THE LEAGUE OF EVERYDAY HEROES
LOOK INSIDE. Do you recognize the hero within?

For over 43 years, we here at TrueNorth have been doing our best to help alleviate the suffering of the less fortunate among us. Feeding the hungry, mentoring at-risk youth, housing the homeless, offering enriching cultural opportunities for our county’s youth and residents at large, giving the medically risk some peace of mind, and in a myriad of other ways as well. You know—good stuff, and lots of it!

It’s people like you though, who are the real heroes of our story; you, and the businesses and organizations who volunteer, donate, and generally support the work we do. We wouldn’t be able to do a fraction of what we do, or impact nearly as many people in need as we do without you.

There are the obvious heroes that we all celebrate like firefighters, soldiers, first responders, and the like. There are also other, less-obvious heroes like teachers, or the single parent who does the work of two for their children. Everyday Heroes like the person who volunteers their free time at a food pantry, or who decides to become a Big Brother or Big Sister to a child who just needs one more positive adult role model in their lives. Everyday Heroes like the person who decides the extra produce from their garden could be used to help feed hungry neighbors, or the person who dutifully gives financial resources to an organization like TrueNorth, to help alleviate the burdens of the less fortunate in our midst. Everyday Heroes like you!

We hope you enjoy looking through our rather unique 2014 ANNUAL REPORT. It’s purposefully unique because so are each of our Everyday Heroes, with unique skill sets, interests, motivations, and passions. Superman was able to “leap tall buildings in a single bound.” Our Everyday Heroes are able to feed the hungry with a single donation of fresh produce, change an adult’s life by teaching them to read, keep entire families safe and warm by keeping the lights and heat on, and positively impact their communities by collecting and donating shoes.

LOOK INSIDE TO FIND THE HERO WITHIN!
MARISSA CARRIER saw a commercial on TV about how Skechers was donating shoes to needy kids through the company’s charitable shoe program, BOBS from Skechers. She thought that was a very cool idea and decided to do something similar locally herself. The fact that Marissa was 7-years-old and in the 1st grade is what makes this story so unique.

With her birthday approaching, she asked her mom, Melanie, if instead of getting presents for herself, they could get shoes to donate to local kids who needed them. Understandably proud of Marissa, her mother readily agreed and together they spread the word via social media and good old fashioned word-of-mouth. Before they knew it, they had 69 pairs of shoes. They contacted TrueNorth to see if there was some way for us to distribute them, free of charge, to kids who really needed them. We immediately said, “We’ll come up with something,” and we did. The shoes were made available to our case workers so they could give the shoes to the children most in need.

Marissa is not alone in her efforts to help the less fortunate among us, but she is one of the youngest. We’re proud to highlight here as an Everyday Hero.

Our PROJECT FOCUS AND PACE out-of-school time programs were a partner with families to ensure a safe, learning, and enriching environment for 1,129 kids.

Having a mentor to help guide you and lead through example is essential for kids. Through one-on-one mentoring, outings, and other community events, 72 kids gained positive assets through BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF NEWAYGO COUNTY.

Through resident, day, family, and adventure-based programs, CAMP NEWAYGO provided an environment for 4,573 kids and their families to develop and grow into their best selves.
JOHN AND DENISE DILL have been volunteering for the TrueNorth Food Programs since January, 2011. Through the end of 2014, they had each donated over 250 hours of their time to the programs, and their enthusiasm and friendliness always make clients feel welcome in the pantry. They volunteer at least four hours each week in the food pantry and have also assisted with the Children’s Christmas Programs.

As Everyday Heroes, John and Denise went above and beyond the call of duty a few years back by helping to redesign the layout of the pantry and install new shelving units. This has created less crowding for clients, more space for food, and made the pantry more efficient overall.

John and Denise enjoy volunteering in the pantry because they are able to help people directly with a basic need. Their dedication to helping serve clients through the Food Pantry has set an example for many of our other volunteers and we are privileged to have them as volunteers at TrueNorth.

There are countless other Everyday Heroes like the Dills who give their time and talents to TrueNorth in a myriad of ways, and we’re grateful for each and every one of them!

Heat and energy are essential, especially for homes living in Michigan during our cold, often bitter, winters. The TrueNorth emPOWER program provided heat and energy assistance 15,960 times to homes in 63 Michigan counties.

Putting food on the table is another struggle for many low-income individuals and families. TrueNorth provided 25,026 meals through the FOOD PANTRY AND FOOD PROGRAMS — food trucks, Harvest Ingathering, Senior Thanksgiving Luncheon, and healthy eating classes.

All children deserve to start school on a level playing field. Through generous supporters and volunteers, TrueNorth gave 1,017 backpacks and grade appropriate supplies to children in need through TOOLS FOR SCHOOL.
KATHY MISAK has been volunteering with TrueNorth since 2006 and had given over 800 hours of service through the end of 2014. Being the Everyday Hero she is, Kathy started helping with the Children’s Christmas Program, but her volunteer efforts have since grown to benefit many different programs at TrueNorth. Having worked and lived in Costa Rica, she is passionate about helping adults learn how to speak, read, and write English, and has parlayed that passion to help ESL learners in the Project Literacy program. She also serves on our Project Literacy Advisory Committee.

Kathy also volunteers every Friday morning entering clients into the database for the Food Pantry. Her kind, caring, personality makes clients feel welcome, and they are comfortable asking Kathy questions about other services that TrueNorth offers. She volunteers as a translator for our Coats for Kids program every fall and also still volunteers with the Children’s Christmas Program. We are so grateful for her continued commitment to volunteer service here at TrueNorth and know she has been an absolute hero to many of our clients over the years.

We’re proud to count Kathy as one of our many Everyday Heroes who give their time and talents to the causes they believe in.

Helping children feel special and instilling hope for the future, the CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM provided gifts to 2,373 children in need to open Christmas morning.

TrueNorth was blessed with 1,697 individuals and groups donating over 38,000 VOLUNTEER HOURS to ensure that our mission was accomplished.

Those amazing amount of volunteer hours has a VALUE OF $847,689.65. These heroes of philanthropy make it possible for TrueNorth to make an impact on those we serve.
When “Brianne” first met TrueNorth Case Manager, ANDREA MURRAY, she was at a very low point in her life. She was going through a difficult divorce, fighting for custody of her two sons, losing her home through foreclosure, suffering from chronic pain, anxiety and depression, and dealing with a past that included drug abuse and a criminal record. Although a college graduate, she was unemployed and struggling to pay her ever-increasing student loans.

Andrea worked with Brianne to establish goals, and through extensive case management and extreme self-motivation, she worked them out over a five month period. Brianne obtained a full-time job in her educational field, won full custody of her sons, and she was able to defer her student loans. Although she did end up losing her home to foreclosure, Brianne immediately set in motion a plan of action to move closer to her new job. Andrea closed her case and counts her as a great success story. Sometimes, we get to be the everyday hero!

All of our staff who work directly with clients have similar stories to tell, and count it a blessing to get to be someone’s Everyday Hero in their time of need.

There are many receiving assistance that have the ability to become more self-sufficient once they are able to determine the hurdles preventing it. TrueNorth provided WRAP-AROUND SERVICES to 460 families to help them determine their hurdles and develop a plan towards greater self-sufficiency.

LIFELINK helped 155 elderly and medically-at-risk residents stay safe in their homes through this “push of a button” system, which summons professional, medical help in the event of an emergency.

Along with our heat and energy assistance that helps keep people safe, our HOMELESS PREVENTION SERVICES provided assistance 1,367 times; including, rent/mortgage assistance, foreclosure prevention, emergency housing, and eviction prevention.
It is not uncommon for an unexpected donation to show up at our door, but when Mike Robinson and Ed Devine, who along with Randy McDonald are the owners and operators of **FREMONT FORD**, came in with a donation in 2014, it was a little different. For starters, it was a check, and a rather substantial one at that. They wanted the money to go towards programming that specifically helped kids and women, and they didn’t really want any PR out of it.

Our Development Director, Mark Kraus, pondered the best way to use the donation and went back to them with a proposal. We would split the donation between Camp Newaygo (whose biggest impact is on girls and women), our Project FOCUS and PACE afterschool programs (which benefit at-risk youth), and Big Brothers Big Sisters (which benefits youth, many of whom come from female-led single parent homes). The “catch” as it were, was that Mark wanted to use Fremont Ford as our King Pin Sponsor for the following year’s Bowlapalooza fundraiser for BBBS, reasoning that if we could attach a local business to the event as the title sponsor, it would encourage other local businesses to support the event at other sponsor levels. They agreed, and that’s exactly what happened.

Mike and Ed explained this was simply part of their business model, and that giving back to the community that supports them is the right thing to do. They were also quick to point out that their employees are a very large reason their business is so successful and only agreed to be featured as Everyday Heroes if we included them in the photo.

Fremont Ford is a great example of many local businesses who act as Everyday Heroes by supporting the work we do.

Along with generous financial donations, TrueNorth was also blessed to have **DONORS WHO GAVE $245,583.15** in donated goods; including, food, coats, school supplies, socks, toys, and so much more.
HOW WE WERE FUNDED

84% Grants
5% Fremont Area Community Foundation
4% Contributors, etc.
3% In-Kind Donations
3% Program Fees
1% Fund at Fremont Area Community Foundation

HOW WE USED OUR FUNDS

77% emPower Heat & Energy Division
9% Housing & Family Services Division
6% Project FOCUS & PACE
4% Camp Newaygo
2% Center for Nonprofit Housing
1% Big Brothers Big Sisters & Behavioral Health
1% Volunteer Services, Housing Families First, Other Programs
I THINK A HERO IS ANY PERSON REALLY INTENT ON MAKING THIS A BETTER PLACE FOR ALL PEOPLE.
JOIN THE LEAGUE OF EVERYDAY HEROES

For volunteer and giving opportunities, please visit www.truenorthservices.org.