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

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That’s what’s happening at The Bounty, a new school food pantry pilot program at Broome-Tioga BOCES East Learning Center in Binghamton. The Food Bank received a $25,000 grant from Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation through Feeding America to establish the pantry and promote emergency food services to multigenerational families.

More than 300 students and family members receive food each month. Families fill out an order form so they have enough canned vegetables and fruits, proteins and dairy, grains and other items to supplement their diet for a week. The order method helps the pantry provide the foods families want.

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LEARNING TO SERVE

FEEDING KIDS IN SCHUYLER

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

PILOTING A PANTRY, CREATING COMMUNITY

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Dear Friends,

As the school year comes to an end, we are reminded that hunger doesn’t take a summer vacation. This is particularly true for the 41,000 students in our region who qualify for free and reduced-price meals at school.

Hunger is a symptom of poverty, and education provides a path to self-sufficiency and economic security. Unfortunately, that path is not an easy one for many students, especially those from low to moderate income households. Increasing access to food for students who are struggling to make ends meet while pursuing their education is a low-cost intervention that will reap positive outcomes.

In March, we applauded the passage of Governor Andrew Cuomo’s No Student Goes Hungry legislation. The plan provides students of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds access to healthy meals from kindergarten through college. We especially support the Breakfast after the Bell program which makes breakfast a regular part of the school day, and the requirement that all SUNY and CUNY campuses maintain a food pantry for students. Currently, only half of SUNY/CUNY campuses operate food pantries. While the plan still has its challenges, it lays the groundwork for improved child and student hunger programs in our state.

Some of our partners are already leading the charge on student hunger. During this school year, we launched a school food pantry pilot program in Binghamton, thanks to a grant from the Enterprise Foundation to serve multigenerational families. Our Campus Mobile Food Pantry distributions at SUNY Broome and those at Ithaca College, Corning Community College and Tompkins Cortland Community College continued to grow. Most exciting, TC3’s school food pantry joined our network as a partner agency. More than 500,000 pounds of food were distributed to students last school year through these programs alone.

School pantries and Campus Mobile Food Pantries allow academic advisors, guidance counselors and other faculty to respond to immediate needs they see when working with students. All too often, poor academic performance is due to economic barriers that lead to hunger. Whether in kindergarten or college, you can’t learn if you’re hungry.

Thank you for supporting our efforts to build and sustain hunger-free communities throughout the Southern Tier – especially for our students. By feeding them today, we are helping ensure that they will be self-sufficient in the future.

In Partnership,

Natasha R. Thompson
President & CEO

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Volunteer Coordinator Jennifer Harris, left, and Natasha Thompson, present Mackenzie Grover with her award.

Congratulations to Mackenzie Grover, a fifth-grader from Elmira, for earning the title of Junior Volunteer of the Year at our Very Important Volunteer Awards (VIVAs) in April!

Mackenzie began volunteering in 2017 to fulfill a school community service requirement, and continued to volunteer long after she completed her obligation. “It feels really good that I am actually able to help out,” Mackenzie says.

Food Bank volunteer shifts are active and hands-on; a great opportunity for children 8 years and up and their families. We could not do what we do without the thousands of volunteers who donate their time each year.

Want to lend a hand? We need summer volunteers! See a list of all available volunteer shifts and sign up online at www.foodbankst.org.

LEARNING TO SERVE

GEAR UP TO END HUNGER

Tour de Keuka, presented by Five Star Bank, is an annual charity bike ride that benefits the Food Bank of the Southern Tier. To participate in a 16, 45, 60 or 100-mile ride, cyclists raise money to feed families struggling with hunger. Riders will begin in Hammondsport and travel around stunning Keuka Lake on July 21.

One in seven people in the Southern Tier struggle with food insecurity. Every cyclist raises enough to provide 450 meals for people in need, making a direct and significant impact in our community.

Learn more and register today at TourDeKeuka.com
Fred Fraley, Jr., of Binghamton, uses the school pantry to provide for his 14-year-old nephew, a student at the school. Fred is also caring for his mother who has cancer. Fred is disabled himself and, since he is not the boy’s legal guardian, receives no benefits for his nephew.

“I have only social security and disability (benefits), and no food stamps, so money gets short real quick,” Fred says. “The school pantry is a big relief. It’s just now that it’s getting to where I can say, ‘Hey, we have a little extra food.’”

The Bounty is also nurturing a sense of community. As a BOCES campus, East Learning Center educates students from 14 different districts. That can make it challenging for students and their families to develop a feeling of belonging and connection.

Since The Bounty opened in November 2017, school staff have created a monthly outreach newsletter that keeps families informed of East’s programs. They now host monthly family gatherings and bring in speakers. Staff have also organized a free clothing and toiletries closet called the Treasure Chest.

In addition, students are gaining valuable career experience by filling orders, packing food and delivering to students and families.

Principal Chuck Wheeler says, “If it was just school staff and Food Bank staff working together, that would be a great thing in and of itself. But we’re getting all the kids working as well as creating a sense of community here. They gain an understanding that they’re doing something for the good of people.”

Thomas, a 14-year-old student volunteer, takes pride in being known as one of the most efficient pantry workers.

“I’ve struggled before in my life, you know,” Thomas says. “I’ve had nothing to eat sometimes. It’s honestly a really good thing to be able to help people out and feed them, and make sure that their stomachs are full and that they’re not going hungry.”

The Bounty has far exceeded the Food Bank’s expectations, says Jennifer Edger, Director of Community Programs.

“It’s become so much more than food,” Jennifer says. “The school is reaching out to families in ways they haven’t been able to before. And the families’ feeling of safety and security at the school is growing. It’s beyond what we could have ever imagined.”

The Food Bank is striving to feed these collaborative partnerships and develop school food pantries throughout the Southern Tier. You can help at www.foodbankst.org/give-a-gift

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**PILOTING A PANTRY, CREATING COMMUNITY**

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without distributing items they don’t need. And it empowers families to make their own nutritional choices.

In May, the Cargill Foundation donated $20,000 to support the BackPack Program and Mobile Food Pantries in Schuyler County. The donation will help provide nearly 4,000 packs of food to children and more than 145,000 pounds of food through Mobile Food Pantries.

Keith Klug, Watkins Glen Cargill Plant Manager, submitted the grant to the Cargill Foundation on behalf of the Food Bank of the Southern Tier because the Food Bank’s mission matches the company’s strategic vision for philanthropy and workforce engagement.

“We know the buying power of the Food Bank stretches our dollars a lot farther in our community,” Keith says.

Cargill also encourages employees to volunteer in their communities and the Watkins Glen plant is working to develop opportunities with the Food Bank.

We are grateful for companies like Cargill and for individuals like Keith who support our efforts to build and sustain hunger-free communities throughout the Southern Tier.
It’s no bigger than a storage closet, but there’s a lot of compassion pouring out of the food pantry on the campus commons at Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3). A new partner agency of the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, the pantry has plans to expand this summer to offer more fresh, healthy foods to students.

For several hours each weekday, residential and commuter students can stop by the campus pantry and grab ready-to-eat snacks or staples to prepare a few nutritious meals. They are met in a stigma-free zone by work-study students Porcha Walker and Shadeh Camacho, and Rose Morusty, a human services student intern who manages the pantry.

“At a two-year college, nothing brings us together like hating the weather and being broke,” says Matt Keichle, Assistant Director for Health Education. Matt serves on the SUNY Food Insecurity Task Force to support Gov. Cuomo’s No Student Goes Hungry initiative, which aims to provide all students from kindergarten through college access to healthy, locally-sourced meals.

A recent national survey found that more than 40% of community college students said they experienced food insecurity in the last 30 days. Studies have also shown students living with food insecurity are likely to have lower grades and graduation rates, threatening the academic success that’s key to overcoming poverty.

“We want students to succeed and they have a lot of barriers to success,” says Deb Mohlenhoff, Director of Student Activities at TC3. “We’ve got students at every level of the continuum. If food insecurity is one barrier we can help eliminate, we really want to do it.”

Porchya says students are sometimes shy to use the pantry the first time they stop by, but that wears away pretty quickly.

“We try to make it a little fun each week, with a riddle or a little game. And we try to decorate and put up recipes for whole meals using the ingredients we have,” Porchya says.

TC3 opened the pantry in fall 2016, shortly after seeing the success of the Food Bank’s Mobile Food Pantry on campus. The campus pantry has relied heavily on monthly shopping trips and donations of shelf-stable food from students and staff. The pantry operates on a points system; all students have 10 points each week to spend.

As a partner agency of the Food Bank, the pantry will have access to weekly deliveries of free and low-cost food including fresh produce. Matt says about 80 students per week visit the pantry now. He is excited for the opportunity to provide more items for more students in the fall. A larger space will provide room for refrigeration and a freezer case.

TC3 is ahead in ending campus hunger as our first college food pantry partner. Fewer than 600 campus food pantries exist at colleges nationwide.

“It’s really exciting that we’re at the head of the class for a school our size,” Matt says.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Fourth-grade teacher Michelle Halperin looked around at the summer meal site in Elmira’s Grove Park last year and marveled at all she saw…a puppet show about respecting people with disabilities while volunteers from The Arc handed out lunches to children. Kids playing football and getting help with math. Families thumbing through books.

“It hit me as I was sitting there…all that was offered in that one pavilion in that one park,” says Michelle, a member of the Child Hunger Task Force of Chemung County.

This year, the task force is building a summer meals program that takes the emphasis off “free food” and draws families together with “fun, friends and food.”

The Family Readin Partnership of Chemung Valley and the Chemung County Library District are working with churches, youth centers, schools, The Arc of Chemung, Catholic Charities and many others to make summer meals fun and educational.

Michelle says the collaborative efforts of the agencies and volunteers make her proud of Elmira and Chemung County.

“It’s something no one organization could do alone,” she says. “When kids see all these elements coming together they say, ‘Hey, this is fun,’ and, ‘This is my community. I belong here.’”