

# HERE FOR YOU. HERE TO SERVE.



**2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

**TrueNorth**  
community services 



# FROM OUR PRESIDENT

What began as a typical year in Michigan, 2020 became a year we will never forget. In January, TrueNorth staff and community members joined to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with a presentation by and conversation with the President of the Muskegon Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The next day, the first case of novel coronavirus in the United States was confirmed in Washington. Our lives were forever changed.

By mid-March, state and federal authorities began taking extreme measures to slow the spread of COVID-19. The closing of schools, restaurants, shops and factories left the working class in a position many had never been in before. While these measures saved countless lives, they had a devastating financial impact on so many. Our message to them; we are here for you. We were so blessed by you, reaching out to offer support when we needed it most. Our message to you; we are here to serve.

Those words became our mantra; *Here for You. Here to Serve*. As many of our programs needed to be drastically altered, our main focus quickly turned to basic needs. Ensuring people remained in their homes, with relative safety, warmth and electricity, and food on their tables was our top priority. TrueNorth Hunger Prevention, Homeless Prevention, and Heat and Energy Assistance programs kicked into high gear.

As schools remained closed throughout the spring, it became heartbreakingly obvious that this terrible virus was taking an emotional toll on our children. So many vital, positive relationships were severed due to closures, cancellations and stay-at-home orders. In partnership with local school districts, other groups and long-time supporters, we responded with innovative programming for kids to do at home. Sometimes it was virtual and sometimes it was hand delivered to the doorsteps of hundreds of very deserving children.

As the pandemic raged, the need seemed to skyrocket almost overnight. Fortunately, individuals, businesses, community foundations and state and federal agencies started to pour resources into local communities. With nearly 50 years of experience and steadfast direction, TrueNorth was entrusted, by you, to help our vulnerable neighbors weather the storm. There has never been a time that I was more proud of our staff, our communities and our supporters. At possibly our most vulnerable time, you were here for us. And because of that, TrueNorth Community Services is *Here for You. Here to Serve*.



**Bev Cassidy**  
*TrueNorth President & CEO*



# OUR BOARD

Composed of unique, talented individuals with diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, our board is dedicated to guiding and directing us to provide high quality programs and services. We appreciate and value each board member as they ensure we achieve our mission of inspiring hope and creating a better world.

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# REMEMBERING **JAN STONE**

It is with heavy hearts that we mourn the loss of Jan Stone, who passed away in early 2021. Losing such a bright, shining star is felt not only by our agency, staff and board members, but the entire West Michigan community. We will forever remember Jan's energy, immense passion for mission and spirit of giving.





A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a group of diverse young people, mostly of South Asian descent, holding a large, glowing paper lantern in a circle. The lantern is illuminated from within, casting a warm, orange light. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The young people are wearing casual clothing, including t-shirts and tank tops, and some are wearing wristbands. The overall mood is positive and community-oriented.

HERE TO SERVE

# OUR YOUTH



In spring 2020, Pioneer campers like Ava Fink, were anxiously wondering what their last summer as a Camp Newaygo camper would look like, and if it would even happen at all. Ava started coming to camp 10 years ago as a cabin camper. Even during that first week at camp, she remembers looking forward to being a Pioneer, or “Pi,” camper one day.

For Ava, Camp is home away from home. Among all of the fun activities, what matters most to her is the community of support and group comradery. As the pandemic began, Ava, along with other last year campers, began Zoom sessions to talk about summer 2020. Funny enough, their solutions to “camp in a pandemic” weren’t too far off from what the staff were planning.

As theories swirled, Ava and the other Pioneer campers were certain that their last year of camp would happen. When Ava arrived to camp, her expectations of program pods and other modifications were in place but it still reflected the place she knows and loves. Ava felt the changes were actually a great thing for their last year camper experience. Pioneer girls got to spend their whole time together and built stronger bonds.

Summer 2020 wasn’t just special because it happened, but because of the ways last year traditions continued. Reflecting on the summer overall, Ava still felt connected to camp, even from six feet away. She was moved by seeing how much cabin girls, like her 10 years ago, loved this summer.



**267**  
Overnight Campers



**6,628**  
Total Youth Served



A close-up photograph of a pair of hands holding a rustic wooden bowl. The bowl is filled with several ripe red tomatoes and one unripe green tomato. The hands are wearing a light-colored, textured cloth with blue polka dots. The background is a soft-focus green field.

HERE TO SERVE

# THE HUNGRY



Individuals who are released from the judicial system often have to start over from scratch. Almost without exception, they don't have an income, and struggle to acclimate themselves back into a world that has changed, sometimes drastically, while they were incarcerated. Brian Reed, a Resource Navigator through Worksolved, helps these individuals search for employment, establish housing, and get back on their feet in Newaygo County.

Assistance with both food and hygiene products is a vital part of the re-entry process and really goes a long way for someone who doesn't have a consistent income yet. Over the past six months TrueNorth has helped over 15 of Brian's clients on their journey toward self-sufficiency. Brian shared that he has been very impressed with not only the amount of help we have been able to provide, but also the quality of these services. He shared how important these programs are for individuals as they work to rebuild their lives.

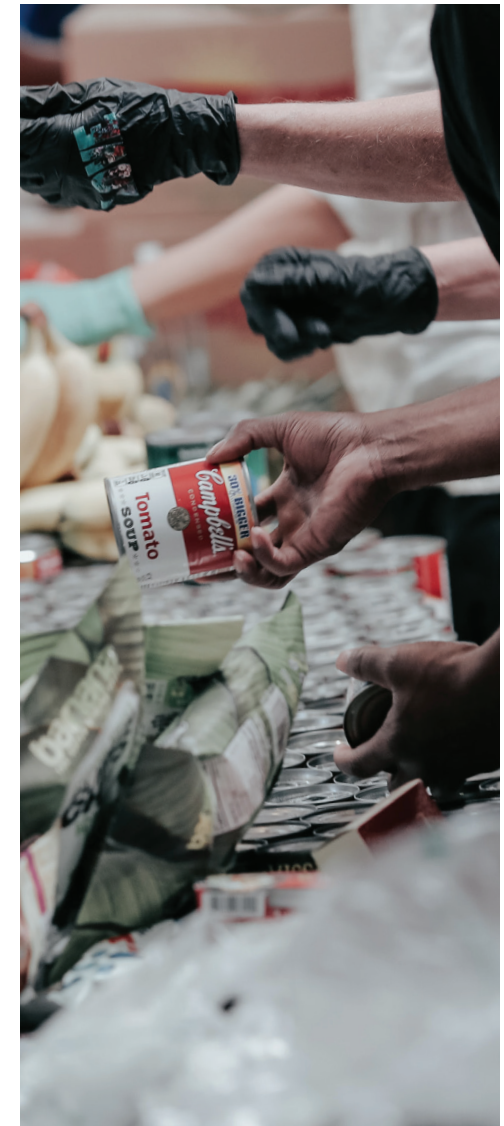
***"The extra support gives me time to focus on other things like improving myself and work."***

***"I get better groceries than I'm able to buy myself."***

***"The food quality is better than expected!"***

Brian acknowledges by connecting with us, it's easier for him to do his job, and he is grateful there are good community organizations, like TrueNorth that provide much needed services for the community.

For our part, we know people thrive when they're given a hand up and we recognize the importance of helping people re-enter and become productive members of our community.



**56,947**  
Individuals Served



**27,465**  
Meals Served



**12,849 lbs**  
of Produce Donations

A photograph of two young women standing outdoors in a wooded area. They are both wearing light-colored overalls over white shirts. The woman on the left has dark hair and is holding a long, light-colored wooden stick. The woman on the right has long blonde hair. They are both smiling at the camera. The background consists of green foliage and a wooden fence.

HERE TO SERVE

# THE COMMUNITY



From camper to counselor, Newaygo native Jackie Charette is excited to take on another role, as a volunteer on Camp Newaygo's Advisory Board.

Jackie's connection to Camp started in 2008 when Jackie was awarded a scholarship to attend camp. She loved that first week at camp, met some of her closest friends, and came back for two additional summers. At camp, Jackie could be "authentically myself, loved by the people around me, and was encouraged and celebrated to be Jackie."

Jackie recalls Camp staff coming to Newaygo High School to talk about the benefits of working a summer at camp. Jackie jumped at the opportunity to give other girls the feelings of belonging and female empowerment she experienced. Working at camp was also a great place for her to develop skills to work in residence life at a University--a career goal she already had her sights set on, and has since obtained!



**444**  
Volunteers



**18,103**  
Total Hours

Jackie was eager and honored to commit to a board term to give back to a place that has meant so much to her. With her love for Camp Newaygo, Jackie was excited to join a group of influential and legendary Newaygo women and supporters. She is loving the amount of responsibility and opportunities being on the board provides and feels that, "as a young person, I am brought fully into the conversation with a level of mutual respect."

When reflecting on her experiences with Camp, Jackie shared immense gratitude to those unknown supporters who made her first summers possible. She has felt a reciprocal responsibility to give her time, talent, and connections so others can be part of camp. As Jackie begins this new philanthropic role, she's excited to lean on her Camp experiences and knowledge in order to give back.





HERE TO SERVE

# OUR NEIGHBORS



Dion Smith, a single father of two children, was in the later stages of a career as a Youth Detention Officer when, in 2016, a car accident left him with serious and life-changing injuries. A long recovery process left him with limited physical abilities, and an unfortunate end to his career. It also took over two years to get set up on SSI Disability.

Many on-going home maintenance issues Dion normally would have been able to do, became impossible and his home steadily became not as safe for his family. So unsafe that Dion actually injured himself again due to a faulty stair railing. After a few years, the needed repairs were also financially out of reach.

Dion was enrolled in TrueNorth's CARE Program which helped with his utility bills. It was through that involvement he first heard about the Healthy Housing Initiative. This initiative aims to create safer, healthier, and more energy efficient homes in partnership with Consumers Energy.

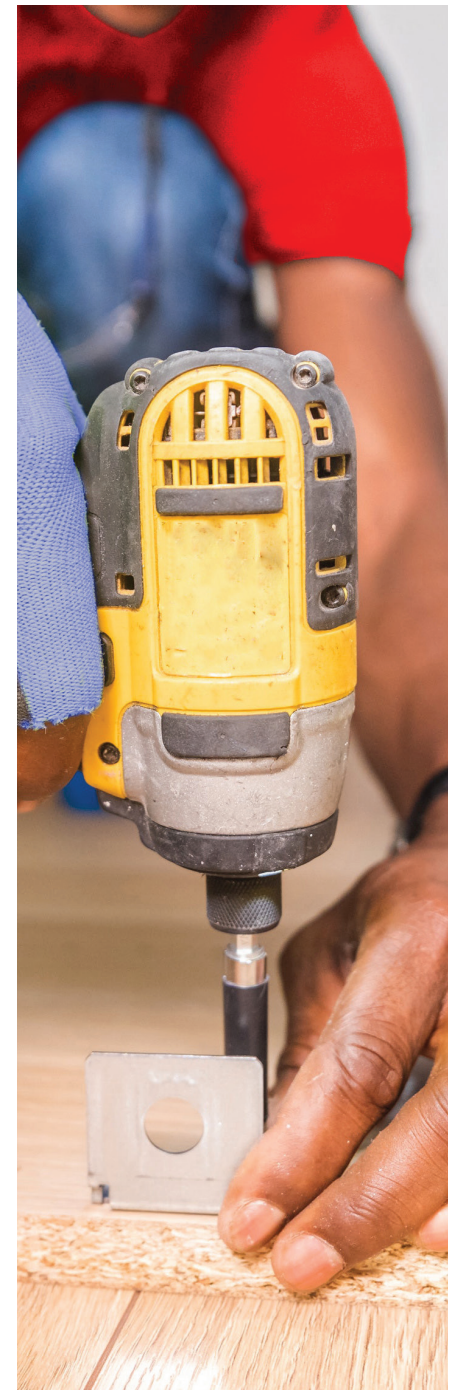


**1,424**  
People Served

Through this program Dion had a new furnace and water heater installed, plumbing repairs completed, an exterior door and window pane replaced, and a new stair railing installed. Dion is extremely grateful for these much-needed repairs, and has contacted TrueNorth staff regularly to express his gratitude.

***“There were just things I couldn’t do myself... I couldn’t fix the railing, the hot water heater wasn’t working right, and I was worried about that. This program has done so much for us. It got real cold when our furnace went out too. I don’t know what would have happened. For sure, there would have been more falls around the house. You’ve done a whole lot and I’m grateful.”***

***— Dion S.***







HERE TO SERVE

# THOSE IN NEED

***“I tried my best to do it all, but I now realize I can’t do it all myself.”***

***— Tom D.***

On a daily basis, Tom, a Mason County resident, faced a leaky roof on his old house. That, combined with a tight budget, made for a stressful and unsafe household. With diminished water pressure, Tom often found himself washing dishes in his bathtub, as it is the only faucet that provides enough water pressure.

Due to a previous injury compounded by years of hard labor, Tom has limited physical ability and lacked the funds necessary to complete needed home repairs, his well had to be replaced, his roof required serious attention, and he needed to catch up on his utility bills.



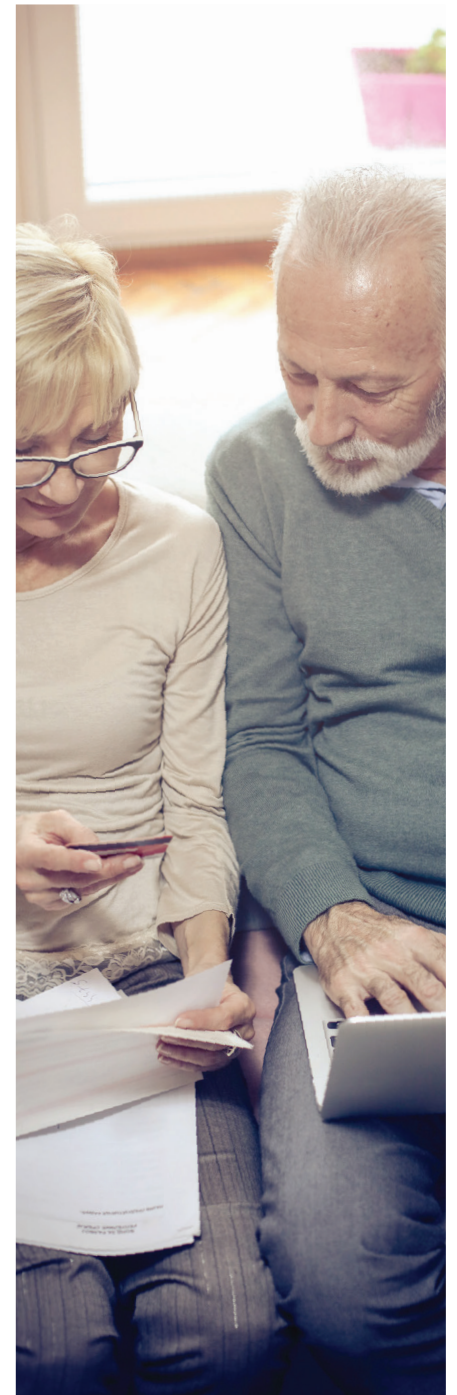
**10,228**  
Households Served



**45,803**  
Individuals Served

Just as unfortunate events beyond his control led to extremely difficult circumstances in Tom’s life, connecting with TrueNorth started as a small moment but, instead, led to a positive path forward. Tom was able to set up an affordable payment plan with the emPower program. This assistance has substantially reduced Tom’s stress levels, giving him the time and space to breathe and relax. He no longer has to worry about his looming electricity bill, since this much more manageable expense is now factored into his budget.

Due to the payment plan for his utilities, Tom has been able to divert funds to other needs, like fixing his roof, making continuous car repairs on his very old car and tackling some expensive health needs. With help from his caseworker, Tom is awaiting the installation of a new well provided through a combination of support from various community organizations. The new well will be a real game changer for Tom.



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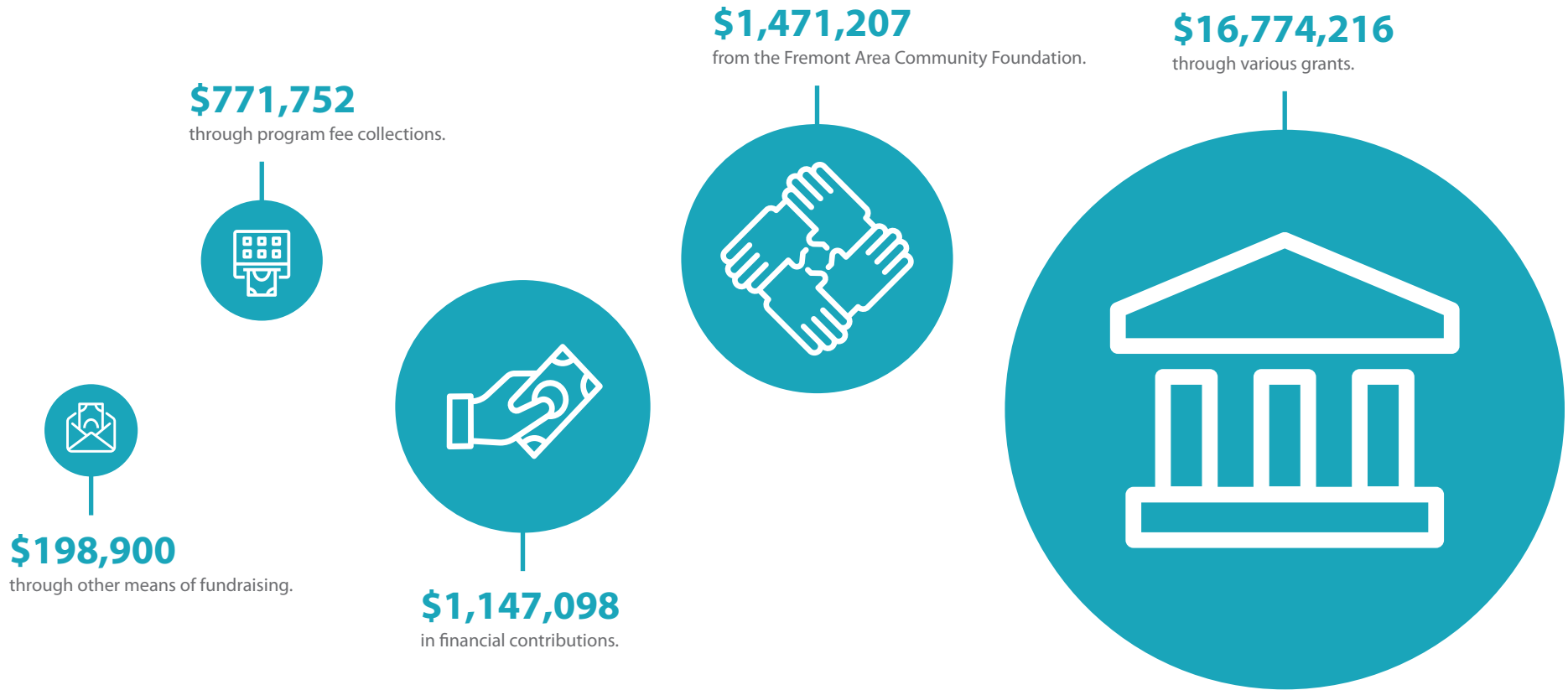
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# HOW WE ARE FUNDED



## IN-KIND DONATIONS



# WHERE WE HELP

**\$2,107,918**

to help fight food insecurity in the community.



**\$2,876,478**

to help fund a variety of housing programs in the community.



**\$13,210,545**

to help provide the community with heat and energy assistance.



**\$629,818**

to help our community through other channels of support.



**\$2,671,771**

to help support the youth in our community.









# Here for You. Here to Serve.







**TrueNorth**  
community services



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