ACCOA Suspends Food and Transportation Programs

The Alcona County Commission on Aging (ACCOA) food pantry and transportation programs will end in June. The ACCOA Board of Directors voted at its May 23 meeting to indefinitely suspend the monthly pop-up pantry and food bank programs due to a compliance discrepancy with its funding. The millage that was voted on by the citizens of Alcona County states that funds will be used specifically for services to residents who are 60 years and older (seniors).

Denise Trelfa, ACCOA Executive Director, stated, "It is extremely unfortunate that these much-needed programs for Alcona County citizens will end. For ACCOA, it is not a matter of need, but a matter of being compliant with what we are tasked and funded to do by the county and tax payers. The board and I are responsible for ensuring current and future funding are protected so that we can continue to provide services to seniors. Any time we are not in compliance, we risk losing our funding."

Volunteers will conduct a final Pop-Up Pantry event on June 21. Additional information will be shared at a later time. Volunteers will be needed.

The cost for pantry staff and overhead is currently estimated at $41,215 per year. The majority of funding for food for the Appointment Pantry and the Pop-Up Pantry was donated by citizens, and Meijer matched funds through its Meijer Bucks Program. Citizens raised $15,276 through a GoFundMe effort in December. After the final pantry in June, $1,308 will remain. These funds and Meijer Bucks will be donated to two churches in Alcona County that agreed to provide food to those in need; Harrisville Methodist Church and Lott Baptist Church in Glennie. Details are attached. Volunteers are asked to assist with these food pantry operations.

The last day of services for the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) program will be June 23. This program has proven to be unsustainable due to its cost. It is currently budgeted at $129,000 per year, minus donations, and serves approximately 22 transportation appointments per month. Alcona citizens are encouraged to contact Thunder Bay Transportation Authority for their transportation needs.

Where can Alcona County citizens/seniors go for free food?

1. ACCOA has arranged with the following food pantries to receive all citizens, regardless of age, who have food insecurities and need help:
   a. Harrisville United Methodist Church (UMC): 217 N. State St., Harrisville, MI 48740
      - for residents of Alcona County only (driver’s license will be checked)
      - Pantry is open the second Saturday of each month, at 9:30 AM
   b. Lott Baptist Church: 4475 Kings Corner Rd., Glennie, MI 48737
      - for residents of the following cities only: South Branch, Long Lake, Mikado, Harrisville, Lincoln, Glennie and Curran (driver’s license check)
      - Pantry is open the first Tuesday of each month, at 1 p.m.

2. ACCOA’s senior center will continue to host Northeast MI Community Service Agency’s (NEMCSA) Golden Groceries Program, which provides food boxes to seniors on the second Tuesday of each month in the parking lot behind the senior center, at 1 p.m. Go to https://www.nemcsa.org/services/need-food/food-boost-program/ for additional information, such as eligibility requirements, and to sign up. There is an income requirement.

3. ACCOA’s senior center will provide emergency hunger meals for Alcona County.

4. For food hunger emergencies only, residents who are 60 years of age or older can call (989) 334-3466 to arrange for pick-up Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

5. ACCOA will host the “Senior Project Fresh,” which provides $25 in coupons to be used at participating farmers’ markets for qualified seniors 60 years and older. Attendance at a Nutrition Class is required, which will be held at the Senior Center on June 8. There is an income requirement. Call (989) 334-3466 for information.

6. ACCOA provides meal Monday through Thursday at 5 p.m. at the senior center. Donations are requested; $3.00 for those 60 and older, and $6.00 for those under 60. Please call (989) 334-3466 by 11 a.m. each day to R.S.V.P. Meals on wheels is available to those who cannot drive. Call (989) 334-3470 to see if you are eligible.

June 2023