

WEST MIDLAND FAMILY CENTER Family Focus

VOLUME 30, NUMBER 3

Thriving, Giving, Growing...Together

Late Fall 2020

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WMFC Spearheads County Wide Effort to Provide One Million Pounds of Food to Families in Need

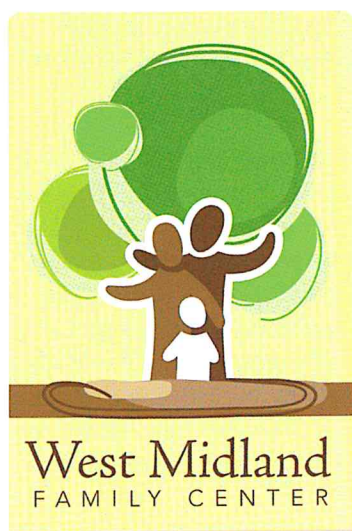
For many years, *West Midland Family Center (WMFC)* partnered with *Midland County Emergency Food Pantry Network* averaging one surplus food distribution per year. Then in 2018, WMFC hosted three surplus food distributions and doubled that number to six the following year. Late in 2019, WMFC in partnership with the *United Way of Midland County* set an aggressive goal of providing one surplus food distribution per month in 2020.

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Fast forward to March 2020. No one could have anticipated the changes that would occur in the United States as a result of a worldwide pandemic. As a nationwide lockdown went into effect many in the WMFC community were laid off or lost their jobs. *The Midland Area Community Foundation* and the *United Way of Midland County* quickly responded to the need and stepped in to approve additional funding for WMFC to gain access to even more surplus food. In addition, the *Food Bank of Eastern Michigan* invited WMFC to partner in another program which would allow WMFC to provide weekly surplus



Camera shy Jason Green and his colorful friends!



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Preschool Students Successfully Adjust to New Learning Environment

This is *Autumn*, underneath her face covering you will find her sweet smile. At WMFC, we must strive to cover that smile to protect Autumn's health and that of her classmates. Maintaining health, well-being and smiles ...that's our job! We work to put smiles on the faces of the children in our care and we protect each and every child as if they are our own. And indeed they are our preschoolers. It's our responsibility to prepare children for Kindergarten, teach them their letters, numbers, and social skills (among other things).

This year, physical distancing and wearing face coverings are among the social skills children are learning. Children have opportunities for both indoor and outdoor learning and play.



Autumn shows her teacher the progress she has made finding items during outdoor classroom time.

While in the classrooms at WMFC, nearly all of the children have adapted well to wearing a face covering. Outdoors, when children (and staff) are able to keep distanced they are allowed to remove their face covering.

Because of COVID, preschool started a bit later than usual. Autumn is now enjoying *Miss Emma's* 4's preschool class where, in spite of COVID-19, she is learning, growing and gaining the same beneficial preschool experience as children have in year's past. Being in school may help protect children like Autumn from stress associated with isolation and may provide them with a sense of normalcy in this difficult time. In the face of the unknown, although they are young, children know that life is different.

We still have openings in eight preschool classrooms, (at five different locations). Contact, *Missy Finney* at 989.832.3256 with questions or visit the *Midland Preschool Partnership* website <https://preschoolpartnership.org> to learn more, because regardless of COVID, the future awaits.



Using tools and fine motor skills, Autumn makes a playdough sculpture during inside class time.

WMFC Spearheads County Wide Effort...continued from page 1

county. WMFC built a strong collaborative effort with the **Greater Midland Coleman Family Center** and the **Greater Midland North Family Center** to rotate surplus food trucks between the three sites in hopes of reaching as many struggling families as possible.

Through the years and currently, WMFC continues to partner with

Hidden Harvest which regularly rescues food and drops it off at WMFC for distribution. Hidden Harvest food trucks unload all types of food at the Center but families really look forward to the fresh fruits and vegetables. The Hidden Harvest deliveries help families bridge the gap between surplus food distributions.

“WMFC is on track to host 30 surplus

food distributions for 2020 and will have led in coordinating 51 distributions throughout Midland County by year end,” shared **Jason Green, CFO and Surplus Distribution Coordinator** “At this rate, WMFC will easily surpass distributing over 1.2 million pounds of food by the end of the year.”

Forbes and Davis Receive Diane Dauer Heart of the Center Award

It is often difficult to choose who should be the recipient of the annual employee **Diane Dauer Heart of the Center Award**, but this year was especially difficult. As a result of the new life challenges presented by a worldwide pandemic, the award committee felt that most every employee at WMFC is worthy of an award as each continues to go above and beyond what is needed in an effort to serve the community on any given day.



Janae Forbes and Chelsea Davis receive congratulations from coworkers in the Zoom Room for being named the 2020 Diane Dauer Heart of the Center Award recipients.

“I wish we could hand out 75 awards,” stated **Renee**

Allen, Diane Dauer Award Committee Member. “Staff from multiple departments consistently rise to the challenges associated with this difficult time. Childcare staff report to work each day to care for children in need of a safe and loving place to spend their day. Maintenance staff members work over time to make sure the building is cleaned and disin-

fected. WMFC Welcome Center Staff make sure that the doors are open and those entering are screened in order to keep everyone inside the Center safe. The list of staff who sacrifice their own safety to serve others is endless. We congratulate **Janae Forbes (Lead 4's Preschool Teacher)** and **Chelsea Davis (Recreation**

and Building Supervisor) as this year's recipients. Their work ethic, devotion to our families and passion for our mission are a great representation of all WMFC staff. Chelsea and Janae truly emulate what it means to be the Heart of the Center.”



Preschool children help one another put away cots after rest time. Everything that is important in life is practiced in preschool.

2020

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Center Loses Great Friend and Volunteer

Gene G. Dauer, the only person to have twice received the **Orrin Barrett Volunteer of the Year Award**, died October 11, 2020 after a valiant fight with Parkinson's and Lewy body dementia. He was a beloved man, brother, father and grandfather. Soft-spoken and kind, keen witted, intelligent and extremely able, he left this world a better place.

Gene started volunteering in 1979, shortly after his wife **Diane Dauer** began working as the **Youth Director**. In 1981, the **West Midland County Community Center Auxiliary** was formed to help raise money for

youth programs. Gene was all about service. He and his team volunteered once a month for many years, until he decided that wasn't enough. Then he volunteered to become **BINGO Chairman** in 1995, which meant giving up nearly every Saturday night for next 21 years. But he did much more than just help the Center's Auxiliary volunteers bring in a \$1 million or so for youth programs. Gene graduated from **Central Michigan University** with a degree in computer technology, so he (and the original **Mr. BINGO Chuck Norisez**) would help the staff of six people with computer

issues back when IT was what happened in a game of tag. Gene was a jack of all trades, and happy any time he was tinkering with something, but his biggest smiles showed up when a child completed their 4-H leather craft project. Gene was the recipient of the **Orrin Barret Volunteer of the Year Award** in 1989 and in 2015. Both he and Diane gave much to the BINGO program, where a tight group of volunteers became "family." Gene will be greatly missed by all.



Gene Dauer (right) at his BINGO retirement party in 2016 with Greg Dorrien, WMFC Executive Director