



First Community Bank sponsors Manna cooking classes, provides \$5,000 of nutrition education for families in need

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HARBOR SPRINGS, MICHIGAN—First Community Bank recently donated \$5,000 to Manna Food Project, designating the funds for nutrition initiatives that include cooking classes and education materials for food pantry clients.

The funds—paired with a grant from the Health Department of Northwest Michigan and Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities—were designated for Manna’s 2020 program, “Nutrition First: Skills for a Healthy Life,” which aims to equip at-risk high school students, college-level students, and young families with the knowledge and tools to navigate the adulthood challenges of healthy living, with a primary focus on food and nutrition. With COVID-19 school closures, classes with high schoolers and college students have been put on hold, but a free virtual presentation to young moms was held over Zoom in September.

“It was a challenging experiment, but the class was a success,” says Jessyca Stoeper, Program Coordinator at Manna Food Project. “We walked them through eating healthy on the cheap, reducing waste, reading food labels, nutrition myths, and ways to get the whole family to eat more veggies. The instructors used motivational interviewing tactics to make the lessons stick.”

Each participant received all the equipment and ingredients ahead of time—an electric skillet, measuring cups, food storage containers, a cookbook, fresh produce, and much more—which meant they were able to cook the featured recipe, Lentil Taco Skillet, even with their kids helping out.

Stoeper says that food security and health go hand-in-hand. “If someone is struggling to put food on the table, they are less likely to purchase high-cost fruits and veggies, and far more likely to choose low-cost convenience meals that can lead to chronic health problems. Then medical bills pile up, and it becomes a never-ending cycle.”

Manna Food Project has pioneered these initiatives throughout their tri-county service area for the last four years. Supporters like First Community Bank help sustain this programming and reach more families.

“We believe that education is the best way to help people. There is nothing more powerful than knowledge,” says Meagan Krzywosinski, First Community Bank’s Assistant Vice President of Human Resources and a member of Manna’s Board of Directors. “These classes provide skills for healthy lifestyles, food independence, and the ability for our community to be self-sustaining.”

Though COVID-19 thwarted initial plans for 2020, Manna and its partners anticipate additional classes later into 2021, both virtual and in-person.

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“We are proud of our partnership with Manna and the work that they’re doing. At First Community Bank we felt that this Manna program was a great way for us to help make a real difference that impacts local families during what has been a difficult year for many,” says Matthew R. Clarke, President of First Community Bank.

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Manna Food Project, a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization, helps feed the hungry in Antrim, Charlevoix, and Emmet Counties. Manna is a partner organization of the national Feeding America Food Bank Network and operates a food bank and distribution center, a food rescue program, a food pantry, and the “Food 4 Kids” backpack program. For more information, call 231.347.8852 or visit www.mannafoodproject.org.

First Community Bank has been family owned and trusted since 1905. Offices are conveniently located in Harbor Springs, Petoskey, Cheboygan, Traverse City, Grand Rapids, and Birmingham, Michigan. Visit www.firstcb.com for more information about their personal, business, and lending services.