

FALL 2018

the Harvester



food bank
of the Southern Tier

Working Together To Build And Sustain
Hunger-Free Communities Throughout The Southern Tier



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FEED. EDUCATE. EMPOWER. LIFE-SAVING NUTRITION EDUCATION

Nutrition and health go hand in hand, so what's on the shelf is just as important as keeping the shelf full.

More and more food pantries across the Southern Tier are distributing fresh, locally grown produce and other health options. In fact, our network distributed more than 3.5 million lbs. of fresh produce last year.

As access to produce increases, pantry clients have requests and questions: "How do I get my kid to eat turnips?" "What's another way to cook zucchini?"

Our Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables (JSY) nutrition educators offer guidance through healthy recipes, cooking demonstrations, food tastings, and

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Friends,

Here at the Food Bank, we are embracing our role as a leader in educating our community about the root causes of hunger and food insecurity.

We have a unique opportunity to share our insights through a new television series on WSKG called *Chasing the Dream*, which will air this fall. I am honored to host this program, which chronicles real stories of local people who are struggling to make the American Dream a reality for themselves and their families. It also highlights the important work of organizations across the region, as well as the changes that must be made to ensure everyone has a place at the table.

September is Hunger Action Month and we hope you will take the opportunity to learn more about the solvable problem of hunger, and take action. Check out our website and social media for stories about hunger in our community and the people working toward solutions. We invite you to come tour the Food Bank warehouse, participate in a Hunger 101 workshop and volunteer. Don't forget to donate to the Fill the Bus campaign at Wegmans stores.

Our mission is to build and sustain hunger-free communities throughout the Southern Tier, not just through the distribution of food but by the distribution of knowledge. We cannot achieve our goals without you. Thank you for being a supporter, advocate, and teacher.

In partnership,


Natasha R. Thompson



Jackie Bogart, left, a Speakers Bureau graduate, leads a team of students in action research in an Ithaca College sociology class last spring.

CLASSROOM MEETS REAL WORLD

When Dr. Alicia Swords sat on a panel about building a social movement to end poverty in 2012, she wasn't expecting to find an ally in fellow panelist Food Bank President & CEO Natasha Thompson.

Food banks and other organizations that provide emergency food are often criticized for focusing solely on charity and not doing enough to demand an end to the systems in our society that keep people in poverty. And Alicia, a professor of Sociology at Ithaca College, is part of a movement to shake up that status quo.

"It's really unusual to have the director of a food bank interested in a social movement perspective on ending poverty," Alicia says. "We started finding ways to connect my classes with the Food Bank, in ways that were meaningful to my students and helpful to the Food Bank."

Alicia advised Food Bank staff in developing focus groups to study attitudes and misconceptions about poverty and food insecurity. For the last two years, students in Alicia's senior-level Inquiry and Action for Social Change course have worked with graduates of our Speakers Bureau to conduct

action research on food pantries and their clients. The Speakers Bureau is a public speaking training that empowers people who have experienced food insecurity to share their stories and advocate for change. Action research is a method of study in which people affected by the research play a key role in the research.

Four speakers attended classes, learned action research skills, and led student teams in developing research instruments to examine questions around how people in need are treated when a pantry operates under a charity mindset versus a social justice approach.

"While charity is immensely important and meets an immediate need, we must also consider longer-term strategies to address the root causes of hunger and poverty," Alicia says.

Social change comes, Alicia teaches, because people study, organize and make changes in their organizations at all levels of society. It comes when people challenge their own assumptions about poverty. Education about poverty is key to ending it.

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nutrition classes but that education unlocks so much more.

Melissa Fay has come to JSY classes at Tioga County Rural Ministry (TCRM) in Owego for several years. Six-year-old Enoch nibbles a squash spear during a summer JSY class, and Elijah, 7, overcomes his ambivalence to try raw veggies and white beans in a freshly-prepared vinaigrette.

“They used to eat a lot of convenience foods like peanut butter and jelly, Pop Tarts, and Lunchables. Now they like Veggie Straws instead of chips and prefer homemade oatmeal cookies to the sugary store-bought ones,” Melissa



Enoch and Elijah taste-test veggies at Tioga County Rural Ministry.

says. “Their behavior has done a 180 since they’ve been eating three nutritious meals a day. They have more energy. And it’s a different kind of energy now; not hyper but awake and not lethargic.”

A collaboration between state Department of Health and regional food banks, JSY is a key strategy for reducing the risk of several chronic diseases among low-income populations including heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and cancer.

TCRM and JSY helped Catherine Rogers change her eating habits so drastically she amazed her doctors with the improvement in her health. With Farmers Market vouchers from TCRM, Catherine purchased more produce with the health benefits she needed. Elisa Rocks, JSY nutritionist, taught her creative ways to use produce in season, and helped her understand and implement her doctor’s recommendations.

“Having a one on one with a professional nutritionist for an hour? There’s no way I could afford that. You go to a doctor and they tell you what



Catherine Rogers helps nutritionist Elisa Rocks prepare a chopped salad at a JSY class.

you need to do, but no one tells you how to do it,” Catherine says. “Elisa really makes it fun and she teaches us how to make really good food.”

Sister Mary O’Brien, director of TCRM, has seen something else growing since her pantry began focusing more on client health and wellness.

“We started with Just Say Yes classes once a month, but what happened was the forming of community,” she says. “People offer each other transportation help, invite their friends, get to know one another and see they have similar stories. They look out for one another. And it gives an opportunity to learn about other resources.”

Pantries like TCRM who are committed to education and wellness are improving clients’ quality of life, in more ways than one.

HUNGER 101: WEARING DIFFERENT SHOES

It’s often said you never know another’s experience until you walk a mile in their shoes. Porter Weeks could never have understood hunger until he spent a weekend living on just the food in a Backpack.

“I realized, quickly, that this is not enough food. I couldn’t concentrate. I couldn’t get any work done. You just can’t function when you’re hungry,” Porter says. “It was a big wakeup call.”

In the Backpack Program, students get a pack of food in their backpack before weekends and school breaks. Each pack contains kid-friendly, easy-prepare items like macaroni and cheese, soup, a protein, a canned fruit and vegetable, and oatmeal.

Porter, a Corning native, first learned about the Food Bank in 2006, as an eighth-grade student at the Alternative School for Math and Science (ASMS). ASMS developed an ongoing hunger education program with the Food Bank, and students volunteered regularly at our warehouse.

Porter was inspired to take his education one step further. He accepted his school’s challenge to take a Backpack home one weekend and eat only the contents in the bag. The experience made Porter a lasting advocate for the Food Bank and the Weeks family made hunger relief a family mission.

“Porter’s father and I are both from very humble beginnings, but neither of us ever went hungry as children. We don’t think it is acceptable for any of our community members to be hungry, especially children and seniors,” Porter’s mother Kim Frock Weeks says. “We met as a family to discuss the concept of making a long-term commitment to an organization whose mission and values



Porter Weeks

were aligned with ours. The Food Bank was the obvious choice for all of us. Porter was the most vocal supporter.”

In 2006, the Weeks family pledged a five-year donation that enabled the Food Bank to develop the Mobile Food Pantry program. The program, now in its eleventh year, distributed more than 3.5 million pounds of food last year.

After freshman year in college in 2012, Porter turned down an internship opportunity at Corning Incorporated to volunteer at the Food Bank, working full-time in the warehouse and at Mobile Food Pantries.

“I really enjoyed all the various volunteering opportunities I had but, for me, until I got involved with the Food Bank, I didn’t realize how many people in the Corning area are food insecure. It’s not always a visible problem. It becomes more real when you see all this food on a truck and it’s gone by the end of the day and there is still need in the community.”

Today, Porter is a first-year doctoral student in Material Science at Washington University in St. Louis, and he continues to give.

“It’s really easy to get caught up in your own stuff and not see the need. I had lived in Corning for 20 years and didn’t know the need was there. And it’s not because I was unobservant,” Porter says. “But, unless you are part of the effort to solve the problem, or are living with food insecurity yourself, you don’t always see it.”

Want to learn more? Take Hunger 101 during Hunger Action Month! Log on to: foodbankst.org.

HUNGRY TO HELP:

ON THE ROAD WITH OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

It's one thing to read about, or talk about, solutions to the problem of hunger. It's another thing entirely to see food insecurity and hunger relief efforts in action. That's why, during Hunger Action Month, we take local elected officials on Hunger Tours of the communities they serve.

Our elected officials travel from village to city, from school to farm, meeting local growers, food retailers, donors and

volunteers, and witness the collaboration between the Food Bank and our partners in the hunger relief network.

Hilda Lando and Carol Ferratella, Steuben County legislators from Corning, participated in a Hunger Tour last fall. They visited Turning Point food pantry in Bath, learned about Kids' Farmers Markets at Addison Youth Center, saw a Backpack delivery at Corning-Painted Post School District and talked with a local farm to learn about the flow of food from farm to table.

For Carol, a legislator for nine years, the Hunger Tour was eye-opening.

"I learned what an integrated process hunger relief is. Everyone seems to be working toward a common goal. The average person just doesn't realize how many people rely on the Food Bank and their partners," Carol says. "When we go back to legislative meetings, we can make everyone aware of the need that's out there."

Broome County Executive Jason Garnar says experiences like the Hunger Tour are critical for elected officials.



Broome County Executive Jason Garnar speaks with Bill Titus, owner of Windsor Berry Farm, on the Broome County Hunger Tour last September.

"It is important to see the incredible need in our community and put a human face with the statistics we all read about," he says.

Last fall, Jason met with women who graduated from our Speakers Bureau, and heard their accounts of systemic barriers people in need experience when attempting to access help from county agencies.

"This experience has made me strive to make an even stronger push to develop policy to help address the issues of food insecurity in Broome County and explore what I can on the county-level," he says.

We are grateful for our local leaders who are so willing to take a deeper look at the problem of food insecurity and search for systemic solutions.



From left, Randi Quackenbush, Food Bank Advocacy & Education Manager, speaks with Steuben County legislators Carol Ferratella and Hilda Lando, and Corning-Painted Post School District staff about the Backpack Program on the Steuben County Hunger Tour last September.

COMING TO A LIVING ROOM NEAR YOU!

In 1931, Historian James Truslow Adams defined the American Dream as "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone." Nearly 80 years later, WSKG Public Television in Binghamton has produced a new series featuring personal stories of that pursuit.

Chasing the Dream will air on Friday evenings this fall, highlighting community members striving to live out their version of the American Dream and the individuals and organizations that are working to help them reach it.

Our own President & CEO

Natasha Thompson hosts the series. Each episode will feature a local story and interview with community leaders paired with a national look at causes of poverty in the U.S.

"Natasha's knowledge of the issues and years of experience working with other agency leaders provides our program with the unique perspective we wanted for our host," says Brian Frey, WSKG filmmaker and series Executive Producer.

"I'm so thrilled to be a part of such a timely and important project," Natasha says. "These stories need to be shared and Brian and his team are

talented story-tellers. It's been an honor to work with and learn from them."

Chasing the Dream will also feature several Food Bank Speakers Bureau graduates.

"Minutes after meeting these women for the first time we learned their deepest hopes, dreams and vulnerabilities" said Bailey Normann, Assistant Producer. "I have never met a stronger, more open group of women. They are a force for change in our communities. We are honored to provide a platform for their voices."



Natasha Thompson, center, interviews Deb Mohlenhoff, of Tompkins Cortland Community College, while Brian Frey, of WSKG, directs.

WATCH IT! *Chasing the Dream*

Fridays on WSKG Public Television at 8:30pm

Premieres Sept. 14

Chasing the Dream will also be available on YouTube and the PBS Passport app.



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

www.foodbankst.org

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