

LMC celebrates 30th year of food basket giveaway

By HP STAFF

BENTON HARBOR — Lake Michigan College has spread holiday warmth by filling and delivering 99 baskets of food to at-risk families and elderly community members in St. Joseph, Benton Harbor, Coloma, Watervliet, Niles and South Haven.

The families and seniors were identified with the help of the Area Agency on Aging and United Way.

“This is a terrific demonstration each year of what the ‘community’ in community college really means,” said Anne Erdman, LMC’s vice president of administrative services. “This program is a part of the culture here — giving back to families in the community is a gratifying way to help build the family of Lake Michigan College.”

Kathy Burnett, chairman of the holiday food basket committee for the past three years, estimates that since its inception in 1983, the program has provided food to about 4,000 families. The committee raises money to buy food for the baskets from Roger’s Foodland, which provided the food at a discount. The committee also recruits volunteers to fill the baskets and coordinates 10 staff members who deliver the baskets.

“With the rising costs of food, we need to raise between \$4,000 and \$5,000



Photos provided

Payton Burwell helps line up baskets in the hallway of the Napier Avenue Campus in preparation for delivery. Payton is the daughter of a former LMC employee.

every year to fill the baskets. According to our partners at the Area Agency on Aging and United Way, the need is particularly great this year,” Burnett said.

The food baskets include a variety of food, including peanut butter and jelly, bread, oatmeal mix, pancake mix, soup, crackers, cereal, canned soup and chili, pasta and sauce, canned vegetables and fruit, apple sauce and rice. Each household also re-

ceives a pre-cooked ham.

LMC students also participate. Each year, the nursing students collect mashed potatoes and stuffing, and the Hospitality Club donates canned corn and green beans. Student Support Services coordinates a collection of games from students and staff, and students wrap the presents to include with the food baskets delivered to families with children.

This year, the holiday food basket committee

also sought donations of dog and cat food, treats or pet toys to include in the food baskets that were delivered to seniors with pets.

“For some of the seniors, their pet is the only family they have and we’re happy to include a little something special for their furry friends this holiday season,” Burnett said. “We have approximately 20 dogs and 20 cats that are in the homes of our elderly recipients.”