's Catholic Church
- St. Joseph Catholic Church, Saint Joseph
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church
- Stevensville United Methodist Church
- Storyline Church
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Berrien Springs
- Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Joseph
- Village Seventh Day Adventist Church
- Woodland Shores Baptist Church
- Zion Evangelical UCC of Saint Joseph
- Zion United Church of Christ, Baroda

Other Volunteers:

- Christmas Day — Wallace Family and Friends
- Thanksgiving Day -- Grande Mere Inn
- Dozens of community service volunteers

Business and Other Donors:

- Falak Farms
- The Flour Shop
- Glik's
- Hillside Farm
- Hollywood Farms
- Houndstooth Restaurant
- Martin's Supermarkets
- Memories of India
- Mike Deja (eggs)
- Panera Bread
- RB Miller Farms
- Silver Beach Pizza
- Spartan Nash
- ThompTech Web & Computer Services
- The Livery
- Twin City Chicks
- Watermark Brewing Co.
- Werner Kaiser (laundry and dish soap)

Board of Directors

- Sharon Austin
- K.C. Gast, President and Secretary
- Pat Grauer
- Camille Luther
- Mary Malesky
- Rob Romano, Vice President
- Alex Schaeffer, Treasurer

How did we end up on Main Street?

The original soup kitchen began serving on Thanksgiving day, 1979 in a store on Territorial Road. **The Soup Kitchen, Inc.** began as a nonprofit corporation on March 8, 1980. At that time, the participating churches served three meals per week. A few years later The Soup Kitchen began serving a healthy noon meal every day of the year. Records show that the Soup Kitchen has served between 33,000 and 66,000 yearly meals.

In 1985 the Soup Kitchen joined with the Salvation Army (SA) and helped them to purchase the YMCA building at 233 Michigan Street. The Soup Kitchen contributed \$200,000 of the \$1,000,000 purchase price and built and furnished its area of the building. Both entities serve many of the same people, and the partnership worked well. Though not an owner, the Soup Kitchen was more than a tenant. The Soup Kitchen paid its own gas and electric bills, and split the water and trash bills with the SA. The Soup Kitchen maintained its area, including paying for building items such as replacement furnaces and air conditioners.

I began working at The Soup Kitchen in 2009 in the middle of the huge financial crisis of 2008-2011. Before the financial crisis, the average number of guests was 160 per day. The guest numbers had ballooned to nearly 300 per day because so many people lost jobs, cars, and homes due to the economic recession. The Soup Kitchen saw its savings shrink by 50% while costs doubled. At that low point, we began planning and saving. We changed vendors for better pricing, and conserved every resource. The Board was and is deeply committed to aiding those in need in Benton Harbor, so rebuilding savings was necessary.

In 2011, I notified the SA of the deteriorating building conditions when I made my first large repairs and noticed that improper drainage was funneling water towards the back doors and had damaged the door sill and doorway side walls. I suggested several ways to remedy the problem, in 2011 and every subsequent year, but no changes or repairs were made, and the water damage continued.

Here is the part of the story you don't know. Due to the building's deterioration, we spent 5 years actively searching for land or property in downtown Benton Harbor to relocate the Soup Kitchen before the SA unexpectedly terminated our lease, effective April 30, 2025. None of those properties fit the bill for various reasons, mostly due to condition or location.

After being notified of the lease termination, we no longer had the option of waiting to find an ideal location or building, as we only had two months before we needed to vacate the SA. We again toured available buildings, and again, for various reasons, most would not work for our mission. However, at least one of the buildings had housed a restaurant, which meant that the Soup Kitchen would not have to seek a zoning variance. It was formerly Lark's Bar-B-Que, located at 174 W Main St in Benton Harbor. Not only had it been a restaurant, but the location is close to the guests we serve. So here we are. The building needed a lot of work, but it will serve our guests well once we're up and running.

Since the Soup Kitchen now OWNS its building, rather than simply being a tenant, we are responsible for the construction and outfitting of the building to meet the needs of our guests and the requirements of the Health Department, the City of Benton Harbor, and the State of Michigan, as does every licensed facility. Progress has been slower than we would like. As we have finished one job, we've found two more things needing repair or replacement. The work on the kitchen itself is almost done. Once the entire building is completed, it will be in superb condition.

As the only full-time employee of the Soup Kitchen, I've been totally enmeshed in this move and transformation since last February. What is remarkable is the continued support we have received from the community. Since leaving the SA building, we have not missed one day of lunch service excepting the day of the Blossomtime Parade.

Many thanks to everyone who has contributed by making sack lunches and sending contributions. Your support is more valuable and appreciated than ever before. This has not been easy for anyone, including our guests. We hope to open the dining room for hot meal service in January. Stay tuned!

- Merry Stover, Executive Director