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Call for food leads to so much more

A single call to Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels changed everything for Leonard and Dana.

Even before the pandemic began, 2020 was shaping up to be a challenging year for this Ypsilanti couple. As Leonard continued to recover from a 2019 car accident that left him with two broken legs and multiple injuries, his wife, Dana, suffered complications of lymphedema. “The lymphedema was out of control,” Dana said, and in January 2020, she lost her foot to the condition.

While the couple spent the first months of the year rehabilitating, a longtime acquaintance promised to prepare their home for their return. But what they returned to was anything but a welcome surprise. The partially finished project left the couple without a refrigerator or working stove. Nails protruded from the bare floors. And without a working sink in the kitchen, water had to be retrieved from upstairs – no easy task for people with Leonard’s and Dana’s injuries.

But with a single call to Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels, everything started to change.

Through its CAPABLE+ program, YMOW provided the couple with a Claris tablet that allowed YMOW staff to see inside the home while social distancing. The tablet also allowed YMOW’s occupational therapist to conduct several sessions with the couple as social worker Megan coordinated the necessary home repairs with the professionals at Handyman Connections of Ann Arbor.

<https://handymanconnection.com/ann-arbor/>

Dana initially called looking for meals, but just as YMOW has always promised, the couple received so much more.

“It’s so beautiful. The change is dramatic,” Dana said. Dana and Leonard now have a working kitchen and new flooring. A new smoke and carbon monoxide detector helps them sleep more soundly in their newly renovated home. YMOW even found a scooter to help Dana move about the house.

With a functional living space and nutritious meals delivered to their door, Dana and Leonard are on their way to a healthier, happier life.

“I wasn’t expecting any of this,” Dana said.
“Megan is awesome. She really went beyond.
I can’t thank you guys enough.”

At right: Leonard and Dana Brown



We got by with a lot of help from our friends

The Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels staff and board began 2020 with its eyes on the future. At a Saturday strategic planning retreat in January, we made big plans for the years ahead. Little did we know then how much our world would change just a few weeks later.

By March we no longer had the luxury to look years down the road. Instead, everyone at YMOW switched to survival mode. In just a matter of weeks, we worked with Michigan Medicine to reduce delivery days from 6 to 3. Staff moved their workspaces to the safety of their own homes. Amid so much uncertainty about what was to come, office staff focused on finding emergency funding while client care associates and a few key volunteers learned to deliver meals, and smiles, from a safe distance while wearing masks and gloves.

Our staff, board and volunteers are to be commended for their hard work to serve the homebound residents of Ypsilanti through 2020. But we didn't do it alone. The Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor communities stepped up in countless ways to care for our homebound neighbors.

There was Ann Arbor artist **Stephen Cain**, who donated money from the sales of his handmade mosaic trays to several local organizations, including YMOW. There was the Ann Arbor T-shirt Company, <https://www.annarbortees.com/> which provided face shields for YMOW drivers, and Ann Arbor Distilling Co., <https://www.annarbordistilling.com/> which switched gears from making drinkable spirits to making hand sanitizer, provided free of charge to those in need.

As organizations like Food Gatherers <https://www.foodgatherers.org/> and Whole Foods Market <https://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/> began donating food, Jo Jeffries, owner of Ziggy's <https://www.ziggysypsistore.com/> in Ypsilanti, emptied a refrigerator to provide short-term storage. Our friends at Growing Hope <https://growinghope.net/> even came forward with free raised gardens for clients who wanted to grow their own food, or who just wanted a way to pass the time as they abided by orders to stay at home. And as more and more people did just that,

our friends at Toyota <https://www.toyota.com/usa/operations/map.html> came through with a pair of vehicles to help us meet demand.

The list of people and organizations that helped YMOW and the homebound population of Ypsilanti in 2020 is endless, as is our appreciation.

2020 wasn't easy. There was stress, there was fear of the unknown and there were more people than ever in need of our help. But thanks to the hard work of our staff and volunteers and the generosity of our community, YMOW served a record number of meals in 2020 without a single service disruption.

Thank you to each and every person and organization that helped to make this possible. We have never been more proud to be part of this community, or more dedicated to our vision of "a community where every senior feels nourished, valued and supported."



Alison Foreman

Alison Foreman, Executive Director



Paula Dykstra

Paula Dykstra, Board President



Volunteers embraced change, filled vital need in 2020

As cases of coronavirus eked closer and closer to home in early 2020, YMOW took swift action to keep everyone safe. That meant big changes not just for clients and staff, but for our invaluable volunteers.

YMOW relies on volunteers for thousands of hours of assistance every year. Many of those hours are filled by students from Eastern Michigan and Michigan universities. So when learning went remote after spring break 2020, YMOW's volunteer pool became parched.

Only a few veteran volunteers were asked to stay on board as YMOW navigated our way through the initial weeks of the pandemic. These loyal helpers were honored as a group with YMOW's volunteer of the quarter award in March 2020.

With ride-along routes deemed unsafe, only those who could handle a route on their own were able to help. Meanwhile, there was more to deliver. With deliveries trimmed to three days a week, volunteers and client care associates delivered two days' worth of meals at every stop. They also dropped off supplies of protective equipment, hand sanitizer, personal care pantry items and additional food, all while wearing masks and standing at a distance.

Volunteers like **Bob Nowlan**, named YMOW's volunteer of the 4th quarter, never missed a beat. Prior to the pandemic, YMOW could count on Bob to report for duty every Monday morning. Since the pandemic began, he's worked every Monday and Friday, taking extra precautions with each delivery to protect himself and those on the other side of the door.

Second quarter honoree **Ronald Youngblood** stepped up when he was needed most, completing his training remotely as the pandemic began and continuing to deliver meals through the hot summer months.

Vera Felk-Spraetz had been delivering meals for 3 years prior to the pandemic. YMOW's volunteer of the 3rd quarter said she continued through the pandemic not only because of the need for food, but the need for human interaction.

That need prompted the creation of YMOW's Only a Ring Away wellness call program, which proved to be a great way for volunteers to help YMOW clients without having to leave their homes. With online training created by YMOW staff, students and volunteers stepped up to see that every YMOW client received a friendly call each week.

By May YMOW began accepting new volunteers again, but training took place exclusively online. New volunteers picked up their food outside and dropped off their empty coolers, all without entering the building or even seeing YMOW staff.

"It was challenging trying to meet and get to know our volunteers while taking the necessary steps to keep everyone safe," said Jessica Cichowlas. She joined the YMOW staff in October as volunteer coordinator.

As the holidays approached, YMOW's volunteer pool grew. "People have been wanting to serve their community, to get out during their lunch break to do something good," Jessica said. "They appreciate our protocols to keep everyone safe and understand the ongoing needs of our homebound neighbors."

"We simply could not carry out our mission without these dedicated members of our community," Jessica said. "At a time when YMOW and those we serve needed them most, they were there, and we cannot thank them enough."

Congratulations to YMOW's 2020 Volunteers of the Quarter

Quarter 1

COVID-19 volunteers

Quarter 2

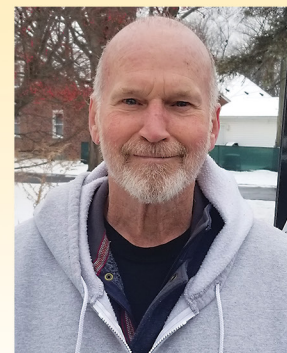
Ronald Youngblood
at right

Quarter 3

Vera Felk-Spraetz
below, left

Quarter 4

Bob Nowlan, below, right



2020: A year like no other



JANUARY 21

First case of COVID-19 reported in U.S.



MARCH 9-13

Emergency food and safety supplies delivered to all clients.

MARCH 14

Pi(e) & a Pint event canceled.

MARCH 19

YMOW Board meeting is held virtually for the first time.

MARCH 26

YMOW calls on public for toilet paper to meet the needs of clients.

MARCH 27

First *Only a Ring Away* wellness calls are made.

MARCH 29

Whole Foods Market on Washtenaw begins donating groceries to YMOW clients.

MARCH 30

Deliveries cut to 3 days a week. **Michigan Medicine** pivots to provide two days' worth of meals with each delivery.

MARCH 9

COVID-19 prompts new safety protocols for meal delivery.

MARCH 10

First COVID-19 cases are confirmed in Michigan. Governor Whitmer declares a state of emergency.

APRIL 4

YMOW receives first of two Meals on Wheels America COVID-19 Response Fund grants.

APRIL 16

YMOW receives Small Business Association loan.



MAY 10
Maiz Mexican Cantina hosts *Tacos and Tulips*, a carry-out fundraiser for YMOW on Mother's Day.

MAY 15
YMOW takes possession of its new Toyota Sienna, stuffed with pantry essentials by employees of **Dunning Toyota**.

MAY 25
Fifth route added to meet increased demand.

JUNE 27
YMOW partners with **Hickory Creek Winery** in Buchanan, Michigan, for a virtual wine tasting event – our first virtual fundraiser.

OCTOBER 1
Dime at a Time begins. YMOW receives 10 cents for every reusable bag used at **Ann Arbor Whole Foods** locations through Dec. 31.

OCTOBER 15
Toyota Motors of North America donates a second Sienna van to accommodate the growing demand for service.

SEPTEMBER 24
YMOW receives \$144,000 through the CRF Rapid Relief Initiative, eliminating the wait list for under-60 clients through the end of 2020.

NOVEMBER 26
112 Thanksgiving meals delivered.

DECEMBER 3
\$200,000 in funding provided by the **Edward N. & Della L. Thome Memorial Foundation**.

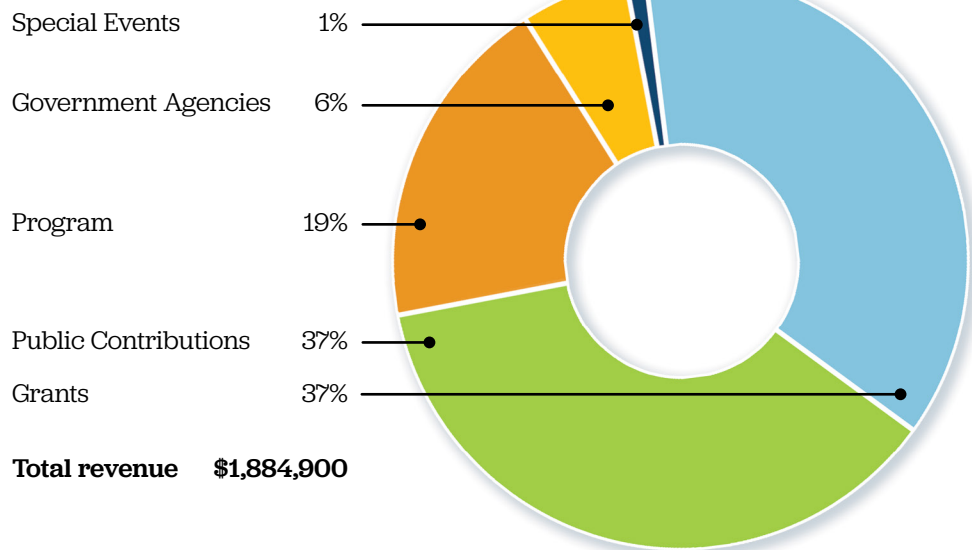
DECEMBER 5
Holidays at Home virtual event replaces *Holiday Home Tour*.

DECEMBER 21-25
Gifts donated by **Domino's** and **Rotary Club of Ann Arbor** are delivered to every YMOW client.

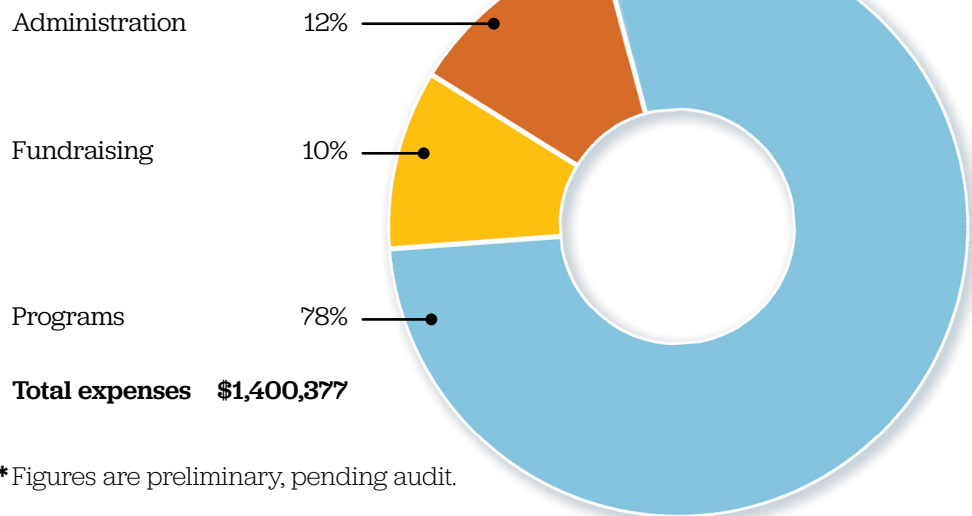
DECEMBER 31
YMOW ends 2020 without service interruption.

Financial summary

2020 Revenue*



2020 Expenses*



*Figures are preliminary, pending audit.

Full financial report available at
<https://ymow.org/about/financials>.

2020 by the numbers

1,226

new individual
donors raised

\$144,842



30

new corporate donors and
grant funders provided

\$130,666



110,257 meals served

1,249

volunteer
delivery hours



3,200

pounds of cat litter
delivered



383

homebound
neighbors
served

6,995

pounds of pet food
delivered



35,642

pounds of
produce delivered
courtesy of Food Gatherers



65

pets served

2,122

Only a Ring Away
wellness calls made



Wellness Program gets YMOW staff moving

2020 drew our attention to many things, not the least of which was the importance of caring for ourselves. To help make that easier for YMOW staff, YMOW introduced the **Kapnick Strive Workplace Well-being Program** in October.

This free wellness program allows staff to stay on top of not only their physical health, but their mental, financial and emotional health, too. From tracking steps to learning to keep a budget, the Kapnick Strive Workplace Well-being Program is one more reason why YMOW is such a great place to work.

Thanks to a grant from the **National Kidney Foundation of Michigan**, YMOW was able to provide FitBit fitness trackers to help staff keep track of their physical activity.

The grant also provides for quarterly and annual prizes for those employees who score the most points on the Kapnick program. Points can be gained in a variety of ways, from exercise to eating right and seeing a doctor.

“Through Kapnick Strive, we’re taking steps to help employees care for themselves while caring for the homebound residents in and around Ypsilanti,” said YMOW Operations Director Kelly Schwartz.



YMOW Board of Directors

Paula Dykstra, *Board Chair - President* • Dieter Otto, *Vice-President*
Christine Laing, *Treasurer* • Cathy Day, *Secretary*

Susan Aaronson, James Belcher, Dan Carleton, Scott Godgold,
Susan Gregory, Lisa Maskill, Cyndi Shepard and Tara Truax

Board inductees and new staff



James Belcher
Board Member



Cyndi Shepard
Board Member



Tara Truax
Board Member



Megan Berry
Social Worker



Kellie Childs
Occupational Therapist



Jessica Cichowlas
Volunteer Coordinator



Jacob Johnston
Client Care Associate



Kelly Schwartz
Operations Director



Brett Snyder
Client Care Associate



Tom Vonck
Client Care Associate

Want to become a YMOW supporter?

Visit <https://ymow.org/donate>
or send an email to giving@ymow.org

**Thank you to these organizations
for contributing \$2,000 or more to
YMOW in 2020:**

- Michigan Public Health Institute
- James A. & Faith Knight Foundation
- Kaufman Charitable Trust
- DTE Energy Foundation
- Ann Arbor Spark
- Vera & Joseph Dresner Foundation
- The Harry A. and Margaret D. Towsley Foundation
- Charter Township of Ypsilanti
- Buhr Foundation
- United Methodist Retirement Communities
- Trinity Health
- DTE Energy Services
- The Thrift Shop Association of Ypsilanti
- National Kidney Foundation of Michigan
- Pittsfield Charter Township
- First Congregational Church
- O'Neal Construction, Inc.
- Old National Bank
- Edward F. Redies Foundation, Inc.
- Rotary Club Ann Arbor North Foundation
- Herbal Solutions
- Domino's Pizza
- Charter Township of Superior General
- People's Food Co-Op

**Welcome and thank you to these
NEW corporate and community
donors who joined our mission in
2020.**

- Dancing with the Michigan Stars - Arthur Murray
- Alma Philanthropy
- Ann Arbor Spark
- Belleville Church of God
- Blue Llama
- Delta Dental Foundation
- Vera & Joseph Dresner Foundation
- Frankenmuth Insurance Foundation
- Gear Gear, Inc.
- JSA Design
- Kaufman Charitable Trust
- Kendra Scott
- Kerrytown Market & Shops
- St. John the Baptist Knights of Columbus
- Michigan Public Health Institute
- National Kidney Foundation of Michigan
- New Beginnings Community Church of Washtenaw County
- Office Furniture Solutions
- Pain Recovery Solutions, PC
- People's Food Co-Op
- Pinckney Chrysler Dodge Jeep RAM
- Rotary Club Ann Arbor North Foundation
- Salt City Antiques
- Wepay
- Zed Enterprises LTD

Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels
1110 W. Cross Street
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197
www.ymow.org



Thank you to these ongoing major supporters of the YMOW mission.



Edward N. &
Della L. Thome
Memorial
Foundation



Washtenaw Coordinated Funders:

