

Monthly Newsletter

Oct. 2026



Helping Hands of Cass County

SHOP, DONATE, GIVE, VOLUNTEER, AND RECEIVE SERVICES

Our Mission: Serve the economically challenged who live in Cass County and help them bridge the gap.

Shop & Donate

Thrift store needs: VOLUNTEERS TO HANG CLOTHING

Pantry needs:

- Canned vegetables and cereal

Give / Volunteer

- All of our services stay in Cass County. See our "GIVE" Page at helpinghandscassco.org
- We need volunteers for Thrift Store and Pantry.

Receive Services

- Call 211 for a referral or 269-445-8104 for our referral procedures.
- With referrals, we provide:
 - food boxes
 - certain household goods
 - hygiene products
 - clothing
 - limited utility support

This organization is operated exclusively for purposes described in Section 501C3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Helping Hands is an equal opportunity provider.



*** FOOD DISTRIBUTION DATES ***

Helping Hands Food Pantry:

408 East State Street

Tues. and Thurs: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Call 211 or agency for referral

Feeding America Mobile

Pantry Trucks:

Open to all, must be present.

+ At Pleasant View Church,
M60 and Crooked Creek Rd.

Fri., Oct. 2: Noon to 1 p.m.

+ At Council on Aging,

60525 Decatur Rd.

Tues., Oct. 27: 4 p.m.

USDA Senior Food Program

at Helping Hands Thrift Shop:

Second Tuesdays

Tues., Oct. 13: Noon to 2 p.m.

New enrollees are placed on a waiting list.



MEET BRYLEE JONES, a school leader and long-time volunteer and summer cashier for Helping Hands. It's no surprise that Brylee is in leading roles; it's in her blood.

Grandparents Mike and Julee Grice serve as church leaders and mother Tina is the store manager for Helping Hands. A senior at Cassopolis High School, Brylee is a leader of the High School Senate, FFA Chapter, and football cheer captain. She's been instrumental in helping Next Generation, a student organization that focuses on mental health and suicide prevention. Outside of school, Brylee was first runner up in last year's Miss Cassopolis pageant and Miss Congeniality. Her connection with Helping Hands began as a ten-year-old volunteer. For the last two summers, Brylee has been employed as a Saturday cashier for the thrift shop. In her words, "Helping Hands is a vital part of our community because it gives so much support. Kids at school say the thrift shop is important because parents can shop for affordable clothing and other things they need." We are blessed to have this caring young woman serve our community!

What's Inside – See Page

Spend It. Save It. Know It.	2
Souptober Collection Boxes	3
Thank You, Volunteers Needed	4
Cass County CROP Walk	5
Michigan Gateway	
Community Foundation	
Sam Adams Backpack Appeal	6

1984 – 2026

40+ years of service to Cass
County

Contact Us:

Helping Hands of Cass County

130 S Broadway
Cassopolis, MI 49031

Need our services:

269-445-8104

helpinghandsofcc@yahoo.com

Give:



Credit card



Venmo

helpinghandscasso.org



Find us at:



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Spend It. Save It. Know It.

Learn how to build credit, avoid scams, and successfully budget at this free financial literacy session being held Oct. 7, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. Helping Hands is partnering with Circle Federal Credit Union representatives to help people build their financial knowledge. An extra bonus for those attending is free pizza from Mike's Pizza Garage and Bar.

Spend It. Save It. KNOW IT.

Where Did My Paycheck Go?

Join Us for a **FREE** Financial Literacy Event.



Understanding & Building Your Credit



How to Spot & Avoid Scams



Credit Monitoring Made Simple



Smart Budgeting Tips That Actually Work

Gain the knowledge and tools you need to protect your money, improve your credit, and build a stronger financial future.

Wednesday, October 7th

Mike's Pizza Garage & Bar | 212 S Broadway St.

Class Begins at 6:00 pm

Door Prizes | Pizza | Goodie Bags



Helping Hands of Cass County



Come Build Your Financial Confidence With Us.

For more information, call Lissa Purlee at 269-228-1069

Thrift Store Specials:

\$5 Bag sales are held the last full week of each month.

Check out Facebook
for other specials.

Thrift Store Hours:

Mon. – Thurs.

9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

STORE NOW OPEN

ON SATURDAYS

11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

It's Soup-tober!

LOCAL PANTRY FOOD DRIVE



Please donate:

- Cans of Soup

- Your favorite soup fixings
- Ingredients for your favorite soup |

- **Food will be shared with the four pantries listed below.**

- Our goal is 1,000 cans of soup.
- Collection boxes are in local businesses, including Cassopolis Village Office, Harding's, G.W. Jones Bank, Village Floral, and Helping Hands thrift store. Local churches will also collect soup.

Thank you for making October a "Soup-er" month for your neighbors.

Prefer to Donate \$\$? Send to:

Church of Cassopolis

Church of God

Helping Hands of Cass County, Inc.

St. Paul Lutheran Church



**Come see our Fall
Collection hitting
the shelves this
month.**



**Our Sale this week is
\$4 Summer Clothes
Bags (Swimwear
included)**



Thank you, Dowagiac Dollar General and manager, Jamie Quigley, for holding a food drive that stocked the pantry. You are a community supporter for people who need help!



Volunteers from Helping Hands packed weekend food boxes for 50 Sam Adams students for two weeks of August and the month of September.



**HAVE A FEW HOURS AND WANT TO HELP YOUR NEIGHBOR?
CHECK OUT THESE VOLUNTEER ROLES AT HELPING HANDS.**

Organizing and stocking food from weekly shopping trips or large food collections.

Packing bags with meals for hungry school children to take home on the weekends. Shopping with your neighbor at the pantry.

Sorting items, hanging clothing, and displaying items for sale at the thrift store. Did you know that team members get a 50% discount on items that have been out in the store floor for a week?

Call 269-445-8104 and ask for Tina or email us at helpinghandsofcc@yahoo.com to sign up.

As Hunger, Disease, and Disasters Climb Church World Service Responds In the U.S. and Around the World

Across the world Church World Services (CWS) is battling challenges facing people today: hunger, poverty, disasters, and displacement (refugees). Area church leaders are inviting all Cass County residents to join that battle by supporting the 38th annual Cass County CROP Walk being held Sunday, October 4th at 2:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging pavilion and walking track in Cassopolis.

Natural disasters are in the news now more than ever, including wildfires, drought, hurricanes, and flooding. Across five continents, CWS is addressing immediate needs like shelter and warmth, clean water supplies, and buckets of cleaning or hygiene products. In the United States, CWS has helped over 62,000 people in recent disasters.

Food is a critical part of CWS work. **To begin with, 25% of funds raised in the CROP Walk will go to five food pantries serving communities in Cass County, many of them feeding two hundred families monthly.** In countries around the world, CWS works with communities to develop sustainable food practices, such as planting gardens and building greenhouses, that not only feed people, but provide products to sell at local markets. Another important program is WASH, supplying people with clean water, sanitation, and hygiene to prevent disease. CWS continues to provide refuge support here and abroad.

The theme for this year's walk is seeds, since they are the beginning of most food sources. You are invited to join in the CROP walk, knowing whatever funds you bring will be well spent. There is no requirement for walking a distance. Walkers find comradery and shared purpose in meeting the needs of neighbors near and far, not to mention the fun and informative activities planned. For further information, contact the Edwardsburg Presbyterian Church at 269-663-6815.



Michigan Gateway Community Foundation Seeks Funding

Sam Adams Backpack Program Announces 2027 Fundraising Goal

In its 10th year of operation, the Sam Adams Backpack Program provides weekend food for school children who might otherwise go hungry when school is not in session. The goal of raising \$20,000 will sustain the program for an additional school year and offer flexibility on food purchases.

A collaboration of local churches and community volunteers shop and pack take-home bags for the elementary students. With a budget of \$4 per student per day for a two-day weekend, a food bag may include cereal or packets of oatmeal, peanut butter, soup, ramen or macaroni and cheese, a fruit cup, and healthy snacks. Due to the rising costs of food this is up from an earlier budget of \$3 per student per day. For longer school closures such as Thanksgiving, winter and spring breaks, the family receives food vouchers valid at Harding's Market in Cassopolis for cereal, eggs, milk, cheese and meat. The voucher program is much appreciated and well-received by the families.

The School District informs income-qualified families about the program and distributes the bags to students on a weekly basis. Currently the program packs bags for 50 students. This is the same as in previous years.

Assistant Principal Lauren Sheeley attests to the program's positive impact. The Backpack Program Team is in close contact with school administration to align food bags and voucher distribution and receive feedback from parents.

The Backpack Program welcomes tax deductible monetary donations of all sizes, and 100% of funds address food insecurity of Cassopolis elementary children. A donation of \$8 feeds one hungry student for a weekend; \$32 covers one student for a month. A donation of \$400 covers the cost of 50 students for a weekend, and \$1,600 covers the program cost for an entire month. Online donations are accepted at Michigan Gateway Community Foundation (MGCF.org, scroll down to Sam Adams Backpack Program). Checks may be mailed to MGCF, 107 W. Front Street, Buchanan, MI 49107 with attention to Sam Adams Backpack Program.



For more information or to become a sponsor or volunteer, contact Barb Strlekar at 269-501-3402 or at bstrlekar@hotmail.com. Our member organizations include Sam Adams Elementary School, Cassopolis United Methodist Church, Cassopolis United Presbyterian Church, St. Ann's Catholic Church, Diamond Cove Missionary Church, Word of Life Worship Center, Penn Friends Community Church, Christs' Temple Church, Helping Hands of Cass County, Harding's Grocery Store and Michigan Gateway Community Foundation (MGCF). These community members form a unique partnership to provide a much-needed resource of weekend food for our local students.