

John Arnold, Executive Director, [Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank](#)



Before his 18th birthday, John Arnold attended the Boy Scouts of America National Jamboree, worked as a Page for a six-month session of the Michigan House of Representatives, bicycled across Europe, started his first underground newspaper, graduated from high school, completed a semester at The University of Michigan, and survived the first month of a three-year enlistment in the Marine Corps.

By age 20, he'd won NCO stripes, seven ribbons, a commendation from his infantry regiment in Vietnam, and an Honorable Discharge, and was named a co-recipient of The War Resister's League's annual Peace Award for that year.

What haunted him, however, was as a child seeing an old woman eating garbage from a trash can. So at William James College he earned a bachelors degree emphasizing his being able to effectively participate in the nonprofit poverty-alleviation field. For six years he then worked as a lobbyist on "poverty issues" for Illinois Legal Aid clients.

Upon hearing of "food banking", he promptly founded and directed the Central Illinois Food Bank in 1982. That led to positions in food banking in St. Louis, Chicago, and finally "back home" in West Michigan, where he has directed West Michigan's Feeding America member food bank through its distribution of 300 million pounds of food aid since 1989.

In 1994-96 John coordinated international award-winning research on how the charity food sector can operate at a level that makes "ending hunger" possible, and in 1998 he pioneered the sector's next great leap forward, mobile food pantries. In 2009 he became the seventh person ever awarded food banking's highest honor, the John van Hengel Award.

[Just FYI: William James College was an "experimental" college the State of Michigan operated as part of the Grand Valley State Colleges' "cluster" of alternative colleges in the 1970's before collapsing them all into what is now Grand Valley State University, so if anyone looks for William James College, it no longer exists.]

Center for High Impact Philanthropy's Inaugural Seminar at Wharton

**Addressing the Needs of Vulnerable Families**

November 7-8, 2010

