



Building to Feed the Hungry

Community Sharing Capital Campaign

Case for Support

A family's rental home burns to the ground. Overnight they lose everything. The family of seven arrives on the doorstep of Community Sharing, some of the children without shoes on their feet, in desperate need of support and caring from their community. Within hours, the family has temporary housing until their new rental home is ready, as well as food, household items, and clothing. We will serve this family several times to help them until they get back on their feet.

Why It Matters

The face of poverty today is very different from what we imagine. Many of those in extreme poverty look like you and me on the outside. It is inside, behind closed doors, that the true story is told. The vast majority of individuals and families accessing food pantries are food insecure, meaning that there is a limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. Food insecurity is related to poor nutrition and negative health outcomes such as poor physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development among children, and chronic health conditions including diabetes, hypertension, and obesity in adults.

This is why organizations such as Community Sharing Outreach Center are essential to a thriving community. Community Sharing (CS) is committed to being a bridge, providing temporary help to ensure that no child goes to bed hungry and no senior citizen is without heat. We want to help keep families together when hard times occur, and care for those in desperate, emergency circumstances so that they can once again contribute to our community. We want to make certain that the loss of reliable transportation due to the cost of car repairs does not result in the loss of employment, making a difficult situation even worse with the loss of income.

Why Now

Over time, it has become apparent that our current facility is in need of major repairs: plumbing, electrical, foundation, roof and parking lot. In June of 2020, it was determined that repairs to the building and grounds would cost over \$1.5 million. The Huron Valley School District, owner of the building, is unable to pay for these repairs as they must understandably focus tax dollars on students and working facilities. The cost of repairs is well beyond the reach of Community Sharing's financial resources. As a result, CS leadership engaged with community leaders to find a solution that will enable Community Sharing to keep its doors open.

Through this community engagement, it was determined that a rental facility is not available in the local area that would meet the needs of CS. Building a new facility is the best solution to avoid closing our doors. Having a permanent home will enable CS to establish roots within the community. We have had to move several times throughout our history and each move has been challenging to clients as well as to maintaining our strong volunteer base.

With incredible community spirit and generosity, Highland Township has approved the use of a parcel of land owned by the Township. The new location will meet the needs of CS and the Township, including such concerns as traffic flow, space and durability for semi-trucks to deliver pallets of food, and adequate parking accommodations for clients and volunteers.

Our Need

Our greatest challenge now is to fund the construction of a facility for CS so that we are able to move our entire operation within the next 12 months. The projected cost to ready the property (utilities, water, etc.), build a facility and prepare the surrounding land for use is \$880,000. The size of the new facility will be about 40% of the space we have today, but will be sufficient to support all essential operations including administrative offices, food pantry, and clothing closet. Anticipated in this budget is that a portion of the work will be performed by volunteers and that we will engage other groups within our communities to lend resources and labor to the project.

Having rented space since we opened our doors in 2004, CS leadership began to set aside funds over the last few years for the eventual purchase of a new home. Since the need is coming much sooner than ever anticipated, we have not been able to set aside sufficient funds to cover the costs of this project.

It Takes A Community Sharing

Community Sharing has been serving individuals and families in need since 2004. The organization was founded by a group of individuals called to address the needs of individuals, seniors and families within neighboring communities in Michigan. Originally founded as a food pantry, the organization has expanded services to include clothing, financial assistance and a pet pantry. Today, CS provides these services to approximately 300 families, reaching 700 individuals each month. More than half of those served are children.

By 2008, CS had built a strong relationship with the Huron Valley School District (HVSD). When space became available at the Apollo School, CS was offered the opportunity to rent and maintain a part of the building for their operations. This space was home to CS for nearly 10 years. In 2017, CS was invited to move to our current location in the Duck Lake Center as the pre-school and Head Start programs housed in the Apollo School were expanding. The additional space provided at the new location allowed CS the opportunity to expand our service area to include the entire Huron Valley School District (over 107 square miles).

Community Sharing serves all those who walk through our doors. We have kept our doors open throughout the pandemic by adjusting operations to provide a safe environment for our clients and volunteers. Within the area we serve, 5.8% of the population lives below the poverty level. Within that population, 5% are senior citizens and 7% are children. We serve some clients for just a brief period of time until they can get back on their feet. Others, such as senior citizens on fixed incomes, we may support for a significant time. We have a compassionate but strict screening process to ensure that services provided are for a temporary period and those who should be able to help themselves do.

Many of the services CS offers its clients are focused on the well-being of children. Each year, CS offers several programs exclusively to support children in need. These programs include:

- Summer lunch program providing healthy food for each child during the summer months when school lunch programs are suspended.
- Back-to-school clothing program, allowing children to come in and “shop” for their school clothes just as they would at a department store.
- Christmas program offers parents the opportunity to choose gifts for their children so that no child wakes on Christmas morning without a gift to open and parents feel they are providing for their family.
- Partnership with the local school district to support children without a home and those struggling to complete their high school education.
- Financial support for special educational camps offered by the local YMCA or similar organizations for children during the summer months.
- Financial support for children graduating high school with a need for some support to attend community college or vocational school.

The real strength of Community Sharing as an organization comes from the passion and commitment of its more than 200 volunteers. Each week approximately fifty volunteers join together to provide services to our clients – individuals and families in need. These efforts are supported by two dedicated part-time administrative staff. During special events, our volunteer numbers can swell to over 100 committed individuals.

Recognizing it takes a village, Community Sharing has a strong history throughout our existence of partnering with other agencies to provide for those in need. We work with Gleaners and Forgotten Harvest for purchase and acquisition of food for our clients. We partner with other state, local and non-profit agencies to support our clients and enable them to benefit from services for which they qualify.

Many of those who are economically challenged never imagined that they would be in need of support for essential items such as food for a day, a week, or a month. Some are embarrassed to even ask for assistance. Most clients need multiple services because poverty affects every part of a person’s or family’s life. Agencies such as Community Sharing are important in addressing community health disparities through the foods and related services that are provided. These services respond to population health needs and are in the best interest of the healthcare, education, economic, and social sectors of our community and state.