



## A Note from Terri



As I write this note to you, I'm sitting on my patio snug in my sweater, drinking my favorite hot tea, and the falling leaves remind me it's autumn. There are many reasons autumn is my favorite season. Some of them are pumpkins, Halloween, Thanksgiving, picking apples and just the overall beauty of the outdoors. Who doesn't love apple cider and doughnuts?

There's something about leaves changing colors that makes everyday places look and feel so homey and warm. Yet I know that for many of our clients, autumn is a reminder that winter is coming. Every autumn we have families come in for help because they are homeless. During the summer they sleep in parks, campers, or tents which certainly doesn't work in Michigan winters. Some families 'couch surf' with friends and relatives as weather worsens but that usually comes with limits. So far this year Christian Neighbors has helped 78 homeless people. Thirty-seven of those folks were sleeping in uninhabitable places. We can help them move into a warm home and provide food because of our community's support.

Another BIG reason autumn is not the favorite season for families struggling financially is because of the impending high heating bills. The **National Energy Assistance Directors Association** estimates average home-heating costs could jump 17.2% over last winter in our area. The NEADA also noted home-energy costs in our community are expected to jump 35% in 2023 from 2020 levels. These increases represent the highest prices in more than a decade. It is not only the high cost of heat that affects our clients. Many families and seniors live in older houses or mobile homes with inadequate insulation and old windows. Heat is pumped in and is quickly lost causing the furnace to run more.

Without our occasional help with paying a utility bill these families would have to choose what they must give up to stay warm! They may skip a rent payment; adults, and sadly children, may go without a meal or take their medicine every other day to make it go further.

There are many health risks that come with living in a cold home, not to mention the chronic mental stress of how to keep your family warm. The body's reaction to low temperatures stresses the cardiovascular system. Cold houses are usually damp which can lead to respiratory issues. Not having sufficient heat in homes is particularly risky for the elderly and babies.

We truly appreciate you and your support as we move into the winter months. We can stop the devastating effects of homelessness and loss of heat in our community. Have a wonderful autumn. I hope it's as much a blessing to you as it is to me.



**Terri Shaler**  
Executive Director

## November is Homeless Awareness

So far in 2023, Christian Neighbors has provided services to 78 homeless individuals. Of these, 37 are living in what is considered uninhabitable places. This includes things like sheds, storage units, tents, or cars. Many face barriers such as low-income, job loss, mental illness, bad credit, and criminal records. This exponentially increases the challenges of finding them an affordable home.

Below are real life stories of individuals and families right here in our own local community who are homeless and are living on the streets:

*"Ben became homeless after his roommate unexpectedly died and he couldn't afford the rent on his own. He is currently living in a storage unit. There is no water, heat or even a window for light. He comes to us weekly for small loads of nonperishable food and hygiene products. We found*



*him a bike, a safe heating source and helped him get a free Safelink phone so he could receive calls from potential landlords and housing assistance programs."*

*"Marjorie had to suddenly move out of her small home of 15 years because it was being sold by the landlord. She lives on a low fixed income and has to wait for*



*subsidized housing to open up- the waiting list is over a year. She found an abandoned house to squat in, sleeping on the floor and has no running water or electricity. She visits us weekly to get food, shower cards, hygiene supplies and moral support to just keep going. Marjorie is 78 years old....."*

We work tirelessly at Christian Neighbors to be sure everyone who comes to us eventually gets housed. Sometimes it takes longer than we would like. It takes time and money to keep those in need fed, warm and clean in the meantime.

## Winter Tips for Seniors

Winter is a magical time of year. But the same things that make winter so special—such as cold temperatures, snow, cozy fireplaces, and more—can also be hazardous, particularly for seniors. For that reason, it's important to be aware of the **dangers of cold weather**, and how to avoid them. Below are a few of the more common risks that older adults face.

### Hypothermia

Hypothermia occurs when an individual's body temperature drops below a certain threshold. Hypothermia can affect anyone, but older adults are especially susceptible. The average person's body temperature actually declines as they age and their metabolism slows. As a result, they're more sensitive to cooler temperatures. Elderly people can even develop hypothermia inside their own homes if the temperature is set too low.



To ensure that you or your elderly loved one doesn't fall prey to hypothermia, be sure to keep houses properly warmed (experts recommend at least 68°-70° Fahrenheit) and dress in warm clothing. In addition, familiarize yourself with the signs of hypothermia, such as shivering, cold skin, confusion or sleepiness, and pale skin.

### Carbon Monoxide

Fireplaces and gas or kerosene-burning heaters are great for keeping your home cozy, but they can also be potential sources of carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide is a deadly gas that is almost impossible to detect.



To reduce your risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, consider switching to electric space heaters (which don't produce the gas). If you still need to use fireplaces or fuel-burning heaters, make sure you have them regularly inspected, and that your house is well vented. Be sure to install carbon monoxide detectors near the heaters. Finally, know the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning: headache, weakness, nausea or vomiting, dizziness, confusion, and blurred vision.



### Falls and Accidents on Ice

Ice-covered sidewalks and roads can make walking or driving even more treacherous for seniors. Stay safe while moving around by equipping yourself and your car with appropriate winter gear. For your car, that means having winter tires put on and getting your windshield wipers and antifreeze checked. For you, that means shoes or boots with grippy, non-slip soles and a cane with an ice tip. In the event that a fall or accident does happen, be sure to keep your cell phone on you at all times.

In icy conditions, it's best to avoid driving or walking alone altogether. If you do need to leave the house, be sure to drive slowly and stick to walking on shoveled pathways.

## Poverty Simulation Held Past October

This past month, we had the pleasure of hosting a Poverty Simulation in the basement of our new Education Resource Center. Many of the participants were from area organizations and businesses. They were able to experience first-hand the daily life of someone who lives in poverty and the challenges that come with it. Here are some quotes from a few of the participants:

*"This simulation reveals major flaws in our systems/society to help low-income people."*

*"This was a great hands-on experience, highly recommend."*

*"This was very stressful. When I completed a task, there were 10 more to do."*

*"Great, organized simulation. Well worth the time and a good reminder."*

It is so important for the greater community to not only be aware of poverty, but to understand the challenges those who live in poverty face every day in their lives. Many of those who participated in the simulation said they were certainly aware of poverty, but to simulate actually living it as reality was a very humbling experience for them.



**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR OUR SENIOR SUPPORTERS**

Every year charitable-minded Americans over the age of 72 face a dilemma: What to do with the mandatory taxable distribution - otherwise known as a required minimum distribution (RMD) - from their Traditional IRA account (s).

One option is to make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) and contribute up to \$100,000 directly to qualified 501(c)(3) public charities, like Christian Neighbors, without counting the distribution as taxable income (if age 70 1/2 or older). Thus, you can receive **both a federal and Michigan tax benefit** from your charitable contribution even if you do not itemize deductions.

Make your donation by December 31 to qualify this year. When you file your taxes for the year, include your donation on the relevant tax document.

Look ahead to next year. Once you meet the criteria for an RMD, you will have a mandatory withdrawal each year until the account is depleted, barring significant policy changes.



**New Staff Spotlight: Welcome Sharon Carper**



Sharon will focus on two different roles within the Christian Neighbors team: coordinator of the demonstration kitchen programs **and** case manager helping senior citizens and individuals with disabilities.

A native of Pennsylvania, Sharon moved to the Plainwell/ Otsego area 26 years ago. She has a unique set of communication, organization and supporting skills developed through a career that has included time as a print journalist, a housing authority marketing specialist, and administrative support roles at a medical facility, several private businesses and faith-based organizations. She actively volunteers at her church and with Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts and several community groups.

Sharon has five children from 14 to 40 years. The entire clan – including their two zany cats -- loves music in all forms, spending time together, and having new adventures.

Learning new things and tackling new challenges are among Sharon’s favorite activities. She’s excited about finding new ways to build community and help our neighbors!



Rounding up your Great Lakes Energy bill to the next dollar helps support us. We appreciate the support we receive from the People Fund.

**Meijer Simply Give: Double Match Day**

**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!

**October 1 - December 31, 2023**

**Double Match Day:** Turn \$10 into \$30

**Saturday, December 16, 2023**

You may find a \$10 card at the end of each checkout lane during the timeframe above, to help support our pantry.



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.

**Stuff the Bus Dates & Needs**

**Friday, November 17**  
9:00am - 5:00pm

**Saturday, November 18**  
9:00am - 5:00pm

**Harding’s in Plainwell**



**We appreciate your help in stocking the food pantry shelves.**

Canned Fruit	Canned Vegetables
Ramen Noodles	100% Fruit Juice
Hamburger Helper	Muffin Mix
Brownie Mixes	Oatmeal
Canned Pasta	Canned Beans
Crackers	Boxed Instant Potatoes
Manwich	Spaghetti Sauce
Pancake Mix & Syrup	Box Pasta/Spaghetti
Canned Tomato Products	Baked Beans



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 49080  
 P 269-685-4166

www.christianneighbors.org  
 info@christianneighbors.org

### Our Mission

The mission of Christian Neighbors is to provide local families in need with Food, Emergency Financial Assistance and skill building Education to create self-sufficiency.

*"Together we are Neighbors  
 Caring for Neighbors"*

## More Pictures of Christian Neighbors in Our Community



Left: Mobile Food Pantry at The Living Well in Kalamazoo.



Right: Christian Neighbors attending the Scottish Festival in Kalamazoo.



Right: Booth/Display at Otsego Creative Arts Festival in Otsego.

### Special Thanks to Parker Hannifin Volunteers Helping with our November Newsletter



Our NEW Electronic Sign



November 13-17

# CONCRETES for a CAUSE

Buy a Concrete Mixer\* and we'll donate \$1 to Feeding America\* or a local food bank.

We're Supporting:

**CHRISTIAN NEIGHBORS - PLAINWELL**

A delicious way to donate.

**Give LOCAL**  
 FOOD. FAMILY. FUTURE.

Shown: Vanilla Frozen Custard Concrete Mixer made with Blueberries and Granola

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## Having trouble finding the Perfect Gift?

Whether you need a perfect gift for an upcoming holiday, birthday, or just to say thanks.....

**Give the Gift of Hope & Stability!**

Your donation to Christian Neighbors, will help people who live and work in your community. It's a perfect gift that keeps giving! Don't forget to send an address so we can send a card acknowledging your gift. Let us know if it is in Honor or in Memory of someone special.

Your GIFT provides HOPE & STABILITY and...

\$40	\$100	\$150	\$300	\$400	\$750
Feeds a family of 4 for 5 days	Healthy Cooking Class in our Education Resource Center	Provide coursework and extensive case management	Keeps electricity or heat on	Feeds a veteran for a year	Secures housing for a family

Christian Neighbors P.O. Box 53, Plainwell (269)685-4166

\*\*We try our best to have all information as correct as possible. If you notice an error, please contact Eric Hoffman at 269.685.4166, Ext. 100 or email at ehoffman@christianneighbors.org.\*\*

2023

# Impact Report

How you helped Christian Neighbors impact the Alamo, Cooper, Martin, Otsego, Plainwell Communities

3rd Quarter Impact  
9 Month Summary  
(January - September)



FOOD PANTRY

  
**1647**  
Food Pantry  
Visits

**586\***  
Children

**71\***  
Homeless  
Households



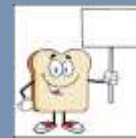
**1325\***  
Individuals served  
among **622\***  
households

*\* Unduplicated, means each individual and household is counted once regardless of how many times service was received in the time period.*



**\$ 98,071**

Worth of  
Food Donated



**1396.25**  
Volunteer Hours

## Emergency Financial Assistance

**\$61,521**

(246 Households)



**\$26,620**

Housing Assistance



**\$34,747**

Utility Assistance



**\$154**

Medical Assistance

## Tributes In Honor and In Memory of Loved Ones

### In Memory

Barb Fox  
Barbara Koster  
Betty Reenders  
Bill Crane  
Bill Vance  
Bob & Carol Meles  
Bob Bailey  
Bob Daniels  
Bruce Binns  
Carol Seiter  
Charlotte Boylan  
Cheryl Moerdyk  
Chris Cooper  
Chuck Moore  
Connie Adams  
Cyndi Trobeck  
Dale Bush  
Daniel Agy Sr.  
David Hartig  
Deborah Dockweiler  
Dick Dunn  
Don Aukerman  
Don Burd  
Don Cook  
Don Snyder  
Dorothy Gregory  
Dot & Gene Watson  
Dr. Kenley Burkhart  
Eileen Graham  
Elizabeth McPherson  
Elmer & Dorothy Dockweiler  
Gary Melvin  
Glenn Gregory

### In Memory

Gloria Deal  
Harriet Lewandowski  
Herb Howell  
Howard Curtiss  
Hugh Myers (OHS Class of 61')  
Jack Hawley  
Jana Tibbitts  
Janessa Thomas  
Jay Franklin Smith  
Jeff Farnsworth  
Jeri Beiner  
Jill Farnsworth  
Jock Pirrone  
Joe Flegal  
John Flatt  
Joy Bassett  
June Boekeloo  
Kathie Johnson  
Lana (Sprague) Mason  
Laura Deerwester  
Lenae Jean Clinton  
Lydia Fish  
Marion Lyon  
Marjorie (Klaiber) Kauffman  
Max & Rowena Loebel  
Mike McFanin's Birthday  
Mona Erickson  
Nancy Lyons  
Robert (Bob) DePauw  
Robert H. Brown  
Robert Scherzer  
Ron "Nick" Cary  
Ron McFanin's Birthday



### In Memory

Ruby Hyde  
Ryan Meert  
Sally Krohn  
Sandy MacVean  
Stanley McNeese  
Taylor Glessner  
Terri Austin  
Tom Laws  
Tom Somers  
Tom Whittington  
Tyler Johnson  
Willis Doezema

Tributes are from  
January 1, 2023 through  
September 30, 2023.

### In Honor

Brenda Parton's Birthday  
Diana Gilmer's Birthday  
Dorothy Irving  
Dyer at River Road Foods  
Gwen Holden-Norton's 92nd Birthday  
Jane Adams  
Janet Benson's Birthday  
Jason Smith- PATH Walk  
Jolene Minor's Birthday  
Ken & Chris Anson  
Laurie Krahn  
Lynea Hartig  
Roger & Mary File Family  
Marriage of Brad & Rose Ann Deneau  
Wedding of Jim & Michelle Raich  
Tom & Betsy Judge



8th Annual PATH Walk 2023  
**THANK YOU!**



We want to thank our 65 walkers who came out on Sunday, October 1, 2023, in support of our PATH Walk, and helped to raise over \$10,000 to help feed our neighbors in need. Over time these donations help us to provide 200+ families with food.

Thank you to our gracious sponsors Boniface Heating & AC (Starting Line), Otsego United Methodist Church Missions Team & Plainwell Ice Cream (Finish Line Sponsors), and Martin Lions Club (Water Station Sponsor).

New to 2024 are three awards to be handed out:  
To the church/organization with the most individuals walking  
To the church/organization with the most funds collected  
To the individual with the most funds collected.



We hope you will join us Sunday, October 6th 2024, for our 9th Annual PATH Walk!

If you would like to partner with us on our 2024 PATH Walk, please contact Eric Hoffman at 269.685.4166 Ext. 100 or [ehoffman@christianneighbors.org](mailto:ehoffman@christianneighbors.org).

