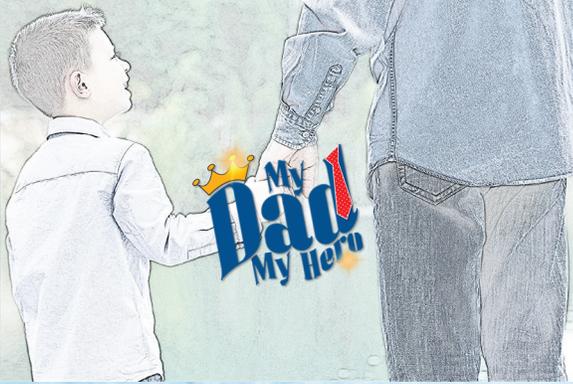


Caring Connections October 2024

“My Hero, My Dad”



Noah was sad and didn't speak. His eyes looked at the floor—not at anyone—just the floor.

This was the first time he had visited the Northmen Den, accompanied by a teacher. At 12 years old, he seemed deflated and lifeless.

He had just lost his father, and his mother was struggling to keep the family together with food, a home, and countless other things.

Noah rarely spoke to the volunteers. But with their warmth and care, he began to open up about his Dad and slowly smiled while he shopped.

Over the year, he shared how he missed his dad and began sharing pencil drawings.

He whispered to volunteer Dottie that he was writing a story about his dad. Dottie told him she would love to read it when it was complete so that she could get to know him and his dad better.

On the day he won the blue ribbon for the middle school essay contest, 'My Hero, My Dad,' he came running into the Den to share his good news with the volunteers who comforted him throughout the school year, especially to Dottie.

“He and his mother moved near his grandmother, and I pray he is well. What an incredible young boy. Seeing so much progress in these young people is rewarding and a blessing in our lives,” a note to me from Dottie.

Dottie Hawthorne was the adult who helped this young boy while working at the Northmen Den in Petoskey Middle School. She was quiet yet powerful enough to make all the children she helped believe in their dreams and life stories.

Rest In Peace, Dottie. You were a gift from heaven for our most vulnerable middle school children.

Kathy Petersen

How Do Children Learn About Our Youth Pantries?

In the same way, our first middle school pantry grew to a fantastic number, from eight students to 42 from November 2016 to June 2017, and we are now seeing over 400 students who learned about us from a friend.

It's the students themselves who play a crucial role in spreading the word about our pantries. **It's a chain reaction, from one friend to another, and another!** The school doesn't provide us with a list of kids who might need a hand-up during the weekend when there is no school breakfast or lunch, and it's not our place to go searching for them.



Briannaca and Carole welcoming students @ Hornets Nest

This is how it happens...

When a child first steps into a school-based pantry, they are welcomed with open arms. We never ask why they are there, as it's not our place to pry. Instead, our volunteers explain to the students that food is expensive for ALL families, and if they want to take home a bag of food, that's okay with us.



My mom said YES to shopping at my school's youth pantry!

We know two things will happen if a child takes a bag home.

ONE - the child comes back, for a parent has said, "This is good! It's okay for you to help!
OR

TWO - The parents have explained to the child that the groceries are not needed for a variety of reasons, and the child does not come back!

It's very simple, and it's beautiful to see a child shopping freely, knowing that they are helping their family with weekly expenses. One child explained, "**Me shopping at the Viking Vault helps my mom pay for our rent and lights.**" Now, **how wonderful is that!**

Discover YOU[®]

Eighty Percent of Northmen Den Youth Services' Mission is to provide food for middle and high school students experiencing hunger.

Equally significant is the remaining 20% of our mission: we are deeply committed to empowering ALL teenagers to realize their full potential and discover their unique SUPERPOWER.



A mother told Kathy once, "I still feel guilty that I didn't realize my teenage daughter was dealing with such loneliness during high school."

In 2021, the Youth Advisory Committee* of 23 youths in Emmet County Schools gave a Youth Needs Assessment Survey to 7th – 12th graders.

Here are a few of the Results from the survey:

- Mental Health issues like depression and anxiety
- Self-esteem/confidence
- Peer pressure
- There are not enough positive, fun things to do after school

Kathy Petersen, Executive Director and founder of Northmen Den Youth Pantries & Services, is a former high school art, English, and Humanities teacher in Saline, Michigan, and a Certified Discover YOU™ Coach who will offer this fantastic program at our downtown office and classroom.

As one YAC student emailed the advisor, "I think this is a beautiful idea for lonely kids (like me). Who would have thought a YAC member in clubs and other activities felt lonely? **But they do. Discover YOU is a group of teens who learn about the beautiful characteristics that all people have within themselves at any age.**

Check out the Discover YOU™ flyer on the back, and call or email Kathy with any questions you may have if you think your son or daughter might be interested! Also, share it with parents, who might want to know about it!



Northmen Den Youth Pantries

501C3 EIN 86-2073121
422 Mitchell Street
PO Box 2085

Petoskey, MI 49770
231-489-8114

kathy@northmendens.org



UNLEASH YOUR TRUEST POTENTIAL!

What if you had a super power?

What if there was an untouchable, unbreakable part of you?

Would you want to know about it?



501(C)3 Charity



Discover YOU with old and new friends with group convos and games plus, a Jimmy John Sandwich & Cookie of your choice in an after-school, relaxed, casual setting!

IT'S FREE!

9th & 10th Graders

Tuesday 3:30 – 4:30
October 29 - December 17
January 7 – February 25

11th & 12th Graders

Thursday 3:30 – 4:30
October 31 to December 19
October 24 - December 12



Space is limited so register as soon as possible to reserve your spot!
Rolling Registration - you can join anytime!

LOCATION:

425 Michigan Street, 2nd Floor, Suite #4
(next to the Back Lot and Above TAP 30)

QUESTIONS:

Call Kathy Petersen @ 231-489-8114 or
kathy@northmendens.org



IMPROVING THE WAY
AMERICANS EAT & MOVE



Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area
community foundation
YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area
community foundation

**All Teens
Are Welcome!**