

Letter from the Founder

Dear Friends,

I thank you for your time and consideration in regards to helping our community children in need. It was not long ago that a young girl, determined to not let a single child experience the pain of hunger, inspired me to launch this effort that inevitably turned into a nonprofit serving a deep community need.

In the last two school years, we've overcome extra challenges in reaching our students in need as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact operations at each school. We desperately miss our in-person interactions with the students, but remain committed to providing food each week delivered to the schools for student pickup.

Hunger hurts. We must stop the pain.

I personally am so moved by every student and every story that walks through our door, especially the opportunity to make it better. We have recently started two new partnerships with local schools, including Concord Academy charter school and Carnegie Cupboard. This brings our total Den count to six operational food pantries.

This work cannot continue without you. Rising food costs and ongoing challenges of the pandemic certainly impact the impoverished families in our community. **Please consider a gift this holiday season in order to ensure that no child is forgotten.**

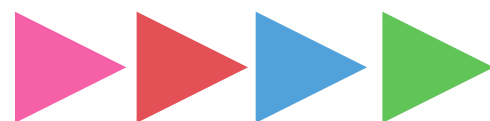
Sincerely,



Kathy Peterson

Kathy Petersen

Donation Tiers



\$10
Provide a weekend supply of food to one student.

\$18
Provide a weekend of food and a few extra needs to one student.

\$40
Provide weekend meals for one month to a student.

\$80
Provide weekend meals for one month to two students.

\$100
Provide a weekend supply of food to 10 students.



Meet Northmen Den Youth Services, Inc.

It's hard to believe we've been at this work for 6 years, but alas! We have, and despite this continue to meet new kids each school with hunger needs. Hunger hurts, and our work aims to solve this problem.

Our first pantry Den opened its doors at Petoskey Middle School, on Friday, November 18, 2016. At that time, an average of 8 new students per week began coming to shop. Today, we operate 6 pantries serving 80 students each week.

Since Concord Academy does not have a school kitchen, students must bring lunch from home. Therefore, on December 2, we are beginning a new weekly lunch program on Thursdays for MS and HS students ages 11 to 18, where 65% deal daily with hunger. We will be providing all 75 students with a healthy sack lunch consisting of a turkey sandwich, veggies, fruit, and a cookie.

Today, we also have many other big changes to celebrate. We've officially established ourselves as an organization focused on serving this community. The **Northmen Den Youth Services** in July 2021 applied to the IRS for its 501c3 nonprofit status.

We have a logo, website, Facebook page and newsletter and are reaching out to you at this critical time for year-end donations to serve our most vulnerable students dealing with hunger.

Let no child be forgotten.





1 in 5

kids in Michigan struggle in poverty

"We enjoy the feeling we are doing a good and necessary project for our most vulnerable youth in Harbor Springs. It was a shock learning the level of need among families in Emmet County. We hope the children feel valued and know we care about them unconditionally."

—Sarah and David Kuckelman

The Forgotten Children

Alex, a high school junior who lives with 3 sisters, his mother and stepfather, knows his family didn't have much. He shops at Northmen Den Youth Services' pantry inside his school weekly. The pantry store offers free food and other items to kids in need each Friday.

Over time, Alex and the volunteers have gotten to know each other - like most Den kids do. One Thursday, he popped his head into the Den while a volunteer was stocking shelves.

"Are you open?" he asked.

"If you need something for dinner tonight, it's open for you," the volunteer replied.

"I don't understand people," he said.

"Sometimes, it's hard to understand another person's choices or actions," the volunteer said.

He stood still for a moment, before explaining that he just got a text from his stepfather. He paused again for some time, before asking if he could read the text aloud.

"I care about you," he read. "BUT I can't share my food with you."

He repeated his stepfather's text message three times. He explained his stepfather would make his mother to only cook dinner for his stepfather and herself, but not for him or his sisters.

"I am so sorry that your stepfather would do that," the volunteer offered sympathy. "It sounds to me that he was once a very hungry little boy whose father said the same to him."

"Yeah, we don't have much," Alex said.

Alex isn't alone. In Emmet County, 34% of families fall into the ALICE category: Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed families. These are families who struggle to afford basic needs like food and shelter. In Petoskey, 1 in 3 teens are walking school hallways hungry, according to MISchoolData.org, and deal with hunger daily.

While families struggling on low income in the region have access to food through the Manna Food Project's Food4Kids program, this support service stops when a child enters sixth grade. In sixth grade, kids are 11 years old. This makes kids in our area ages 11 to 18 the "forgotten" children.

It doesn't take long for a child in middle school, struggling with poverty, to realize they are different: they smell; they don't dress as nicely as the other kids; and they become invisible.

This holiday season, let's remember all children.

We can take action to empower our youth to strive beyond their circumstances and write their own future story. On average, each student that visits on Friday takes enough for dinner, plus 4 to 6 small meals for Saturday and Sunday.

2,250

Den students were served in 2021.

July 2021

Northmen Dens Youth Pantries, Inc. applied for 501c3 status



Benefits of our pantry style

Northmen Den Youth Pantries is designed to operate like a "store" for these children, providing this sense of dignity and control for children otherwise without. Our experience watching the children shop at the Den reinforced that it is important to:

1. **Empower students by allowing them some control over their lives**, as they choose the food they take and sometimes take extra items to care for siblings;
2. **Provide food which is as nutritional as possible**, including name brand items within reason;
3. **Empower Den students by allowing them to assist with setting up the pantry**;
4. **Encourage healthy independence** by providing instruction on how to prepare simple meals, for instance, a can of soup accompanied by fresh fruit, carrots, bagels, rolls, or other foods.