

**WITH YOUR HELP,
CHALLENGES DRIVE CHANGE**



As the pandemic laid bare the deep-rooted economic suffering in our region, the team at AIM Independent Living Center in Corning partnered with the Food Bank to launch their Community Nutrition Program. Led by Nick Moffe, Director of Peer Support Services, and Andy Zick, Program Coordinator, AIM delivers food and essential goods to neighbors in need throughout Steuben, Chemung, and Schuyler Counties. This delivery service is a lifeline for underserved populations, including seniors and people with disabilities, as well as families with young children living in rural areas with transportation hardships.

“I’m grateful to have such a great service you provide with the food pantry and delivering the food right to my door ... when you’re on a fixed income it’s nice to know you don’t have to choose between medicine or food,” a client recently shared with Andy.

“Covid, more than anything, ripped the band-aid off of shame and removed some of the stigma of needing help,” Andy adds. His life changed in the pandemic, too, when

he was laid off from his job managing a golf course. He realized it was an opportunity to follow his longtime hope of working in a helping profession, and he set out to join the AIM team. “I hear clients’ gratitude on the phone when they call in their orders. We are committed to client choice, and sometimes I’m chatting with someone for an hour about their nutrition needs and preferences. That human connection means so much to all of us.”

In addition to providing phone and online ordering, Andy and Nick have been busy developing partnerships with area grocers to explore additional order-ahead options to further expand compassionate, judgment-free food support for anyone who needs it.

“Innovative approaches to ending hunger are needed now more than ever,” says Sarah Keenan, the Food Bank’s Programs & Partnerships Coordinator for Steuben and Schuyler Counties. “Building healthy communities is not only about providing food but also about addressing barriers to accessing help, like the folks at AIM have done so wonderfully.”

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food bank
of the Southern Tier

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



In addition to flipping the calendar to 2022, there have been a lot of anniversaries lately. I recently celebrated 20 years at the Food Bank, and, throughout this year, the Food Bank is commemorating its 40th year of service.

While we don't know exactly what day the first loaf of bread was shared, we know for sure the commitment to end hunger that propelled the early Food Bank pioneers to action is the same spirit of service that drives our efforts forty years later.

The Food Bank started out small, with a couple of dedicated community volunteers and a borrowed truck. Like the little engine that could, we've steadily grown into the organization we are now. That resilient foundation continues to flourish into initiatives that bolster the capacity of our partner agencies, as well as the establishment of School Food Centers to meet the needs of children and families.

As we approached the big 4-0 in the midst of the pandemic, we drilled down on what matters most and refreshed our core values to guide us into the foreseeable future. In an ever-changing world, a constant we hold dear is your support inspiring us to innovatively turn challenges into opportunities in service of our Southern Tier community. Thank you!

In partnership,

Natasha R. Thompson
President & CEO



40TH YEAR PLEDGE!

Our shared mission of building and sustaining hunger-free communities is at the heart of our work together, with our values guiding how we achieve the vision of a future without hunger. As we commemorate our 40th year of service, we make the commitment to YOU that the values of **integrity, learning, respect, inclusion, caring, and abundance** are far more than words on a page. They inspire how we engage our neighbors in need, shape the interactions both inside our building and outside these walls, and strengthen our relationship with you, our partner to end hunger. Stay tuned for news of our value-driven developments, innovations, and explorations throughout the year, as we strive to be even better.

YOUR PARTNERSHIP EMPOWERS COMMUNITIES



“The question,” remembers Chuck Wheeler, Executive Principal of East Learning Center in Binghamton, “was whether food support for whole families could take place in the school setting.” He’s got a radio in one hand, the sounds of

school buzzing through his palm as the sun streams into the classroom. “When the Food Bank approached us with the opportunity to be their first School Food Center partner, we were certainly interested.”

East Learning Center houses alternative education and treatment programs for adolescents; the food center was designed not only to meet nutrition needs but to fit into the curriculum of the skills-based learning program. High school students — a significant portion of whom have personally experienced hunger — now work together unloading dairy and organizing dry goods, taking great pride in the opportunity to support their community. There is enough food for all who need it, with stock replenished weekly by the Food Bank’s delivery team.

“These families in need are just like you and me,” Chuck adds. “It could be your neighbor who needs help; it could be your son or daughter; it could be any of our students. This program should be in every school.”

Since opening its food center doors in 2017, East Learning Center has served as a model for other schools committed to ending child hunger. A mile and a half from the Food Bank’s first School Food Center, our newest School Food Center at Benjamin Franklin Elementary is bustling to life. Decorations adorn doorways of Pre-K classrooms,

boisterous voices of the littlest learners filling the hallways with hope.

“We had a very eye-opening experience,” Benjamin Franklin Principal Kyle Skinner explains of his food center’s origins. “Surveys revealed more help was needed than what the Backpack Program provides; half of our families have experienced food scarcity and 80% have felt concerned they could run out of food before they have funds to get more. Food scarcity is something very vulnerable for families, and we don’t take that vulnerability lightly. It can be really hard for people to ask for help, and we knew we had to act quickly to set up our food center. We need to make sure our students are taken care of and their families, too. We have to meet the families’ needs so the students can be here, happy and healthy every day.”

“School Food Centers are a really effective way for the Food Bank to meet community members where they are,” says Kathleen Pasetty, the Food Bank’s Programs & Partnerships Coordinator for Broome and Tompkins Counties. “This nutritional support is an important component of Benjamin Franklin’s Community Resource Center.”



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YOUR COMMITMENT PUTS VALUES INTO ACTION



After relocating to Ithaca for Fred's role as Vice President for Alumni Affairs and Development at Cornell University, Fred and Susan Van Sickle took note when we received the 2017 Food Bank of the Year Award.

"Throughout our 37-year marriage, we've always supported the church and our alma maters," Susan, a piano teacher, explains. "I had done food drives, but when I learned how much farther a dollar goes by giving to the Food Bank because they are able to access wholesale bulk food, I was impressed."

The Van Sickle's have devoted their careers to education and are particularly passionate about supporting children and families to have the security of knowing where their next meals will come from.

When Fred joined the Food Bank's Board of Directors, the couple's commitment to supporting Southern Tier families strengthened even further. "I think we were like a lot of people during the pandemic," Fred says. "We wanted to do more to help and felt increasing our giving could really have an impact."

With the ongoing support of committed community members like Fred and Susan, the Food Bank has been able to concentrate not just on pounds of food but on root causes of hunger, serving as a model for programs across the nation. "The Food Bank is very creative in responding to client needs; thanks to excellent infrastructure and donor support, the team can innovatively serve the region," Fred reflects. Fred has a unique perspective, being both a donor and fundraising professional.

"It feels good to be able to help the community," Susan adds. "When you see the scale the Food Bank is working on, you know you're really making a difference."

Your Partnership Empowers Communities *(continued from page 3)*

Parents and caregivers can request that food be sent home with their students or access the Community Resource Center through a discreet entrance. There are exciting developments on the horizon, including delivery systems in partnership with Binghamton University, seminars about college financial aid, workshops on home ownership, job fairs, and parenting support.

"The phone calls we get from families that are in difficult positions and don't know what to do, where to go, or where to turn — for us, to be able to say, 'it's okay, we can provide you with food and other resources to get you through the week,' being able to fill that immediate void for families has been an incredible experience for our school," Kyle says.



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Working together to build and sustain hunger-free communities throughout the Southern Tier.

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