



## YOU ARE HELPING CLIENTS GAIN MOMENTUM

A few years ago, at the Anti-Hunger Policy Conference in Washington D.C., Food Bankers leaned in as an advocate asked a panel of food-insecure people what agencies could do to really learn what kind of help food-insecure people need. “You ask them,” a panelist said flatly.

It was a “no duh” moment that stunned the audience for a moment before raucous applause filled the room. And Food Bankers have been leaning into that message ever since.

While client-driven services have long been central to the Food Bank’s work, new momentum is enabling faster progress.

“All this momentum is coalescing,” says Randi Quackenbush, Director of Community

Impact. “We’ve been working toward this for seven years, and it’s finally happening.”

The Food Bank started the Speakers Bureau program in 2016 to give clients a forum to share their stories of poverty and food insecurity. Now, that program is evolving into Community Advocates training and will create more opportunities to bring people who have experienced hunger and food insecurity into the decision-making processes of hunger relief.

The Food Bank has received national attention for direct work with clients, but Randi says there’s more work to do. “We can do so much more to incorporate clients into our decision-making process.”

To that end, Randi and Lyndsey Lyman,

*continued on page 3*

# INSIDE THE ISSUE

HUNGER ACTION MONTH  
..... 2



HEALTH MEETS HOME  
..... 3



SNAP JUDGMENT  
..... 4



**Food Bank of the Southern Tier**  
388 Upper Oakwood Ave  
Elmira, NY 14903  
607.796.6061  
[foodbankst.org](http://foodbankst.org)



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### OFFICERS

Joe Thomas, Chairperson  
Mary Pat Dolan, Vice Chairperson  
Steve Hoyt, Treasurer  
Jessica Renner, Secretary

### MEMBERS

John Bayne  
Michael Eisner  
Anis Fadul  
Marty Heysham  
Karl Krebs  
Shannon Matteson  
Peter Newman  
Grace Park  
Erin Summerlee  
Fred Van Sickle  
Alison Wolfe

Our tax ID number is 20-8808059.

Stories and photos by  
Maria Strinni,  
Special to the Food Bank

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### “ENDING HUNGER” IS AN EVER-MOVING TARGET



At the Food Bank, we are constantly analyzing our distribution data to determine where hunger exists in our communities and strategizing innovative ways to reach out to our neighbors in need.

But, as we saw last year, social and economic forces move in unpredictable ways, upending patterns and creating new challenges. As such, we must continuously question our assumptions and find solutions grounded in data and informed by the people we serve.

The unparalleled generosity we experienced during the pandemic is allowing us to adopt creative approaches to reach underserved groups across the region. We are investing in programs and partnerships aimed at removing the stigma associated with asking for help and ensuring people leave our food distributions feeling supported and hopeful for the future.

Your compassion and commitment to our work has re-energized our team, and you are making it possible for us to feed people today and prevent hunger tomorrow. I invite you to read about some of our new distribution models and our ongoing efforts to end hunger in the Southern Tier. You are a vital part of our progress — thank you!

In gratitude,

Natasha R. Thompson  
President & CEO

**GET INVOLVED**

**Hunger Action Month**® | **FEEDING AMERICA**

**September is Hunger Action Month!**

It's an opportunity for community members, businesses, civic organizations, elected officials, and congregations to get involved and take action in their local communities. What can you do? Whether it's advocating and raising awareness, making donations, or volunteering, you can find a way that's right for you.

**Learn more at [foodbankst.org/HAM](http://foodbankst.org/HAM)**

## HEALTH MEETS HOME

A joint effort between the Food Bank and healthcare partners, along with support from local medical students, will get clients the food they need to make long-lasting strides toward total wellbeing. Health Meets Home, in its pilot stage, will create the ability to address food access and the effect of nutritious food on health outcomes while providing needed health and nutrition to participating families.

Students at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM) and Arnot Health providers are screening patients to select 10 households who are pre-diabetic and at risk of food insecurity. Medical students will visit weekly with participants to deliver tailored Food Bank boxes of food, along with basic cooking supplies and healthy recipes. The pilot program begins this fall. Successful outcomes will lead to an ongoing partnership.

“More and more, medical professionals are asking their patients about food insecurity because it impacts health,” says Matt Griffin, Food Bank Director of Health & Nutrition. “Food insecurity now has its own diagnostic code for health status.”

Feeding America recently reported that 13% of residents in the Food Bank’s six-county service area are at risk of food insecurity and, thus, increased medical complications by lack of access to nutritious food. Isabelle Corgel, Food Bank Health & Nutrition

### You are Helping Clients Gain Momentum

*continued from page 1*

Advocacy and Education Manager, are creating programs to foster equity and inclusion in client outreach and food distribution, address implicit bias in services, and offer avenues for partners to engage directly with Community Advocates.

“We’re going to be doing more work to help



**PARTNERS IN HEALTH:** From left, Stephanie Craig, medical student; Dr. Beth Dollinger; Isabelle Corgel and Matt Griffin, Food Bank; Kayla Penta, LECOM faculty; Jake Merrill, medical student; Kristine Cummings, LECOM faculty.

Programs Manager, says the program pre-screening process has revealed those local numbers may be as high as 38%.

Access to nutrition-dense food and resources could keep neighbors healthier and prevent serious illness and the need for costly medical interventions.

Dr. Beth Dollinger, of Arnot Health, is the only board-certified osteopathic surgeon who is also certified in culinary medicine. She says many patients who experience food insecurity are unaware of the resources available to them. LECOM and Arnot Health will gain an understanding of how to address hunger at regular check-ups and support patients with access to food and other critical resources, clearing obstacles to achieving a healthier community.

“In the Southern Tier, \$71 million a year in healthcare costs is associated with food insecurity,” Matt says. “I imagine there are a lot of preventive treatments that could mitigate these health conditions and reduce healthcare costs. Health Meets Home is a tremendous step in a healthy direction.”

people with lived experience know that they can be leaders in their communities,” Randi says.

Lyndsey says, “Also, many neighbors in need simply aren’t getting information on where to go for help with food.”

“Many feel they don’t qualify for assistance; that they aren’t ‘needy enough,’” Randi adds. “We are working on new strategies to let them know they are deserving of help and that we have enough for all.”

# SNAP JUDGMENT CAN YOU LIVE ON \$4 PER DAY?

Christine Barksdale takes a vegetarian lasagna out of the oven and stirs the remaining tomato sauce on the back burner. She repackages the leftover ingredients — cheeses, peppers, riced cauliflower, greens — and plans how she'll use them in meals for the rest of the week. It takes a lot of time to plan and prepare to use up every bit of the ingredients in healthy and quick recipes.

An Ithaca city employee and a small business owner, Christine can buy whatever groceries she wants, wherever and whenever she needs. But each September, she takes the SNAP Challenge and buys only what she can afford on the average SNAP allotment — just \$4 per person a day.

SNAP is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the federal program formerly called Food Stamps. Anti-hunger advocates use the SNAP Challenge to draw attention to the program's shortfall — that \$4 a day often leaves individuals and families without enough to eat.

"I heard the CEO of Panera had done the challenge and it stuck with me when he said he spent so much time thinking about food — not just about being hungry but how he was going to get enough and how to prepare it," Christine reflects. "In planning, I had prepared my shopping list for the week. I had made adjustments, because I was going over my limit, when I realized that the large can of organic diced tomatoes was 55 cents over my limit. Having to make changes in real time was frustrating because I have become so accustomed to buying what I want, when I want."

The first thing Christine realized after heading to four or five stores to find the



Christine Barksdale of Ithaca poses in her kitchen during her recent SNAP Challenge.

best bargains was how much time and money she had spent on transportation. She acknowledges the SNAP Challenge can seem like "poverty tourism" for people with abundance; that she's fortunate to have reliable transportation, gas money, and time to bargain hunt. "Traveling to different stores is time-consuming and expensive. If you're working two jobs to make ends meet, you don't have time for that," she says.

While Christine says it is possible for her to eat well on \$4 a day, many low-income households lack basic cookware and storage containers, healthy recipes and cooking knowledge, and time for all the required meal prep and planning.

Christine first started participating in the SNAP Challenge when she was on the board of directors at Loaves and Fishes. In her nine years of challenging herself, she has learned something new each time she does it. The experience keeps her grounded as she continues to work with underserved populations in various capacities throughout New York state.

"I feel the need to do things that keep me connected to the issue," she says. "I don't like sitting in rooms making decisions about people who don't have enough to eat with people who have no idea what that's like."



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

[foodbankst.org](http://foodbankst.org)

*This newsletter is sponsored by:*

