

From Hunger to Hope: Meijer Simply Give Fuels Local Pantry

When a young family of five lost their home and had to move into a single room in a motel, they weren't sure where their next meal would come from. Without a kitchen or refrigerator, fixing meals and storing food was nearly impossible. That's where Grand Rapids-based Northwest Food Pantry stepped in.

For three months, the pantry helped the family find food they could store and prepare under tough circumstances. Thanks to the Meijer Simply Give hunger relief program, the pantry was able to supply fresh food and essential staples, ensuring the family had enough to eat while working toward stability.

Through the pantry's connections with several local partnerships, the father found a job and the family secured subsidized housing and six months later, they no longer needed assistance. But their connection to the pantry didn't stop there. The mother now volunteers, supporting others facing similar challenges.

Northwest Food Pantry started in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1990 after a group of deacons from area churches learned of the food insecurity in their neighborhood. Finding no nearby resources for help, they went into action. Since then, what started as a small, church-led effort has grown into a vital resource, helping between 140 and 180 families every week and more than 8,500 people annually.

Using just 500 square feet in the basement of Trinity Reformed Church, the pantry uses an efficient, client-choice model that allows families to select the food they need rather than receiving pre-packed boxes.

"It gives them dignity," said Becca Schelhaas, the pantry's executive director. "People should have a say in what they bring home to their families."

As demand grows, partnerships have become critical. One of the most important is the Meijer Simply Give program, which helps Northwest Food Pantry purchase food when it's needed most.

"Every single item in this pantry is a donation," Becca said. "If we didn't have Simply Give, I don't know how we'd do this. It allows us to buy exactly what we need, when we need it."

Simply Give lets Meijer customers purchase donation cards that fund pantry purchases. On double match days, Meijer double-matches any cards purchased, effectively tripling contributions.

One of the biggest benefits is access to fresh produce, dairy and proteins, items that many food pantries struggle to provide.

"We get plenty of canned goods, but Simply Give allows us to buy fresh items like potatoes, onions, milk and eggs," Becca said. "Things people take for granted but are absolutely essential."

The people who rely on Northwest Food Pantry come from many walks of life. Some are retirees or individuals with disabilities struggling with the rising cost of food. Others are working families who earn too much to qualify for government assistance but still have financial difficulties. The pantry also serves migrant workers and families with children who need extra help to get through tough times.

"There's no one typical client," Becca said. "But the biggest group we serve are those who don't quite qualify for food stamps but still can't make ends meet."

Since Becca became director of the pantry in 2024, the number of families visiting the pantry has doubled. "Every month, we see new families," she said. "And every month, the need grows."

Supporting hunger relief efforts like Northwest Food Pantry is easy with Meijer Simply Give. The Meijer Alpine store in Grand Rapids has partnered with the pantry, ensuring local donations stay in the community.

“We always need food donations, volunteers and personal care items,” Becca said. “But Simply Give is one of the most effective ways to support us because it lets us buy what we need, when we need it, without fail.”

Through the Meijer Simply Give hunger relief program, we’re proud to support organizations like Northwest Food Pantry that provide dignity, stability, and hope for families facing food insecurity.

Additional assets available online:  [Photos](#) ⁽²⁾

<https://meijercommunity.com/2025-06-30-From-Hunger-to-Hope-Meijer-Simply-Give-Fuels-Local-Pantry>