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5th Hour

Imagine you are 8-years old and can't wait to get to school so you can have a hot breakfast, which is the only place you get to have one. Then you are excited for lunch and try to stock up on as much food as you can, including putting anything that's in packaging in your pockets so you can surprise your younger brother and sister with a snack later. How about when there is a snow day, and everyone else you know is super excited to be able to have a day off, but all you can think about is how you are going to feed your siblings and yourself? It may be hard for you to comprehend, but this is the sad reality for many young people, including some here in northern Michigan.

Thankfully, we have places like the Good Neighbors Food Pantry in Boyne City. According to their website, in 2015 GNFP began with a mission to assist the 13% of the community and 25% that earn more than the poverty level but less than the cost of living for the county. People are in serious trouble finding housing in our area, which has led to skyrocketing housing costs. This has created a desperate situation for many families. This includes access to healthy food to stave off food insecurity.

I am one of the fortunate students who have never had to worry about food insecurity. That being said, I have a few friends who stress over where their next meal will come from. My family and I invite them over on holidays and weekends when times are extra tough for them. I can't imagine having to be concerned for your basic needs being met on top of schoolwork,

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social anxiety, or any other issues. Seeing your parents or your caregivers having to skip meals or act bravely in the face of food insecurity would have to affect a child for the rest of their life.

That's why places like the Good Neighbors Food Pantry are so important. From the minute you walk in the door on any Tuesday from 10:00-12:00 PM or 2:00-5:30 PM, you are treated with respect and dignity. There are choices that are healthy and filling, and they will make sure you get enough protein, which is the number one issue for people who are food insecure. There is a general feeling of warmth and compassion from the volunteers who assist you. Speaking of volunteers—they need many! My mom's company is helping stuff nutrition education bags she donated with foods for families to be able to have Thanksgiving, and I am helping as well. It's the least I can do to help give back to my community.

But places like this have financial needs too: for every \$10 that is donated to the pantry, they can purchase \$100 worth of food to line their shelves for people who need it. That means with the \$100 from the Kiwanis Club, they would be able to purchase \$1000 worth of food! There would be so many families that would benefit from this, and I can't think of a more worthy charity to receive this honor than the Good Neighbors Food Pantry of Boyne City.