



Manna resumes food rescue program, accepts food donations after year-long hiatus

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HARBOR SPRINGS, MICHIGAN—Manna Food Project has announced that it will resume its Food Rescue program as well as accept food donations from the public starting April 1, 2021. After a year-long suspension, this decision comes after diligently tracking community transmission of the virus.

“Pausing Food Rescue last March was the right thing to do,” says Kim Baker, Executive Director of Manna Food Project. “Although it’s difficult to turn away food donations, we had to take every precaution to protect our staff, volunteers, partners, and food pantry clients.”

The purpose of Manna’s Food Rescue program is to collect donated and surplus food each week from local grocery stores and businesses. These items range from soon-to-expire canned goods, discontinued and overstocked items, day-old breads and baked goods, prepared food from restaurants, and produce naturally being rotated off the shelves, all of which would otherwise go to waste. By diverting this food from the landfill, Manna not only fills hungry bellies but also reduces food waste in the community—about half a million pounds each year, accounting for approximately 25 percent of the food they distribute.

The other 75 percent of the food Manna acquires is through their association with Feeding America and the US Department of Agriculture, along with purchasing from local suppliers. As a Partner Food Bank of Feeding America West Michigan, Manna regularly receives shipments of free and low-cost food from a distribution center near Grand Rapids. They also purchase some items from retailers like Meijer, Burnette Foods, and Sysco.

Once the influx of donated foods came to a halt, Manna was forced to increase these kinds of purchases. As a result, Manna doubled its spending in April 2020 compared to April 2019.

“We were lucky to have such generous community support at the time we needed it most,” Baker says. Baker explains that Manna staff came together and re-evaluated the Food Rescue situation many times throughout 2020, but the nature of the virus and its spread throughout the community was too difficult to predict. He also highlighted the bigger responsibility the organization had to Northwest Michigan.

“The bottom line is this: if we had to close down our operations to quarantine, there goes food assistance for three counties. Potentially thousands of people in our region would be without a source of emergency food. That was a risk we couldn’t take. But now that the case counts have stabilized and

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vaccines have been distributed to many of our staff and volunteers, we feel comfortable to resume the program.”

For more information on Manna’s Food Rescue program or preferred food donations, visit www.mannafoodproject.org/manna-food-rescue.htm, or call their office at 231.347.8852.

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Manna Food Project, a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization, helps feed the hungry in Antrim, Charlevoix, and Emmet Counties. Manna is a partner organization of the national Feeding America Food Bank Network and operates a food bank and distribution center, a food rescue program, a food pantry, and the “Food 4 Kids” backpack program. For more information, call 231.347.8852 or visit www.mannafoodproject.org.