Access
OF WEST MICHIGAN

Cultivating Solutions to Poverty

IMPACT REPORT
2018-2019

Celebrating the activity of God in our midst, Access strengthens and develops wholistic solutions to poverty by cultivating equitable systems through education and collaboration.

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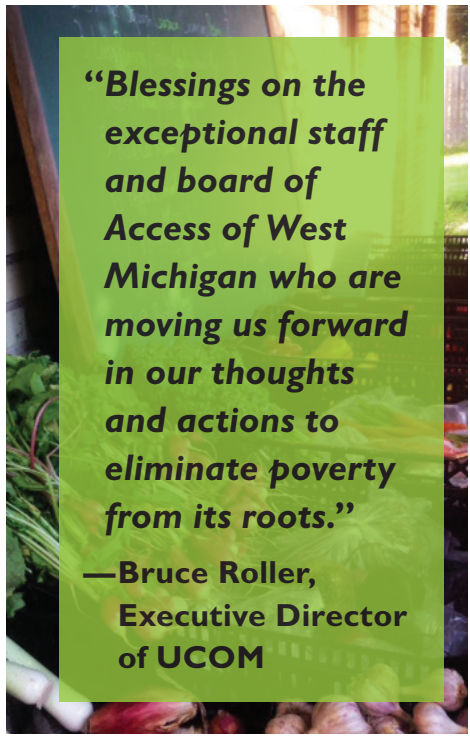


"Blessings on the exceptional staff and board of Access of West Michigan who are moving us forward in our thoughts and actions to eliminate poverty from its roots."

—Bruce Roller, Executive Director of UCOM

A VISION FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

The terms "equity" and "systems change" get thrown around a lot in our community. At Access these words are far more than buzzwords, they are central to our mission and integral values in each of our programs. In the past year we have continued to work alongside our partners to make a meaningful impact for long term change in our community.

Through our **Poverty Education** workshops we taught emergency department doctors, high school students, pastors, and government officials about the root issues of poverty. Our experiential workshop demonstrated that poverty is more than meets the eye, and as a community we can prevent poverty rather than just react to it.

Through **Congregation Connections**, we partnered with congregations to examine systemic causes of poverty locally, held trainings on cultural sensitivity and housing, and engaged in community-wide events focused on addressing racism.

Through **Good Food Systems**, we challenged the lack of affordable grocery stores by piloting and supporting five year round farm markets. It is unjust for low-income neighborhoods to lack access to healthy food, so we took action. With our partners, we added value to the food system by opening additional retail outlets that support small local farms and fair production standards. Each market sells healthy and nutritious food at an affordable cost while increasing neighborhood vitality in areas with limited food access.

As we bring attention to the injustice in the systems that operate throughout our community and form innovative solutions in partnership with others, the result is authentic equity for all residents.

Thank you for sharing and supporting this vision!

Emma Garcia & Christina Swiney
Co-Executive Directors

POVERTY EDUCATION

Poverty Education Workshops exist to overcome misconceptions about poverty and motivate people to become involved in activities that promote justice in our communities, as well as provide economic opportunity for our workshop staffers. Our vision is to create community awareness of systemic challenges of poverty and promote fair and just social solutions.

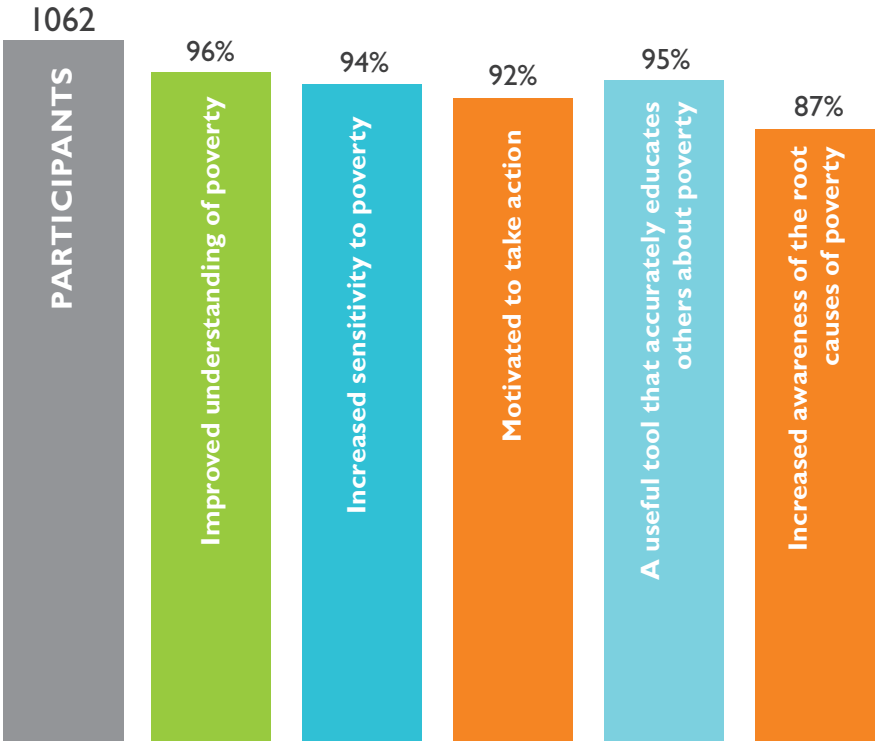
30 Staffers Employed

20 Organizations Trained

Organizations include schools, non-profits, medical institutions, government entities, churches, and corporations.

"This was a great exercise to show the different levels of poverty and what families are actually facing on a daily basis." **—Participant**

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES



CONGREGATION CONNECTIONS

Congregation Connections links social services and faith groups, working to strengthen communities throughout Kent County by supporting ministry and outreach teams. We collaborate with the faith-based community by offering training and casework services. We envision a thriving network of faith communities that act as centers of relationship and connection with their neighbors.

100 Partner Congregations

17 Denominations Served

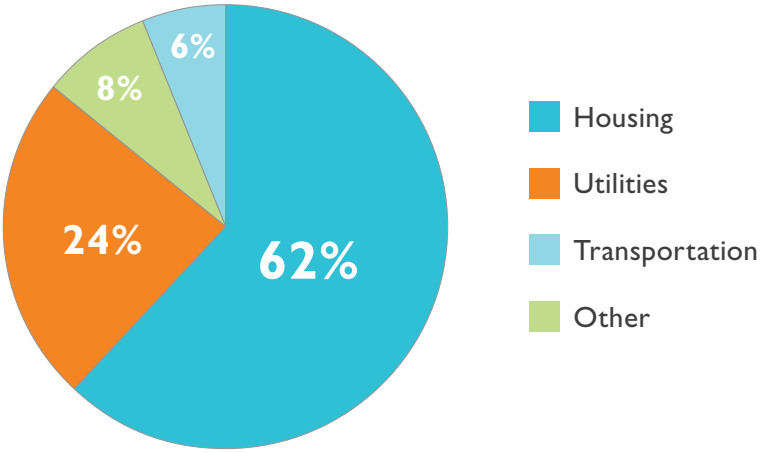
1,561 Families Served

$314,520 Distributed for Community Needs

Pictured below, Lee Street Church. Photo Credit Troy Meekhof @MidJulyMedia

"We learned a lot from you and we are in the process of changing how we handle financial requests we receive. Thank you again."
—Lee Street Christian Reformed Church Deacons

TYPES OF ASSISTANCE REQUESTED



TRAININGS & EVENTS

- Cultural Sensitivity Training
- Housing Training
- Stand Against Racism
- MLK Day 2019: A Stone of Hope

Pictured below are hosts of this past year's Stand Against Racism Event. Access hosted this event alongside the Christian Reformed Church Office of Race Relations and Calvin University. The event featured Truth's Table Podcast.

GOOD FOOD SYSTEMS

Growing a local food system that is fair, green, healthy, and affordable for all.

The work of Good Food Systems aims to address food access, health, and justice in our local food system. Our values are:

- Equipping community partners
- Investing in our local food economy
- Growing health
- Convening food and faith conversations

We are thankful for the following program sites that join us in our work:

SECOM Resource Center, North End Community Ministries, United Church Outreach Ministries (UCOM), The Pantry, Streams of Hope, Cityview Church, Family Network of Wyoming, The Other Way Ministries, and North Kent Connect

201 People Participated in our Nutrition Program at Seven Program Sites

80% of participants reported cooking more healthy food for family and friends

70% of participants reported visiting the Emergency Department less

86% of participants reported they feel as if they can better self-manage their chronic disease

3,541 Participants Reported an Increase in Food Security

We completed year two of our healthy, affordable food markets initiative and community supported agriculture cohorts at five program sites.

of market shoppers report that the Pantry Farm Markets make it easier to access affordable fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood

of market shoppers report that they eat more fruits and vegetables because of the Pantry Farm Markets

$73,760 Invested into Local Farm Partners

"Thank you for your work in asking the hard questions and inviting us into the space to do the same!"

—A participant in *one of the 7 good food workshops* led by Access in the past year

OPERATING EXPENSES: $396,035

- Farm to Pantry: $41,800
- Good Food Systems: $38,257
- Nutritional Options for Wellness: $44,258
- Poverty Education: $32,088
- Annual Fund: $24,378
- General Expenses: $147,859
- Congregation Connections: $67,395

PASS THROUGH FUNDING: $835,998

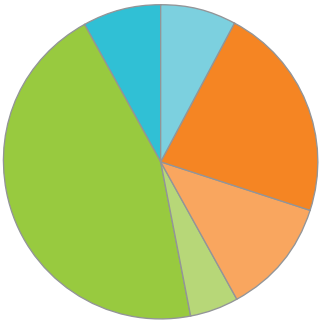
There are two ways monies are passed through and distributed at Access. One is through our Congregation Connections Program, and the other is when we serve as the fiduciary for grant programs (for example, the funding for the affordable food markets). In 2018-2019, $253,043 passed through Access for Congregation Casework Services, and $582,955 for grant funding to community partners and organizations.

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OVER $5,000

- Amway Corporation
- Kent County Health Department and the Michigan Health and Wellness 4x4 Plan
- Fifth Third Bank
- Spectrum Health Healthier Communities
- Non-Profit Technical Assistance Fund
- Heart of West Michigan United Way
- Wege Foundation
- Local Spins
- Fountain Street Church
- Andy J Egan Company
- LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church
- Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church
- Trinity Lutheran

OPERATING INCOME: $465,273



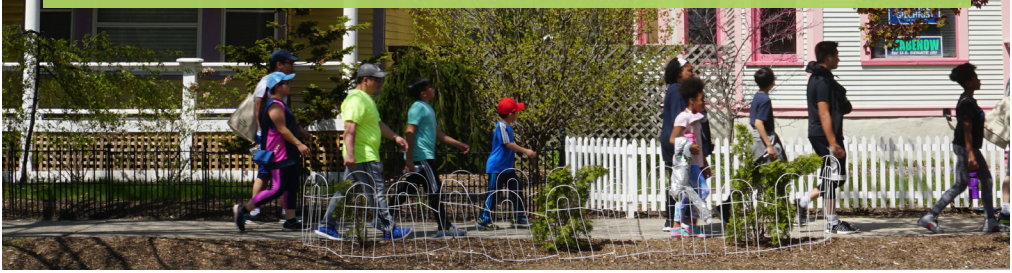
- Events: $21,528
- Grants/Foundations: $211,052
- Individuals: $58,062
- Congregations: $100,976
- Earned Income: $38,221
- Businesses: $35,434

41st ANNUAL WALK FOR GOOD FOOD

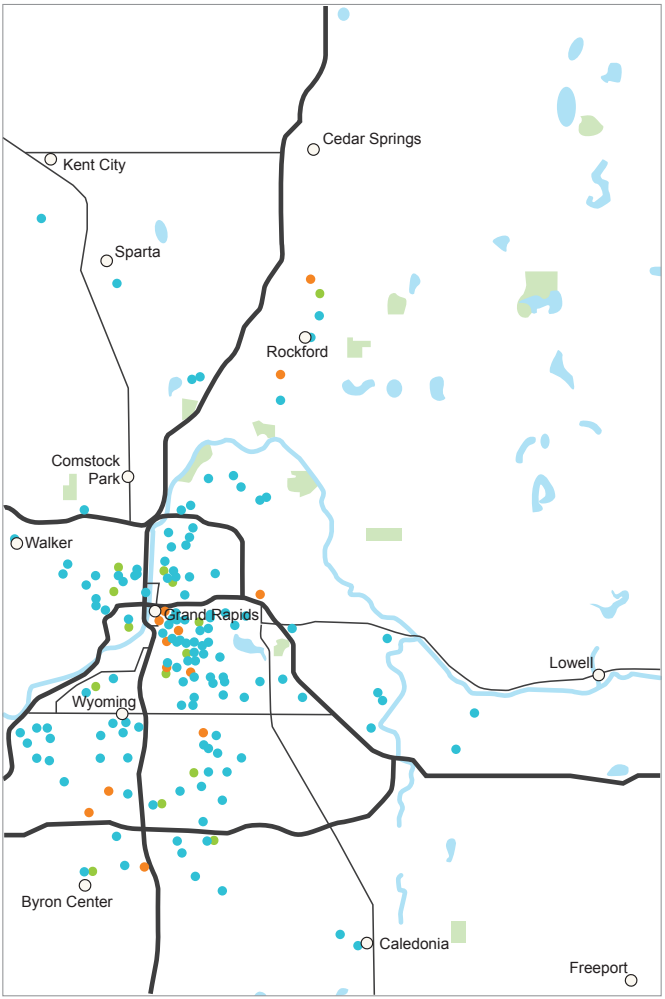
The Walk brings non-profit organizations, businesses, congregations, farms, and individuals together to bring awareness of the great work happening in our community to address food access and poverty. By walking together we unite in vision of a Good Food system for all and broaden our shared impact for social good.

Funds Raised for Good Food Organizations: $112,024

Access of West Michigan • Urban Roots • New City Neighbors
Asian Community Outreach • Baxter Community Center • HQ GR
East Paris Food Pantry • Heartside Gleaning Initiative • Hope Farms
Meals on Wheels Western Michigan • North End Community Ministries
Our Kitchen Table • United Methodist Community House • Plainsong Farm
SECOM Resource Center • The Pantry • St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Community Ministries Program at Trinity United Methodist Church
United Church Outreach Ministries (UCOM) • Westminster Food Pantry



THE WORK OF ACCESS IN KENT COUNTY



Congregation Connections **Good Food Systems** **Poverty Education**

GET INVOLVED/ CONNECT

Check out accessofwestmichigan.org and follow us on social media to stay up to date and learn ways to get involved.