THREE SQUARES

A Rotary Project to Reduce Food Insecurity in District 6290

Because the Hungry will Always be Among Us
Three Squares

Have you ever wondered where the term “Three Squares” originated?

In the days of old wooden sailing ships, availability of food and fresh water was always a problem, making it difficult to feed healthy meals to hardworking crews. This was especially true when the ships were exposed to severe weather that tossed the ships like corks on the waves. In these conditions, the wood burning stoves used to prepare the healthy meals on the ships became dangerous devices that could even consume a wooden ship. As a result, hot food was often difficult to provide.

To serve the meals on Royal Navy ships, the ship’s carpenter would make plates for the crew. The easiest way to make plates was to cut square sections from a piece of wood. Square-shaped plates could be easily stowed away and would not break in the event of rough weather. Turning the square-shaped plates into round ones was an unnecessary expense.

When sea conditions allowed and there was sufficient food available, every effort would be made to provide the crew with hot meals served on those square plates. If you enjoyed “three square meals a day,” you were receiving the food needed to support a healthy and active life.
To Rotarians in District 6290:

Hunger touches every community, nation, and region in the world. There is no easy way to describe the grim fact that nearly 870 million people on our planet are chronically undernourished. Sadly, a great number of those affected are children, whose minds and bodies are denied the sustenance needed to grow into healthy, productive adults.

We are all familiar with hunger in the developing world. But many of us are less familiar with hunger affecting people in our own communities right here in North America.

Food insecurity, the inability to ensure the ongoing availability of food, affects 1 in 6 American and 1 in 7 Canadian households. In the case of children, these numbers are significantly higher. To address this issue in our District, I would like all Rotarians to join me in a year-long focus on food insecurity in our local communities. During the 2014/2015 Rotary Year, I am asking all of the 60 Rotary clubs in District 6290 to use your vast resources and diverse membership to establish an ongoing project to help alleviate food insecurity in your neighborhoods. Many clubs are already doing annual projects of this nature and to that I say congratulations and thanks. Please continue your fine work. If you have not undertaken such a project already, I encourage you to seek fresh insights into the needs of your community and to pursue innovative answers to combat the problem of hunger that touches your community.

To assist in this effort, we have partnered with Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank to develop the information in this pamphlet to help club members make connections to local hunger-relief agencies, discover community needs, and identify and fund new projects. I am confident that you will not only identify a project that will make a positive impact to combat the problem of food insecurity in your community, but that your implementation of that project will be a tremendous success.

Thank you for joining me in this district-wide undertaking. Together we can make a profound difference in the lives of those less fortunate in our district by ensuring that Three Squares are enjoyed by all of our neighbors.

Yours in Rotary,

Al Bonney,
District Governor 2014/2015
Rotary International District 6290
Food Insecurity in Michigan and Ontario

What is food insecurity?

Food insecurity is unreliable access to life’s most basic building block: food. It may seem strange, but right here in North America, in two of the world’s most economically advantaged countries, millions of children, adults, and seniors are worrying about where their next meal will come from. For these neighbors, Three Squares are hard to come by.

The most recent studies show that food insecurity affects 1.8 million people in Michigan\(^1\), and 571,000 in Ontario\(^2\). And the problem isn’t going away.

Food insecurity is a symptom of poverty. So if the economy is improving overall, why hasn’t food access followed?

The reasons are complex, but it appears that many people have simply been left behind by the economic recovery. Companies are operating with smaller staffs, wages have barely budged,\(^3\) healthcare continues to get more expensive,\(^4\) and higher education costs are skyrocketing.\(^5\) At the same time, the federal government has been cutting back on food assistance, shifting more and more of the burden onto private charities.\(^6\)

But while the reasons for food insecurity may be complicated, the answer is simple.

While millions of people have a food deficit, industry has a food surplus. Each year, an estimated 40% of all food produced in the United States goes to waste.\(^7\) If we can save even a small amount of that food from going to waste and get it into the hands of those in need, we can go a long way to making sure that food is available to all who need it in our communities.

This simple idea is at the heart of modern hunger relief in North America.

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Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank

Note: While Feeding America West Michigan serves most of the territory in District 6290, the district overlaps with the service areas of several other food banks. See the section titled “Food Banks in Michigan and Ontario” for more information.

Founded in 1981, Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank exists for one purpose: to ensure that food is available to our neighbors in need.

In 2013, Feeding America West Michigan distributed more food than ever before: 25.6 million pounds in 40 counties from southwest Michigan through the Upper Peninsula. The majority of that food was reclaimed from farmers, retailers, and processors who would likely have thrown it out otherwise due to overproduction or unmarketability. (Shoppers tend to pass over oddly shaped fruits or dented cereal boxes, for example.)

At our main warehouse north of Grand Rapids, our volunteers help us sort, inspect, pack, and ship this food to more than 1,200 hunger-relief agencies across the state. These agencies include food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and mobile food pantry sites where fresh food is hand-delivered to people in need.

These agencies are on the front lines in the fight against hunger. Most of them are run by volunteers and supported by small congregations or community centers. Too often, they are unable to fully meet the need in their neighborhoods because they lack adequate funding, facilities, or expertise.

That’s where Rotary International comes in.

Get Involved in Your Community

Each Rotary Club is an arsenal packed full of the most potent anti-hunger weapon: connections. Through Rotary, you’re connected to local congregations, financial institutions, building contractors, colleges, electricians, IT experts, logistics companies, food producers, and more.
You have all the resources a community hunger-relief agency could need to meet the challenges they face.

So how can you use those connections to make sure everyone in your community has access to Three Squares?

I. **Infrastructure Improvements**
   - Widen doorways to accommodate forklifts and pallet jacks
   - Install shelving to increase storage capacity
   - Create kitchens where agencies can prepare meals and host cooking demonstrations

II. **Equipment Purchases**
   - Improve client access to fruits, vegetables, dairy, and meat with refrigerators and freezers
   - Facilitate food transport by donating pallet jacks, grocery carts, flexible roller tracks, and vehicles
   - Improve food service by donating cooking equipment
   - Accommodate more clients by donating chairs and tables

III. **Technology and Communications**
   - Streamline food ordering and client interactions by donating computers and software
   - Strengthen agency ability to communicate and fundraise by creating or updating websites

IV. **Service Expansion**
   - Offer strategic planning consultations for agency leadership
   - Assist Feeding America West Michigan in installing resource stations at agencies to help clients access public services
   - Underwrite an internship or staff position to provide nutrition education, financial counseling, or job training

V. **Financial Assistance**
   - Donate to Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank
   - Contribute to a county-by-county relief fund for struggling agencies at Feeding America West Michigan
   - Establish a fund at Feeding America West Michigan to help agencies build capacity
   - Fund a backpack program at a local agency to improve availability of food to children
   - Cover an agency’s utility or fuel bills
VI. **Food Industry Connections**
- Bolster the local economy and improve food access by connecting Feeding America West Michigan to local growers, retailers, and processors

VII. **Volunteer**
- Give your time to a local agency in the area of greatest need
- Volunteer at a Food Bank branch or partner

**Features of a Sustainable Agency**

Hunger-relief agencies, just like any business or organization, need to develop strong strategies in order to weather challenges and meet their goals. Consider how your Club’s project can help agencies achieve the following sustainable features.

1. **Physical Capacity**: The agency has enough dry storage, refrigerator, and freezer space to meet demand and has room to expand.
2. **Transportation**: The agency has the ability to transport all the food it needs from the Food Bank to their location.
3. **Staffing**: The agency is adequately staffed and has a strong and growing volunteer base.
4. **Financial Security**: The agency is adequately funded with a forward-looking strategy and diverse funding sources.
5. **Fundraising**: The agency has strong support from individual donors, participates in fundraising events that build awareness, and has incorporated grant-writing into their strategy.
6. **Computing**: The agency has a computer and is able to keep electronic records, communicate by email, and order food online.
7. **Networking**: The agency maintains constructive communication with fellow nonprofits, making referrals for their clients for a variety of human needs.
8. **Client Choice**: The agency allows clients full freedom in selecting which food items they receive, especially with regard to clients with special dietary restrictions.
9. **Food Bank Involvement**: The agency participates in a variety of Food Bank programs and avails itself of any resources for improvement the Food Bank may offer.
Food Banks in Michigan and Ontario

If you’d like to get connected with the main food distribution hubs in your area, contact the Feeding America West Michigan branch or partner organization closest to you.

Food Bank Locations

Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank
864 West River Center Drive
Comstock Park, MI 49321
District Counties Served: Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Ottawa
Contact: Ken Estelle
616-784-3250
kennethestelle@feedingamericawestmichigan.org

Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank — Cadillac, Michigan
101 Clay Drive
Cadillac, MI 49601
District Counties Served: Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Lake, Leelanau, Manistee, Mason, Missaukee, Osceola, Wexford
Contact: Lorrie Sluiter
231-779-0056
lorries@feedingamericawestmichigan.org

Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank — Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan
815 Meridian Street
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783
District County Served: Chippewa
Contact: LeeAnn Izzard
906-632-0348
LeeAnnl@FeedingAmericaWestMichigan.org

Partners in Michigan

Food Rescue of Northwest Michigan
2279 South Airport Road West
Traverse City, MI 49684
District Counties Served: Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Kalkaska
Contact: Brandon Seng
231-995-7723
brandons@goodwillnmi.org
Manna Food Project
8791 McBride Park Ct.
Harbor Springs, MI 49770
District Counties Served: Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet
Contact: Deb Noblett
231-347-8852
manna@mannafoodproject.org

Food Bank of Eastern Michigan
2312 Lapeer Road
Flint, MI 48503
District Counties Served: Crawford, Cheboygan, Otsego, Roscommon
Contact: Kara Ross
810-396-0213
kross@secondharvest.org

Ontario Food Banks

    Ontario Association of Food Banks
555 Bloor Street W
2nd Floor
Toronto, ON
M5S 1Y6
Contact: Amanda King
Amanda@oafb.ca

Local Hunger Statistics and Resources

Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank compiled information on food insecurity and poverty for each county and provincial district in Rotary International District 6290. The data for Michigan comes from the Michigan League for Public Policy’s Mapping the Facts project (2013) and Feeding America’s nationwide Map the Meal Gap project (2011). The data for Ontario comes from Statistics Canada’s Health Profile, December 2013, and Food Banks Canada’s Hunger Count 2013. The goal is to provide you with a snapshot of need in your local community, along with contact information for the individual agencies hard at work fighting hunger.

To view the information for your county, visit the District 6290 website at www.ridistrict6290.org and click on Three Squares.
Use Social Media to Spread the Word!

Here are some quick ideas that can help increase ‘the buzz’ about our service project(s):

1. Collect & Share current news about projects and need. Bulk up your Club Facebook inbound newsfeed with stories from organizations that are focusing on the need and this project in particular. Have your Facebook Administrator ‘Like’ the following pages on behalf of your club. You’ll have a great source of regular, news-worthy posts that can be shared with your club and your followers. (www.facebook.com/FeedingAmericaWestMichigan, www.facebook.com/FeedingAmerica, www.facebook.com/ridistrict6290)

2. Define/Promote your club project(s).
   a. Partner with other clubs – Have your Club Facebook Admin post that you’re considering a project and are seeking partners. Post that on your club page, but also post it to the District Facebook page. The District will ‘share’ that so all following our District page will get the news. (At last check, 40 of our clubs are on Facebook).
   b. Promote your projects – Create a Facebook Event for major club activity designed for public involvement (or funding). Share that with your club and District and encourage people to ‘invite’ their friends via Facebook.
   c. Tell local organizations/media what you’re doing by putting the same info on Facebook pages of local news stations, radio stations, newspapers etc.
   d. Be sure to capture great images and mini video clips that tell the story. Be sensitive to securing permission from participants if you intend to use these in your promotions. Remember that fun, action shots are more interesting than a group of people sitting around a table planning an event.
   e. Be sure to post all great info and don’t forget to mention Rotary 😊

SERVICE PROJECT CYCLE

Conduct Community Assessment
Evaluate Success
Select A Project
Make A Plan
Fund The Project
Work With Community Partners
Manage The Project

To learn more about the Service Project Cycle, go to www.ridistrict6290.org, click on Three Squares, and click on “Communities In Action, A Guide To Effective Projects”
Rotary District 6290 Local Matching Grants Available

To Support Club Relief Projects

Double the Impact on your Community from your Club’s Project!

If your project addresses an identified need in your community, is sustainable and your club
1) donated at least $50 per capita to the Rotary Foundation Annual Fund during the 2013-2014
Rotary year, 2) met the attendance requirements at the District Grant Management Seminar,
3) submitted the MOU pertaining to grants, and 4) is current on grant reports for prior grants,
your club is eligible for a local matching grant for your project during the 2014-2015 Rotary
year. Local grants for individual club projects will be awarded in the amount from $500 -
$1500. Local grants for collaborative projects with one or more clubs are also available. For
more information on the local matching grant process, go to www.ridistrict6290.org and click
on Foundation.

For the 2014-2015 Rotary year, project sustainability and addressing an identified need in your
community will be an important component for grant approval. As such, grant requests for
service projects that go beyond cash and/or food donations will be considered. Examples of
sustainable projects that will be considered are (see pages 3 and 4 for additional examples):

1. Infrastructure improvements (ex: new food pantry shelving, pantry building
   improvements, etc.)
2. Equipment purchases (ex: new refrigerator, new cooking equipment, new tables and
   chairs, food carts, etc.), and
3. Technology and communications improvements (ex: new computers, new software,
   upgraded websites, etc.)

To review the local grant instructions and application, go to the Rotary District 6290 website,
click on “Foundation” on the toolbar at the top of the homepage, then “Foundation Grants.”
The process is straightforward and funds are available for your community.

The District Grants Committee will accept applications for Local Matching Grants from July 1 –
October 31, 2014 for the 2014-2015 Rotary year. Funds normally become available for the
projects in January.

If you have any questions pertaining to the grant process, contact PDG Jane Millar, District 6290
Grants Committee Chair, at (231) 347-2347 or jane@northernmediation.org.
The EarlyAct Club of Lowell, Michigan, is a school-wide Rotary International service club for elementary students from ages 5 to 13. The Club is the first EarlyAct Club in District 6290 and is sponsored by the Lowell Rotary Club. The mission of EarlyAct is to promote goodwill, understanding and peace through the active participation of its student members so that with committed citizenship and effective leadership they may improve the quality of life of their school, local and global communities.

Thank you, members of the EarlyAct Club of Lowell, for making a profound difference in the lives of people all over the world!