



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 21, 2020

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Older Adults Get Access to the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program

Kalamazoo, MI – Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department’s Area Agency on Aging (AAA) IIIA has joined forces with Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes to streamline distribution of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farmers to Families Food Box Program. On May 8, the USDA approved contracts across the country for the program, which allows local farmers and suppliers to coordinate boxes of fruits, vegetables, and dairy with food banks and Area Agency on Aging across the state. AAA IIIA will receive the first delivery this week.

COVID-19 has created barriers, such as attaining basic needs like food, for vulnerable older adults who are at a significant risk for devastating effects of the virus. This initiative allows produce boxes to be delivered to older adults while removing that barrier and following the Stay Home, Stay Safe Executive Order. This endeavor is supported through the state of Michigan Aging & Adult Services Agency initiatives with Quarantine Boxes, and USDA produce boxes.

Older adults age sixty and older who are home bound are encouraged to call Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes’ Call Center at 269-343-3663 (open 9am Monday – Friday until full) or email info@kzoolf.org to schedule a delivery. In addition to the perishable food items through the Farmers to Families program, additional food items will be available including bread, eggs, and non-perishable items.

“Unfortunately, COVID-19 has hit our older adults the hardest – not only in terms of mortality and social isolation – but in creating barriers to accessing basic needs like food. This is one of our most vulnerable populations, and we must do more for them,” said James Rutherford, Health Officer of Kalamazoo County. “Thankfully, Kalamazoo’s resources and coordination of partnerships through our Area Agency on Aging IIIA and Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes has responded to this issue with this joint initiative. We are also incredibly grateful for the opportunity to support the State of Michigan’s initiatives to connect families to fresh produce during this pandemic,” said Rutherford.

Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes is also a direct recipient of USDA Farmers to Families donated food boxes which are available to all residents of Kalamazoo County (no age restrictions). These food resources are available by scheduling a pick-up or delivery through the Call Center at 269-343-3663. The Farmers to Families produce, dairy, and meat boxes will be provided along with bread, eggs, and assorted non-perishable items for the entire household.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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The partnership between AAA IIIA and Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes extends farther than with the USDA Farmers to Families Program. Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes has evolved service initiatives to diminish barriers to serving homebound older adults. Together, both organizations will build upon this new initiative to coordinate delivery to those in need. “Our partnership with Area Agency on Aging IIIA is invaluable. It allows both agencies to connect vulnerable individuals with quality food resources and to bolster their support network,” said Greta Faworski, Resource Development Director of Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes.

Information about the COVID-19 is rapidly changing. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html, www.michigan.gov/coronavirus, and www.kalcounty.com/hcs/covid19.php.

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