

WEST MIDLAND FAMILY CENTER Family Focus

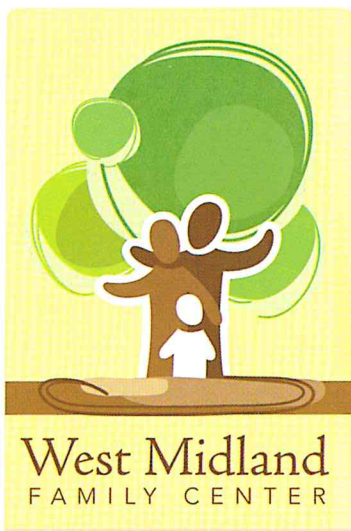
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Thriving, Giving, Growing...Together

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Five Combine to Deliver the Goods! \$92,000 Raised for Refrigerated Box Truck

Collaboration is the name of the game for *West Midland Family Center (WMFC)* because collaboration always creates a win-win scenario for the people we serve.

The pandemic shed light on the multitude of economic pressures of so many in the *West Midland Community* and beyond. This need, paired with policies implemented by food distributors mandating the proper cold storage of items donated for community distribution, led to the obvious need for a truck.

Grant awards totaling \$92,000 from the *Midland Area Community Foundation, Midland County Youth Action Council (MCYAC), Midland*

100 Club Members, Hemlock Semiconductor and WMFC, were used to purchase the much needed 12-foot refrigerated box truck. The box truck food storage area has since proved to be multifunctional as a freezer, a cooler and as a non cooled storage area. The purchase of the refrigerated box truck enables WMFC and partner organizations to facilitate community surplus food distributions, giving easy access to nutritious food for residents. The project has helped alleviate hunger and stress for those in need.

For many years, WMFC has partnered with the *Midland County Emergency Food Pantry Network (EFPN)* to provide food to the community, originally averaging one surplus food distribution per year and expanding from there. Late in 2019, the *United Way of Midland County* joined the effort setting an aggressive goal of providing one surplus food distribution per month for 2020. Then, in 2020 with a pandemic and local flooding, WMFC partnered with additional organizations to coordinate surplus food trucks throughout the county thus ensuring food for thousands of individuals in need. Together these organizations along with individuals from differing



*WMFC Staffer Mike Sobolewski uses the hydraulic lift gate to unload a pallet of food donated by **COSTCO***

*...See **Collaboration** page 2*

2021 COP Graduates...Where are They Now?

The *Class of 2021* had quite the roller coaster ride on their way to graduation. Spending part of their Junior year and most of their Senior year bouncing back and forth between in person and virtual learning, or some hybrid of the two, was not easy to navigate...at first! However, in keeping with the main goal of the *Dow College Opportunity Program (COP)* to 'keep moving forward,' they adapted and pushed their way through with an unexpected level of success!

COP works with students from *Bullock Creek (BCHS)*, *Coleman*, *Meridian Early College*, and *Shepherd High Schools* and had a total of seven students graduate from these local high schools in 2021.

COP students *Jacob* and *Taylor* both graduated from Bullock Creek. *Jacob* will be entering the electrical trade while *Taylor* attends *Delta College* through the BCHS 5th Year program. Her plans are to continue at either *Michigan State University* or *University of Michigan*. Meanwhile *Ana* is participating in Meridian's 5th Year program as she works towards an associate's degree.

Meanwhile, COP's four graduates from Coleman High have diverse paths ahead! *Dylan* is attending *Mid-Michigan College* and *Olivya* is participating in the 5th Year program. *Jess* and *Alayna* are attending *Saginaw Valley State University* and recently moved into their separate dorm rooms. Alayna really enjoyed taking part in the SVSU *Welcome to Campus* events. "They had so many fun events... like henna tattoos, and they brought in farm animals sort of like a petting zoo. It was all free and got you out of your room to meet new people since classes hadn't started yet," shared Alayna.

Jess essentially grew up at WMFC where she volunteered in the *WMFC Junior Lifeguarding Program* before becoming a *WMFC Lifeguard*. Working as a lifeguard then led to becoming involved in the COP program. Not one to sit idle, Jess finds SVSU filled with opportunities.

"One of the most exciting things about living on campus is all of the opportunities available to students outside of just taking classes," said Jess. "It is pretty fast paced and there is always something exciting to do!"

WMFC would like to congratulate the Class of 2021 for not only persevering through their "not so normal" last few years of high school but for the successful first steps they have taken in pursuit of their future careers. WMFC is very proud of all our 2021 COP graduates!

Collaboration...cont'd from page 1

backgrounds convene in service of a very basic human need; nutritious food for the people of our community. WMFC, the *Greater Midland North Family Center* and the *Greater Coleman Family Center*, serve as food distribution host sites. The *Food Bank of Eastern Michigan* and *Hidden Harvest* are vital to the process as food distribution hubs from which all our community distribution host sites gather food for distribution to the community. WMFC also partners with the *Mt. Pleasant ALDI Grocery Store* to pick up rescued food items twice weekly and with *Midland Costco Wholesale* three times weekly. This collaborative project is in keeping with WMFC's focus on assisting people to meet their basic needs and is within the scope of the WMFC vision of helping each community member today to reach their full potential tomorrow.



Dow COP Student Jess (seated in the front row, 3rd from the left) is enjoying college life while making lots of new friends at Saginaw Valley State University.

Meet Christian and Kerianne Allemang

Meet the Allemangs. **Christian** is a **WMFC Board Member**. **Kerianne** is **WMFC's School-Age Program Director** and she leads in the onboarding process for all newly hired WMFC employees. The Allemangs are pictured below on one of the benches that Christian installed at WMFC as part of his 2007 *Eagle Scout* project.

Christian recently found his way back to WMFC via a circuitous route that began when the **United Way of Midland County** held a **Young Leaders** gathering at a local watering establishment. The featured speaker **WMFC Executive Director Greg Dorrien**, was praising the virtues of what happens with United Way funds at WMFC. Unbeknownst to Greg, Christian, who had recently been transferred back to **Midland** from **California** by **The Dow Chemical Company**, was in the audience. Later that evening Christian introduced himself to Greg. Their conversation lasted another month before Christian returned to WMFC to volunteer on the Finance and Investment committees. Fast forward to today and Christian has now

joined the WMFC Board of Directors as is still a member of the **Finance and Investment Committees**. "It's wonderful to be back working with such a great organization. The Center's transformation after all these years is amazing. It's an honor to be associated with it," shared Christian.

Meanwhile, Greg learned that Kerianne had stayed behind in California to finish the school year because the program and kids she was directing would have been devastated by her departure. Hearing this, Greg knew that Kerianne was someone WMFC should have on staff. "It's an absolute privilege to be part of the families' lives that I work with at WMFC," commented Kerianne. "Watching our student's resiliency and their ability to find joy amongst the stresses of COVID-19 is very inspiring. They are strong, brilliant, and bold.

Helping them grow has been the highlight of my position at WMFC."

When they aren't working or volunteering for WMFC, Christian can be found hiking, playing guitar, and dreaming of the next big trip. While Kerianne enjoys getting out into nature, paddle boarding, exploring local businesses, and working on home design projects.



"We are excited to see the Center's mission continue to grow and adapt through the coming years," stated Christian.

LeViere and Dull Named Heart of the Center Award Recipients



In a classroom focused on learning through play, Joy teaches children the love of learning while encouraging the personal growth of friends like young Parker.

The **Diane Dauer Heart of the Center Award** is presented annually to a staff member in October during **WMFC's Staff Professional Development and Safety Day**. Recipients are chosen through a nomination process in which both patrons and staff can complete a form and nominate a deserving staff member. This year **Joy LeViere** and **Zoe Dull**, both from the Childcare Staff, were named recipients of the 2021 **Diane Dauer Heart of the Center Award**.

"I was so surprised and honored when it was announced that I was one of the Heart of the Center Award Recipients," stated Joy. "I am so blessed to be recognized for all that I do at WMFC."

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Ooh, ooh....Monkey see, Monkey do

2021 Board of Directors

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Heart of the Center Award Recipients...continued from page 3

Zoe echoed Joy's sentiments regarding being named an award recipient.

"I am beyond honored to be recognized not only by my immediate coworkers, but by the Center as a whole," commented Dull. "It means so much to me to know that my hard work has been noticed by others and that others feel I represent the values of community, kindness, and selflessness."

"I love my job and I love the Center. WMFC and my classroom are my home away from home, and my coworkers and colleagues are truly my second family," continued Dull. "I am so thankful for WMFC and so grateful to all those who have supported

and encouraged me to grow as a teacher and as a person. I can say without a doubt that without WMFC I would not be the teacher I am today."



Zoe loves hanging out on the playground with young friends like Maddox.