

# Neighborhoodly News



2025 February Edition



*Caring for our neighbors of the Alamo, Cooper, Martin, Otsego and Plainwell communities since 1983.*

**Our Mission is to provide local families in need with food, emergency financial assistance, skill-building education, and other resources offering stabilization.**

## Celebrating Our Community



### Love Your Community: Business Food Drive

Join us for our "Love Your Community" Business Food Drive, taking place **February 1–14!** Each year, local businesses support our mission by placing donation boxes or change buckets in their establishments, inviting employees and community members to contribute food items or cash donations. Your generosity helps stock our food pantry, which saw 2,407 visits in 2024.

While we purchase some food from local food banks, the majority of our donations come from the incredible support of individuals, organizations, schools, churches, and businesses in our community. We couldn't do this without you! Thank you for making a difference for local families.

**Some drop sites for Love Your Community Business Food Drive:** **McPherson**

Plastics Inc.



Amy Van Putten would like to thank all those who donated to the food pantry over the holidays. "I cannot even begin to express how thankful we are for the support of so many individuals and businesses." We had 2,407 pantry visits in 2024! That's a lot of food going out our doors! We sincerely could not care for our community without the support of all of you!



Amy Van Putten  
Food Program Director

### Community Members Taking The Initiative

**Lexi Gross**, a student at Otsego High School, saw that a big amount of fresh food was being thrown away. She has taken it upon herself to do something about it! Twice a week she delivers us fresh fruit such as apples and oranges and in one week alone, she delivered 98 pounds! This initiative is called "Share Table" and she is leading it through the Superintendent Student Advisory Committee at Otsego High School. **READ her full story on our website under the ABOUT tab, click BLOG.**

**Jenn Wilson**, an employee at Gilkey Elementary, also brings us shelf stable items such as packaged fruit, snacks, cereal and other miscellaneous items that otherwise would be thrown away. She delivers 2-3 bags every couple weeks. Thank you Jenn!



There are a lot of services and programs at Christian Neighbors. And we are excited to bring even more resources into the hands of those who need help while growing and supporting our local

with events at our Education Resource Center. We could not do all the work we do without volunteers. Volunteers are the lifeblood of small nonprofit organizations, bringing passion, dedication, and invaluable skills. They give of their own precious time, away from family, friends, and hobbies – this is not lost on us at Christian Neighbors.

Volunteers along with the amazing Christian Neighbors staff are the hands and hearts behind every success, every need fulfilled, every client feeling like they have been heard and helped. They are not just a number. I love seeing our volunteers' smiling faces. I love that they love our mission. They amplify the impact of our resources and services, allowing us to reach more people and achieve greater results.

Volunteers not only sustain daily operations here but also build a sense of community and shared purpose.

Volunteers are essential to the success and growth of Christian Neighbors, and I thank our volunteers along with our staff, board, and the clients they help to serve.

If you would like to learn more about volunteer opportunities with Christian Neighbors, please reach out to us at 269.685.4166 ext. 100 or visit our website [www.christianneighbors](http://www.christianneighbors) and click on the "Ways to Help" tab.

In Gratitude,



Jennifer Collins, Executive Director

## -The Director's Note -

Jennifer Collins, Executive Director



## Celebrating Our NEW Staff!



I am a Plainwell High School graduate and I was on the diving team at PHS. I continued diving at McKendree University for 1 year. I now live in Plainwell and love traveling to New York City. I also enjoy music and watching live theatre.

**Taylor Seibert, Administration Assistant**



I grew up in Plainwell. I moved to Traverse City a few years ago and recently moved back to the Plainwell area. I have 3 years of nonprofit experience working with community action of Allegan county. I am married and a mom to 2 kids ages 3 and 1. In my spare time, I enjoy spending time outside and learning new recipes with my family. I am excited to be back into the nonprofit field working with the community and spending time in the kitchen.

**Cari Dyer, Kitchen & Program Assistant**



**Wendy Gauthier  
Pantry Assistant**

Wendy is a devoted wife, mother, and mother-in-law who cherishes her family above all. She and her husband enjoy spending summer weekends in Cadillac, where they relax on their boat and create lasting memories with family. A passionate dog lover, Wendy is also deeply committed to helping others and making a positive impact in her community. Her warmth and generosity shine through in everything she does.



# Honor and Memorial Tributes

## In Honor of:

Anne & Art Hartman's 40th!  
Antoon & Lieve Brusselmans  
Bob & Jeanne Ridderman  
Diana Gilmer's Birthday  
Donna Doctor  
Fred Jacobs  
George & Betsy Lee's 50th  
Wedding Anniversary  
Gwen Holden-Norton  
Janet Benson's Birthday  
JoAnn Vanden Borgh  
Kerry & Barbara Smalla  
Laborde Family  
Malachi's Birthday  
Maryln Langeance  
Meijer Simply Give  
River Bend Yoga  
Ron & Sandra MacVean  
Terri Shaler & her retirement!  
Trent Bouma

## In Memory of:

Aaron Harback  
Albert Dale Sparks  
Alva Burleigh  
Alyce (Colyer) Tice  
Ann Arnoldink  
Arthur Frederick  
Betsy Hill  
Betty Holben  
Betty Martin  
Beulah Pallett  
Beverly Visser  
Bill Bibart  
Bill Riley  
Bill Spencer  
Bill VandenBroeck  
Bill & Flora Moore  
Bob & Brenda Powers  
Bob & Dixie Stratton  
Bob Bailey  
Bob Green  
Bob Koster  
Bob Phillips (OHS Class of 1961)  
Bob White  
Bonnie Bonnes  
Bruce Binns  
Char Bailey  
Charlene Terranova  
Charles Barton Jr.  
Charlotte Jaratz  
Chuck Cooley  
Claus & Ruth Holtman  
Danielle Lemon  
Dave Levine

Davey Whitehouse  
David Hartig  
Dennis McConney  
Dick Ramm  
Don Greene  
Donna Lampros  
Dorothy & Glenn Gregory  
Dorothy Gren  
Dorothy Kissinger  
Dot & Gene Watson  
Douglas London  
EJ Hart  
Edward Rohr  
Ellen Frith  
Elwyn & Ida Sprague  
Esther Wyman  
Ethelmae "Evie" Sell  
Gary Melvin  
Glenn Gregory  
Guyton Ray  
Hank Barber  
Harold & Mary Beth Garman  
Jacob Myers  
James P Bishop  
James Tungate  
Janelle Eddy  
Jay, Ann, James, and Luanne Wolbert  
Jean Merrill  
Jean Smalla  
Jeffrey Farnsworth  
Jennifer Kaechele  
Jerry Fenner  
Jerry Howrigan  
Jim & Nancy Page  
Jim Sell, Dr.  
Joe Gauthier, Jr.  
JoAnn Eddy  
JoAnn Hazekamp Corbin  
John & Dorothy Lukins  
John & Mildred Doelker  
John Relken  
John Westbrook  
Joline A. Hoffman  
Joshua Coleman  
Joyce Spencer  
Judy Shumaker  
Julie Lenhart  
Keith Wilson  
Ken Doctor  
Kevin Charkowski  
Kim Milani  
Kirk Siebert  
Kristine Baker  
Kyle Hegedus  
Larry Elgersma  
Liane Riley

Linda Sparks  
Louis Bryck  
Louise Whiffin  
Mable Storms  
Marc Russell  
Maxine June  
Mark & Kathy Tuinstra  
Maxine McFanin on her birthday  
Mike McFanin on his birthday  
Milton & Glenna Burkett  
My Parents & Husband  
(Joyce Thompson)  
My Parents Richard & Eleanor Wood  
(Dennis & Holly Swincicki)  
My Siblings (Sharon Doelker)  
Nancy LaPorte  
Pat Drake  
Pat Thomas (OHS Class of 1961)  
Patsy Nyberg  
Paul Eddy  
Peggy Madison  
Phyllis Drozd  
Phyllis Niswender  
Ray Koch  
Ray Winkel  
Rebecca Galloway  
Rich Campbell  
Richard Downing  
Richard Van Niman  
Richard Wheatley  
Rick Clemens  
Robert & Marilyn Koster  
Robert J. Holland  
Robert Kennicott  
Robert Scherzer  
Roberta Kuitert  
Ron Holmes  
Ron Mc Rae  
Ron McFanin on his birthday  
Ruthie Beckman  
Shirley Giesbrecht  
Steve Kantz  
Swaran Kaur  
Sylvia & Dale Dratt  
Taylor Glessner  
Ted Ellis  
Terri Lynne Moses  
Tim Daniels  
Vance Swope  
Vera Herin  
Warren Brooks  
Wilbert "Dave" Fleser  
William & Nina Bergholtz  
William Menck  
Yurgen Markewycz



Food insecurity continues to be on the rise in the communities we serve, which makes our commitment to the cause, and that of our local Meijer, vital. Thank you for joining us as we work to help end hunger. We couldn't do this without your support and partnership! Simply Give runs from

December 29, 2024 - March 29, 2025

Double Match Days are:

March 1 & 22, 2025 (Saturdays)

Turn \$10 into \$30

If you would like a receipt for your donation, please mail or drop off your check to Christian Neighbors, and note Simply Give on the memo line, and we will process it as a gift, and take it to Meijer for you.

## 2024 is a WRAP!

Emergency Financial Assistance Update: We remained busy throughout the year last year and were able to provide \$86,107 in financial assistance for rent and utilities. We were able to help 97 local households with rent to prevent eviction and had a total of 215 utility allocations for propane, gas and electric, totaling \$43,692. Christian Neighbors has strong partnerships with many local agencies, including Salvation Army, which provides additional housing assistance to our neighbors in need and the Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo, which runs the home heating assistance program January through March. We are so grateful to both of these agencies for their supplemental support. We are off and running already in 2025 and are looking forward to another successful year of helping our neighbors in need!

### IMPACT FIGURES FOR 2024

### THANK YOU



Thank you to our funding partners, including: Heart of West Michigan United Way, Allegan County Community Foundation, Mignon Sherwood Delano Foundation, Perrigo Foundation, Great Lakes Energy Peoples Fund, and Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

\*Contain duplicated households and participants.

**Food Pantry Hours:** Mon: 10-Noon and 4-6pm drive through only,  
Tues: 10-Noon and Thurs: 2-5pm for in person shopping.

**Emergency Financial Assistance Hours:** Tues: 10-Noon and Thurs: 2-5.

**Resource Workshop Hours:** Mon: 10-12pm. Get help signing up for benefits and resources.

This agency will pursue a practice where the education, health and human service needs of residents within our service area are addressed without regard to age, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, national origin, or any other classification or category.



# Celebrating Our Volunteers

## Volunteer Spotlight: Kirk Holmes

Many people are surprised to learn that shuttling broken down cardboard boxes to a recycling center are an important part of the Christian Neighbors food pantry operations. But one volunteer knows better.

"Volunteers who unpack supplies to stock the pantry shelves generate a large quantity of cardboard that needs removed," says volunteer Kirk Holmes. So once or twice a week after his shift at Perrigo, Kirk opens a storage shed behind the food pantry building to find a big stack of collapsed cardboard boxes. He quickly loads the stack – which often reaches the ceiling – into his car then recycles the cardboard at the Otsego transfer station the next morning.

"Sometimes I can't even fit all the cardboard in my car," Kirk says. Why does Kirk faithfully complete what seems like a simple task? The answer stems, in part, from his childhood. "I remember a time when our family had no where to live," Kirk says. "We lived for a while in our car in a park and then ended up at the Salvation Army. Rows of green cots filled the room but knowing that I wasn't sleeping in a car was a step up. That time always stuck with me."

About 10 years ago, Kirk was living life when he felt called to do more and give back to the community. He responded to an ad seeking volunteers to help at Christian Neighbors and felt a special tug to help the organization tackle food insecurity needs.

"I know first-hand how life can throw a lot at you," Kirk says, "but being hungry on top of these things is horrible." Kirk applied to help with outdoor maintenance tasks but quickly learned that Christian Neighbors really needed help with the cardboard recycling.

"Now I do the task because I want to do it," Kirk says. "It makes a difference." The Alamo Township resident encourages people to explore what simple task they might do to help Christian Neighbors fulfill its mission.

"Bring your time and your talents," he said. "That is the best gift in the world since time is a finite resource that you can never get back."



**National Volunteer Month is celebrated in April of each year.** We honor our volunteers for providing over 2,000 volunteer hours in 2024. Thank You!



## Christian Neighbors Recognizes PATH Walk Participants



On Sunday, January 26, 2025, Eric Hoffman (left) presented members of First Congregational Church (Otsego) with the perpetual award for Business/Organization with the Most Walkers. Pictured l-r, are Hoffman, Kellie Lemmer, Kim Rayburn, Karen Clemens, and Patty & Chuck Hyet.

Additional awards will be presented to members of First Baptist Church (Otsego) for Business/Organization Raising the Most Funds, and Individual Raising the Most Funds by the Number of Entities, Not Dollars.

*The 16th Annual*

# Reflection of Hope Dinner & Auctions

The 16th Annual Reflection of Hope Dinner & Auctions event will be held on Thursday, May 8, 2025 at The Silo, located in Allegan. Following that event, there will be an online auction from May 9 -13, 2025.





### Christian Neighbors SE

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### MISSION STATEMENT

Our Mission is to provide local families in need with food, emergency financial assistance, skill-building education, and other resources offering stabilization

*"Together we are Neighbors  
Caring for Neighbors"*

*Learn more about volunteer opportunities on our website under the "Ways to Help" tab.*

# VOLUNTEER FAIR

## Come Meet Us!



Christian Neighbors



**Wednesday, March 19th | 12 PM - 2 PM | The Silo, Allegan**

Looking for a way to give back and make a difference in your community? Join us at the 2nd Annual Volunteer Fair, where local organizations are eager to connect with passionate individuals like you! Come explore the perfect way to share your time and talent.

## SAVE THE DATE

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 2/1-2014 Love Your Community Business Food Drive     | 4/2 Soup Supper @ Hope Lutheran Church               |
| 2/10 Food Distribution @ Hope Lutheran Ch - 11am     | 4/2 Food Distribution @ Royal Estates 4pm-6pm        |
| 2/10 VITA Tax Appointments                           | 4/14 Food Distribution @ Hope Lutheran Ch - 11am     |
| 2/12 VITA Tax Appointments                           | 4/24 Food Distribution @ Royal Estates 4pm-6pm       |
| 2/15 VITA Tax Appointments                           | 5/7 Soup Supper @ Martin United Methodist Church     |
| 2/19 Preparing for Emergencies - 10am-12pm           | 5/8 16th Annual Reflection of Hope Dinner & Auctions |
| 2/24 VITA Tax Appointments                           | 5/12 Food Distribution at Hope Lutheran Ch - 11am    |
| 2/25 Energy Savings Class from 1pm-2pm               | 5/12 Secretary of State @ ERC                        |
| 2/27 Food Distribution @ Royal Estates 4pm-6pm       | 5/22 Food Distribution @ Royal Estates 4pm-6pm       |
| 3/1 and 3/22 Simply Give Double Match Days at Meijer | 6/9 Food Distribution @ Hope Lutheran Ch - 11am      |
| 3/10 Food Distribution @ Hope Lutheran Ch - 11am     | 6/26 Food Distribution @ Royal Estates 4pm-6pm       |
| 3/11 Preschool Food Stories with MSU Extension       |  |
| 3/12 Soup Supper @ Otsego United Methodist Church    |  |
| 3/19 Carve the Soup with Michael Ritsema             |  |
| 3/26 Soup Supper @ First Congregational Ch - Otsego  |  |
| 2/27 Food Distribution @ Royal Estates 4pm-6pm       |  |
| 3/28-3/29 Stuff the Bus at Plainwell Harding's       |  |



Find out more by scanning the QR code above or visit [www.christianneighbors.org/calendar](http://www.christianneighbors.org/calendar).