

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SCCS Partners with Loaves & Fishes to Improve Food Pantry Services

Vicksburg, MI – February 25, 2010 – The affects of Michigan’s struggling economy are evident throughout the region served by South County Community Services (SCCS). Families in need turn to SCCS—the area’s only social service agency—for emergency assistance for food, medicine, utility bills, transportation and other crucial necessities.

Emergency food assistance, which SCCS refers to as “food pantries” is the largest and busiest component of SCCS’s assistance programs. Food pantries are designed to help families facing a critical lack of food in the home by providing a four-day supply of meat, canned goods, cereal and other staples. The content of the pantry is based on Federal nutrition guidelines and the quantity of food provided is based on the number of persons in the household.

To better meet the great demand for food assistance and to ensure that all persons in SCCS’s service area who need help are served appropriately, SCCS is joining forces with Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes. Founded in 1982, Loaves & Fishes provides food and coordinates appointments for 27 food pantry sites in Kalamazoo County.

Beginning Monday, March 15, persons needing food pantries from SCCS must call the Loaves & Fishes appointment line at 343-3663. Loaves & Fishes will schedule the appointment and notify SCCS. Persons receiving pantries will still pick up their food at the SCCS office inside the Vicksburg Community Center, 101 S. Main St. in Vicksburg.

Pantry appointments at SCCS will be available on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM. Persons may call Loaves & Fishes any business day to request a pantry appointment. The Loaves & Fishes appointment line is open from 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM Monday – Friday.

“By becoming part of the Loaves & Fishes appointment system we are providing our clients with more options,” said SCCS Executive Director Jan VanStratt. “If an emergency situation arises on a day that pantry assistance is unavailable at SCCS, the Loaves & Fishes scheduler can inform the client about other options.”

Persons may only receive a pantry from one provider once every 30 days unless they have a special referral from a social services caseworker. SCCS and Loaves & Fishes maintain client information so that eligibility can be verified.

“Using the Loaves & Fishes appointment system will also help us track how often a family is seeking assistance,” VanStratt said. “If families are asking for food assistance from multiple pantries every month, there are clearly greater issues in the home that need to be addressed. We can help our client families address those issues.”

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The food provided by the SCCS pantries comes from the generous donations of money and grocery items from individuals, organizations, civic clubs, churches, youth groups and businesses, along with food supplied by the Loaves & Fishes warehouse. SCCS uses funds donated to the pantry program to purchase meat, eggs, milk, produce and other perishable items that supplement the canned, boxed and frozen items.

The Loaves & Fishes appointment line is only for people needing emergency food assistance. Families needing SCCS's help with utility bills, prescriptions, transportation or other services should continue to call SCCS directly at 649-2901.

For more information about South County Community Services, visit our website at www.sccs.us. For more information about Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes, visit www.kzoolf.org.

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South County Community Services is a full-service assistance agency serving the residents of 38 percent of the geographical area of Kalamazoo County, including Brady, Climax, Prairie Ronde, Pavilion, Schoolcraft and Wakeshma Townships. Included in this area are the villages of Climax, Fulton, Schoolcraft, Scotts and Vicksburg.