Access OF WEST MICHIGAN | 16/17 IMPACT REPORT

CULTIVATING **SOLUTIONS** TO POVERTY

accessofwestmichigan.org

HELLO FROM OUR CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

EMMA GARCIA
CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ACCESS OF WEST MICHIGAN

CHRISTINA SWINEY
CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ACCESS OF WEST MICHIGAN

In the last year, Access has focused on the theme of cultivation – the work of planting, tending, and developing. The ground we tend to is the community we love, and the seeds we plant are those that grow into strong trees rooted in the values of justice, equity, health, and peace. As we reflect on the year behind us, it is clear that our work of cultivating wholistic solutions to poverty through education and collaboration has had great impact:

97% of poverty simulation attendees reported that the workshop increased his or her understanding of the experiences of low-income families and the issue of poverty

97% of our nutrition program participants reported overall health improvement because of the services Access provides

100+ congregations throughout Kent County collaborated through Access to invest $263,874 for housing, utility, and transportation needs

As we continue to strive toward the vision of thriving communities rooted in just and equitable systems, we hope you will join us to praise God for the grace and growth He has given us in abundance. We are thankful too for your partnership and we invite you to grow with us - we're eager to share the vision and continue to cultivate solutions together.

With gratitude,
Emma García & Christina Swiney
Co-Executive Directors, Access of West Michigan

THANK YOU!

OUR STAFF *(Pictured from Left to Right)*

TOP ROW

TAMARA JACKSON
Benefits Outreach Coordinator

NANCY VELDKAMP-BRUBAKER
NOW Program Manager

JAN STINE
Office Manager, Caseworker

ERIKA BLAND
Communications Coordinator

CHRISTINA SWINEY
Co-Executive Director

BRENDA NICHOLS
Poverty Education Director

NIKI PERKINS
Congregation Casework Coordinator

BOTTOM ROW

MCKENZIE JACKSON
NOW Project Coordinator

SAVION SANFORD
Community Engagement Coordinator

EMMA GARCIA
Co-Executive Director

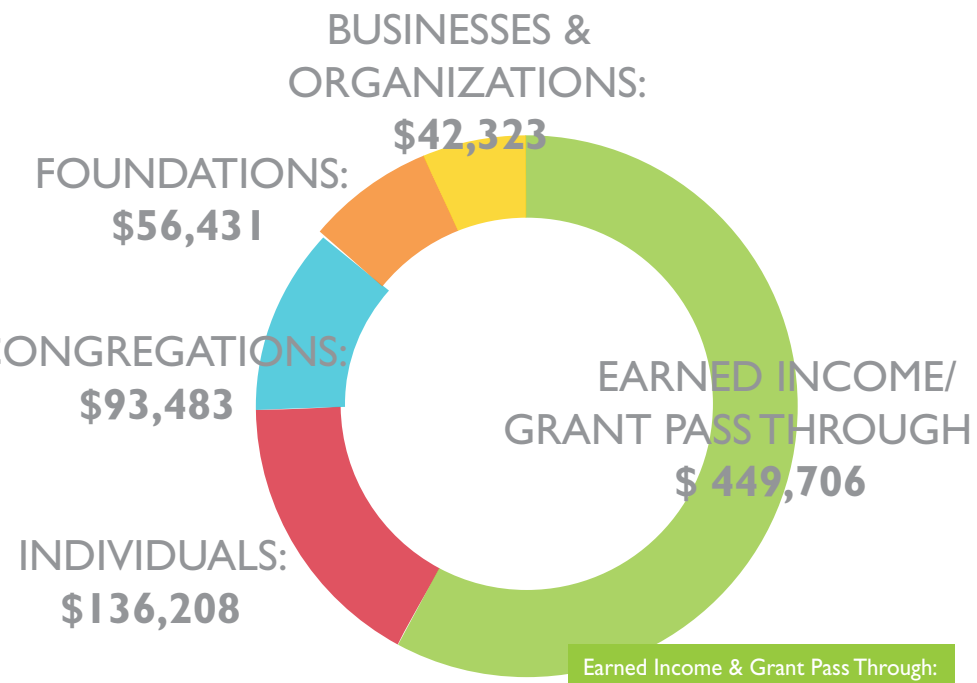
HANNAH FERNANDO
Farm to Pantry Coordinator

ERIN SKIDMORE
Good Food Systems Coordinator

NOT PICTURED

JILL SCHAIBLE
NOW Program Assistant

2016 HIGHLIGHTS & FINANCIAL REPORT



Earned Income & Grant Pass Through:

This denotes monies that are distributed through Access directly to our collaborative grant partners, as well as congregation pass through reimbursement.

TOTAL INCOME FOR FISCAL YEAR:
APRIL 2016 - MARCH 2017
$778,151

Thank you to all of our donors, supporters and partners. We would not be able to do the work we do without your continued support.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2016 BOARD

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NURYA PARISH

MICHAEL ALBERT

JORDAN PAINTER

39TH ANNUAL HUNGER WALK OVERVIEW

- Over $104,000 was raised by the 39th Annual Hunger Walk
- 22 Local and international non-profit organizations were funded
- 79 walk teams, including congregations, agencies, youth groups, and businesses, participated in helping make the walk a success

THANK YOU TO OUR HUNGER WALK SPONSORS

CD's Engine, Central Michigan Paper, D&D Printing, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Dermatology at MidTowne PC, Fifth Third, Forest Hills Foods, Fulton Party Store, Grand Valley State University/Kirkof College of Nursing, IBS Financial Services, J&B Electric, JDH Engineering, KCI Printing, Kent County Health Department, Maple Hill Golf Course, Mecosta County Collision, Meijer, Mercantile Bank Molina Healthcare, Omega Marketing, Orion Construction, Funky Buddha Yoga Hothouse, Tater Tats United Commercial Services, Inc, West Michigan Asian American Association, West Michigan BIGGBY Coop, West Michigan Realty Pros

GOOD FOOD SYSTEMS

Working at the intersection of food security, nutrition, and food justice, Access connects our community to the important work of promoting a Good Food system and healthy food for all. The collaborative solutions and programs that Access facilitates equip food assistance organizations, invest in our local food economy, grow health, facilitate community action, and convene food and faith conversations.

"We have loved working with the Other Way (through the Access Farm to Pantry Program). Sadly quality local food is often only consumed by the wealthy in our nation while the low quality excess is handed to those who have less via food pantries. The food co-op disrupts this reality and proclaims that in the Kingdom of God good food is a right and not a privilege."
-Lance Kraai, **New City Farm**

"I'm so excited for these green programs…eat fresh, eat local! A big thanks to Access for helping our neighbors access fresh food; you are changing Grand Rapids for the better!"
–Brittney Gray,
Interim Executive Director,
The Pantry

"What a blessing this program has been. Very informative and helpful, enjoyed every moment of it."

OUR PROGRAMS

FARM TO PANTRY

- 20 classes across Kent County were offered over the course of 5 months on the topics of cooking, preserving, meal planning and food systems education
- $30,000 invested in local small farm partners through leveraged funding
- 90% of participants reported having a stronger understanding of how to store and prepare fresh, healthy food
- 74% of participants report having an increased understanding of agriculture and the U.S. food system
- **Donors:** West Michigan Growers Group, Michigan Fitness Foundation, and farm partners including Hope Farms, Full Hollow Farm, Green Wagon, Groundswell, Farm, Peach Ridge Farm, New City Neighbors Urban Farm, Plainsong Farm, Kent County Health Department, Michigan Health and Wellness 4x4 State Plan

PANTRY NETWORK

- 14 field trips, trainings, and resource sessions facilitated for pantry partners
- 3 Food and Faith series events held in partnership with Plainsong Farm and the Dominican Center
- 5,846 families connected with holiday food

NUTRITIONAL OPTIONS FOR WELLNESS (N.O.W.) PROGRAM

- 231 participants received 2,777 nutritious and diet-specific food services and participated in 603 healthy lifestyle class hours.
- Class topics included nutrition and affordable sourcing of healthy foods, cooking and gardening, disease education, and healthy movement and stress management
- 97.8 % of participants reported that their overall health improved because of the N.O.W. Program
- 90% of participants reported that they are cooking healthier for their families and friends because of the N.O.W Program
- **Donors:** Spectrum Health Healthier Communities

CONGREGATION CONNECTIONS

"I am so thankful for the help Access provides, and I'm equally thankful for other churches who are willing to partner in providing relief for situations like this. Our church could not have done this alone, but together we can!"

-Diann Johandes
Congregation Partner
Speaking about a county-wide effort to support a refugee family

"I have had so many clients hug me tight in appreciation of my help, for letting them cry on my shoulder and listen to their stories."

-Tamara Jackson,
Benefits Outreach Coordinator,
Access of West Michigan

CONGREGATION CONNECTIONS

The Congregation Connections Program envisions vibrant communities with faith groups impacting their nieghborhoods and drawing on the strenths of the individuals and families within. The program collaborates with over 100 congregations across multiple denominations in Kent County empowering them to serve their neighbors with healthy outreach and impact, offering casework services to support people experiencing low income.

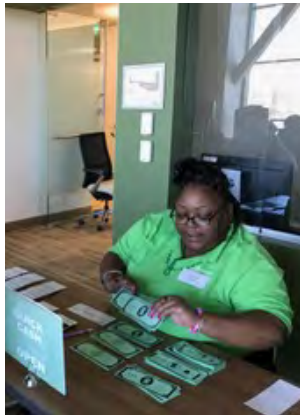
OUR PROGRAMS

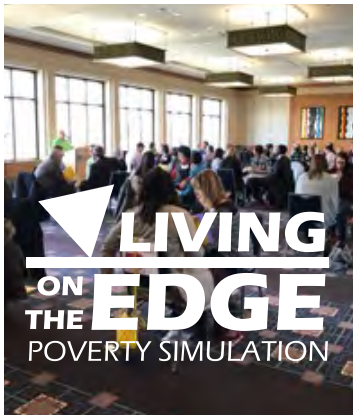
CONGREGATION CASEWORK

- 110 partner and donor congregations
- 1,947 casework services: ranging from utility assistance to eviction prevention
- $263,874.30 distributed to meet local needs through congregations
- 15 congregations trained in benevolence best practices
- Built a benevolence Collaborative with 5 churches and 4 agencies in the Heartside area
- **Housing and Shelter Response:**
  During the summer of 2016, Grand Rapids experienced a housing and shelter crisis – which has continued through today. The tight housing market and increasing rent costs forced many residents out of homes and into shelters - beyond capacity. Emergency funding was quickly exhausted, so five of the main shelters in Grand Rapids coollaborated with Access to provide emergency shelter. Over 13 congregations partnered together to raise over $17,000 for the cost of overflow shelter options. Access was glad to be able to partner with both agencies and congregations to impact families who are facing homelessness, while working to change the systems that cause the situation.

BENEFITS OUTREACH

- 17 partner sites, including 5 food pantries and 7 community resource centers, walking individuals through the process of applying for state and federal assistance including SNAP (formerly food stamps)
- 138 community referrals and resource connections made
- **Donors:** Feeding America West Michigan and the Food Bank Council of Michigan.





"Extremely eye opening. This simulation opened my eyes about how much people struggle in poverty and how difficult it is to survive day to day. I feel as though I've lived in a separate world, and that because of it I have grown up with biases."

– GVSU Participant

POVERTY EDUCATION

The Access Poverty Education Initiative facilitates workshops that help participants experience and recognize the barriers and root causes of poverty. Access employs individuals who have experienced poverty to staff the workships and to help participants form ways to take action to reduce poverty within their community.

OUR PROGRAMS

"LIVING ON THE EDGE" SIMULATIONS

- 30 "Living on the Edge" Simulations facilitated
- 2,000 workshop attendees
- 38 Staffers employed
- Workshops held in 6 counties throughout Michigan
- 97% of participants report improved understanding of the barriers and difficulties of living in poverty

PARTNER WITH US

Access of West Michigan works to ensure a just and equitable food system for all in the West Michigan area. Your donations fund the programs needed to accomplish this goal. Check out **accessofwestmichigan.org** to place a donation online. Thank you in advance for your generous contributions.

GET INVOLVED

Check out **accessofwestmichigan.org** to learn ways to get involved.

CONNECT

accessofwestmichigan.org

Access
OF WEST MICHIGAN
Cultivating Solutions to Poverty

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