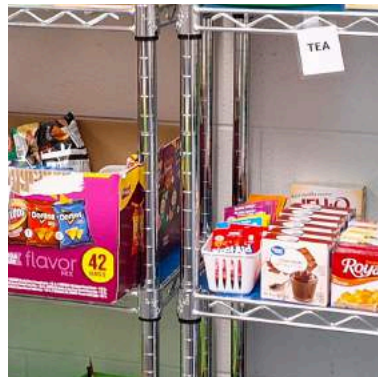




2023

Annual Report

Whether it's individualized help, peer support or groceries that our students need, we're there for them.





Letter to our Supporters

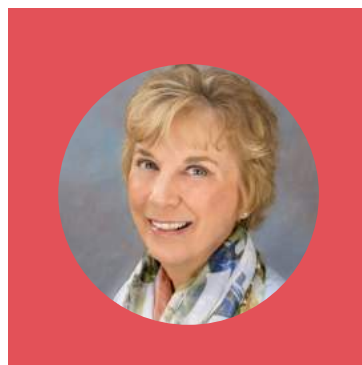
Beginning in 2016 with eight students and in October the number rose to 400+ students visiting their school-based youth pantry in 2023. With MI School data showing 950-1000 students deal with hunger, we have reached 40% of them.

As we look to 2024, we want to create an environment that kids come first for the food, but they return to visit with our caring and encouraging volunteers. Our mission is supplemental food for over the weekend when there is no school lunch. Our VISION is to not have our Youth Pantry students be shopping at adult food pantries to feed their children when they become adults. Thus, our Northmen Den Youth Services free After-School classes and workshops must begin to reach and teach all middle and high school students how they can become who they are meant to be.



Kathy Petersen

CEO & Founder



northmendens.org



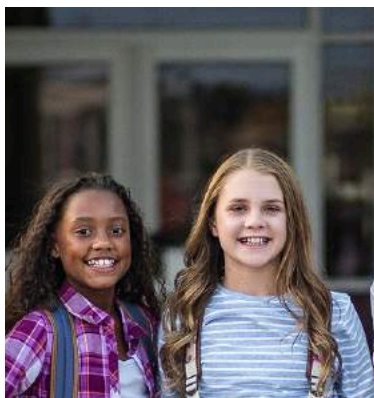
Mission + Vision

Our Mission

To nourish our neediest students by providing food, tutoring and mentoring in a manner that respects dignity and individuality, while sustaining dreams. Whether it's individualized help, peer support or groceries that our students need, we're there for them.

The first Northmen Den youth pantry opened at Petoskey Middle School on Friday, November 18, 2016 with 8 students to give their opinion if a pantry was a good idea. Well, those 8 brought ten of their friends that same day!

By June 2017, that number had grown to 35; in 2018, they opened Petoskey High School Northmen Den and Harbor Springs Middle School Harbor Hut youth pantry. All three pantries were serving 100 students per week. As of the 2023-24 school year, we operate 14 youth pantries in Emmet County and 1 in Charlevoix County and serve 375-400 students weekly out of the 1000+ who deal with hunger daily.



14
youth pantries

375-
400

students served
weekly by our
youth pantries



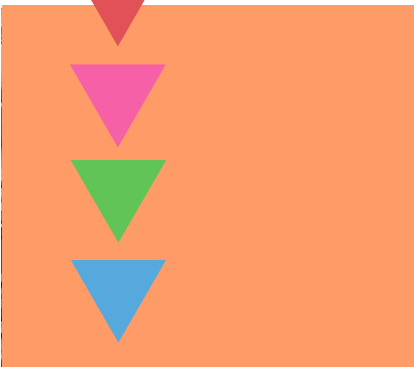
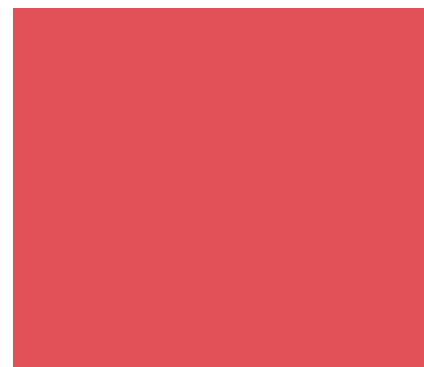
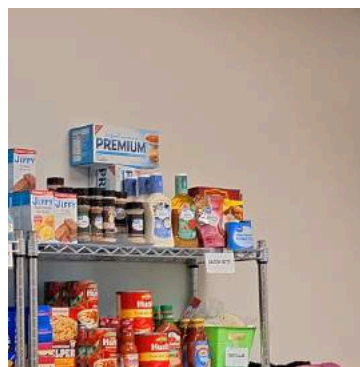
Our Programs

Youth Pantries

The primary goal of our pantries is to provide students with supplementary, easy to prepare food for the weekend as well as healthy school day snacks and other supplies such as personal toiletries, school supplies, and other individualized needs as we are able. We work in close partnership with the middle school counselors who select students to participate with the Northmen Den based on eligibility for free or reduced lunch and other factors.

Our pantries serve middle and high school students. The middle school years are when many students begin to develop an independent, can-do attitude towards school. However, for the disadvantaged, school - the very tool which can be a ticket to new opportunities - may also become the place where a lesser self-image is reinforced and the promises of an education begin to seem out of reach.

The students we serve notice the difference that Northmen Den creates, beyond just food or basic needs items provided. The pantry is staffed by volunteers that truly care, and those relationships are making a huge difference for the kids.





Our Programs

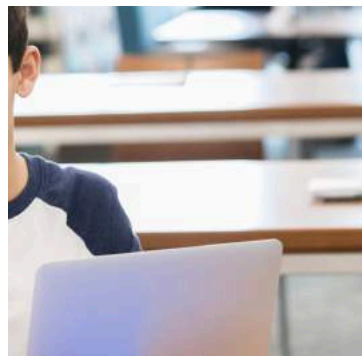
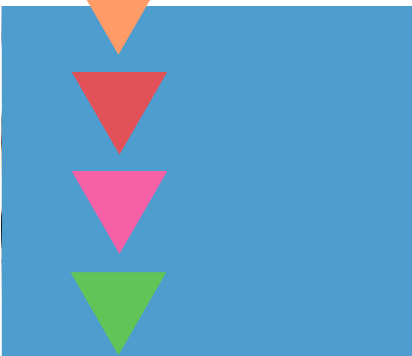
422 Club 4U

Part of our vision to support students in need is to go beyond basic physical needs and provide a well-rounded sense of wellbeing. Our after-school and out of school youth program offers fun indoor and outdoor activities for Middle School and High School students. Monday and Wednesdays the Center will be for Middle School Students and Tuesday and Thursdays are for High School Students. Examples of our 422 Club 4U initiatives include:

Discover YOU - Mentoring: Discover YOU Mentoring curriculum offers evidence informed, easy to integrate workshops to help students: build mental and emotional wellbeing; navigate their unique and personal journey; make positive life choices; increase academic performance and outcomes; and more.

Flying Classroom: A digital PK-12 grade STEM+ curriculum based on the global expeditions of Captain Barrington Irving. The Flying Classroom curriculum is full of academically rich, relevant, and rigorous learning activities aligned to STEM+.

Spring Break Adventure Northmen Den and The Grandpa Shorter's Scholarship Fund provided students the opportunity for 3 Spring Break adventure days. at Camp Daggett. Bus service and lunch was provided each day. Indoor and outdoor adventure activities included: climbing on the ropes course, outdoor hikes and activities, and arts and crafts.



Impact Report

13,250

students visited our Youth Pantries in 2023

4,800

volunteer pantry hours with in 2023

\$160,000

Food Distribution \$149,000 Bought + In-Kind Food Drives \$11,000

\$152,640

the value of volunteering hours in 2023
(4,800 hours x \$31.80 = \$95,400)

“If I can make one child feel genuine warmth and care, I've made a difference”

-Kathy Stewart, A Hornets' Nest volunteer





From hungry student to thriving employee

Since sharing her story in 2022, our community has fallen in love with Maddie, a hungry 7th grader who came to Northmen Den looking for help. Through love and support of our volunteers, Maddie overcame the consequences of poverty. With her perseverance and support of those who cared, she became the first person in her family to graduate from high school.

Today, we are excited to reveal that Maddie is our Briannaca, Northmen Den's first intern. Briannaca has been such a bright light for our organization, and it has been such a joy to see her thrive in helping students who are in a place she once experienced.

Briannaca was one of eight students chosen by her principal to visit Northmen Den's first pantry when it opened its doors.

"I later found out he had chosen 8 kids that he thought were leaders," she said. "I could not believe that it was free, it was crazy. As soon as I left, I went to the lunch room and told all my friends about it and then I went there weekly."

Briannaca grew up with her grandparents, who are biologically her half-brother's grandparents but always and forever truly her own family, too. When she was 7, her parents got a divorce and her dad left. Her mom needed to work, and living with her grandparents made that possible. Her mom would visit every other night, and otherwise she was raised by her grandparents.

"It was hard growing up without a dad, because you'd hear kids celebrating time with their dads and I didn't have that," Briannaca said. "But, my current family is very close knit. I've always told people that my grandma is my second mom. When you need it, she's there."

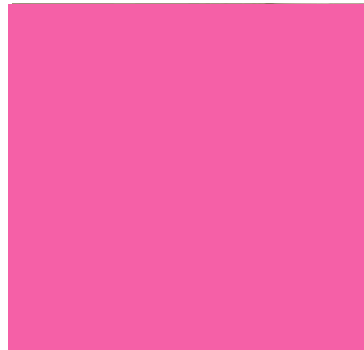
It truly is a community that rallied around Briannaca and fueled her success. She has a large family composed of half or step siblings and stand-in parents. "When my dad left, my half-brother's dad stepped up for me," she said. Plus, the community she found at school and within Northmen Den.

“Each week I started going back not only for the food, but for the love and kindness all the volunteers gave,” Briannaca said, recalling her visits to the pantry during high school. “They remembered my name, asked me about my family, and eventually they became my second family, my second support system, and just a hug if I needed one.”

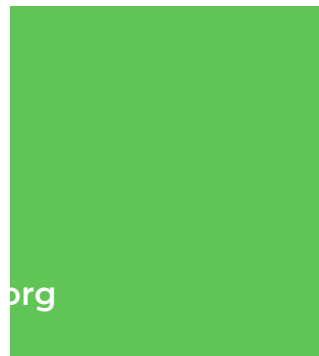
Briannaca said she was a very guarded person because of traumas she experienced in her childhood - something her grandma helped her work through in order to let herself truly shine as an individual. Her grandma never really let on that the family was financially struggling, but Briannaca always knew it was a lot - to take care of 11 people under one roof - and Northmen Den offered a safeguard.

“I would still always go back there to tell them about my successes. I would take my lunches and eat them with the volunteers. I asked my teacher if I could come down and help out,” she said. “It made me feel really good because somebody was paying attention.”

Now as Northmen Den’s first intern, Briannaca is proud to continue providing that experience to more students who will benefit from the extended support system, saying: “We strive to make all 15 of our youth pantries kind, warm, and a safe space for every child that walks through our doors.”



“They remembered my name, asked me about my family, and eventually they became my second family, my second support system, and just a hug if I needed one.”



Thank you!

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Looking ahead

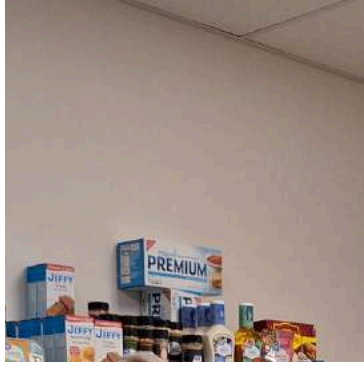
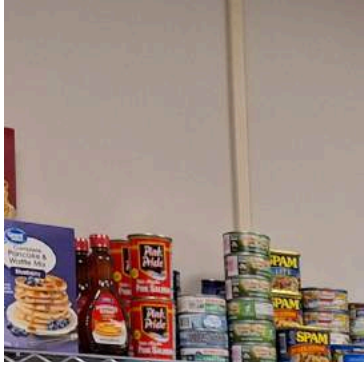
Looking to 2024, we are excited to continue feeding our hunger students. We know that there are still over 1,000 students that are still going to be hunger in our community - we hope to nourish more of them in 2024.

We are also focused on expanded our Youth Center to offer free after-school classes and workshops to reach and teach all middle and high school students how they can become who they are meant to be.

Your continued support is critical to allowing us to continue working towards our mission. There are a number of ways you can join us in 2024:

- **VOLUNTEER:** Give your time to support our neediest youth:
- **DONATE:** Your gift provides nourish food and after school support to our students.
- **HOST A FOOD DRIVE:** Collect food items to support our pantries.






Thank You

Thank you for your ongoing support to nourish our students by providing food, mentoring, and tutoring in a manner that respects dignity and individuality while sustaining dreams.

 PO Box 2085, Petoskey, Michigan 49770

 (231) 622-8044

 kathy@northmendens.org

 northmendens.org

