



## Your Support Helps College Pantry React to Need

**Sayre Paradiso is the Health and Wellness Services Office Manager for Tompkins Cortland Community College in Dryden, as well as the Manager for the on-campus Panther Pantry and TC Community Closet. Sayre is also chair of the Tompkins County Food Distribution Network and a participant in the Food Bank's Community Advocates Training program.**

**In her own words, Sayre shares how the pantry fits with the larger college community, and how her pantry experiences as a student inform how the pantry operates today.**

When I was a student here, if it were not for the pantry on campus, which was half the size it is now, I don't know if I would have been able to stay in school. But with the assistance of the pantry, I was able to take an internship here and drop one of my jobs.

I've only been working here since 2019, and it has been the wildest ride, but if I hadn't had the pantry while I was a student, I wouldn't

have been able to get this far.

I think about that a lot.

There is this weird myth that when you're in college, everything's cool. Everything's handled. A lot of our students don't qualify for SNAP because of their family dynamics but they need the help. And we're in this food desert here in Dryden. We have very little public transportation in our community.

So we're bringing students to this campus who are used to having public transportation, are used to having a bodega that sells produce down the street from them, or from rural areas with farmer's markets. We just don't have that here in Dryden. Everyone thinks about Ithaca and how wonderful it is, but it's such a small part of Tompkins County. It's hard to be on the edges of the county. You're kind of trapped.

We have realized that our pantry is a value-add to coming to college and we use it to promote higher education and Tompkins Cortland specifically.

*(continued on page 3)*



## Program Aids Neighbors in Need, With Your Help



The best partnerships succeed because all sides move forward with the larger goals in sight.

For a group of area medical students, it's the passing of the torch from one group of leaders to another. For the Food Bank, it's the continuation of a program that's gained positive feedback. For donors to the Food Bank's Strategic Investment Fund, it's validation that funding is being expended in ways that enhance the community.

Through the Food Bank's Health Meets Home initiative, the students at the LECOM (Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine) campus in Elmira found a way to put their studies into practice while working alongside several local families to develop healthy eating habits.

Health Meets Home is a relatively new program, started in 2021 and funded through donations to the Food Bank's Strategic Investment Fund. The program is a true partnership with LECOM and Arnot Health, in which patients with prediabetes are recruited and matched with LECOM students, with the goal of preventing progression to diabetes.

Participants order food through an app-like program called OrderAhead. The orders are then packed weekly at the Food Bank and delivered to participants' homes by LECOM students who also work with them on reaching their health goals.

The program also provides recipes, nutrition education, spices, and kitchen equipment to assist participants with cooking nutritious meals and exploring new foods and cooking techniques. In addition, the students also take biometric measurements for the participants to monitor their health and progress, including blood pressure and blood sugar tests.

Participants have the opportunity each week to share feedback on things like food choices and recipes, and as a result, the Food Bank has been able to improve the selection of foods.

Outgoing student coordinator Noah West cites the program's appeal to his interest in sports nutrition.

**"Someone came and spoke to the class about the program, and I could see the benefits of a healthy lifestyle," Noah says. "It's nice to help households in the area. We have a big team of student volunteers who gather data and find new participants."**

According to Caitlin Price, the Food Bank's Health and Nutrition Programs Manager, participant feedback has been excellent.

**"Participants have shared that the program has really made a difference in their ability to access nutritious foods, and many have made great progress toward their personal health goals, including walking more, reducing blood pressure, quitting smoking, and trying new recipes and foods," Caitlin says. "It has been so great to see the relationships and the trust that has been built between the students and the participants."**

For Audrey Law, an outgoing coordinator, it's not only program participants who are helped.

**"I really enjoyed seeing the impact this program had on my fellow classmates," she says. "It gave many students an opportunity to take on a leadership role as primary group contacts, and also mentorship opportunities as we brought on more first-years to the program. Health Meets Home gets us out of the classroom and into the community to do exactly what LECOM was put in Elmira to do, which is serve the local community."**



# Volunteers Help Us Better Serve Your Communities

Food Bank volunteers logged nearly 13,000 hours in 2022 — the equivalent of seven full-time staff. We couldn't do what we do without them, and we'd like to recognize their efforts.



Debra, a four-year volunteer, says of all the places she volunteers, the Food Bank is the most rewarding because the work reaches so many people.



Paul and Donna have been volunteering for 4 1/2 years. It gives them a chance to give back, which both say was instilled in them at a young age.

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*(continued from page 1)*

Our pantry is part of every college tour; it's part of conversations with parents when they stop in.

When parents come up and see this bucolic campus, I think it helps them to know there are resources here that help take care of the students living in the dorms, providing for their families, living with their grandparents, or on their own and busting their butts to get through here.

We have opened our pantry to staff and faculty as well, to lessen the stigma. If your favorite professor is in there grabbing a bag of potatoes, it's going to be a little more comfortable for you to get what you need to help your family.

We have staff and faculty who have their children in the daycare, and they come up with their little kids.

We're helping our community understand that food is a basic need and right.

We're raising a generation of people who go out in the world and think, "people use

these services and it's not a big deal." We're helping to aid in the destigmatization of accessing help.

We're just trying to make it so people feel comfortable asking for what they need. And if they're not sure what they need, they can go to someone and say, 'help me figure this out' and have their voices heard. It's important.

When we have someone helping with SNAP, they don't think anything of it. They're here, accessing a resource that we're providing.

Nobody wants a handout. People might need help but they aren't going out of their way to go through the process. It's not fun; it's hard. It's administratively intensive. Nobody would choose to live a life that's harder than it has to be.

**“ If it were not for the pantry on campus, I don't know if I would have been able to stay in school. ”**



## You Are Helping Clients Find Their Voice

After years of struggling to find her voice, Linda Holly is ready to use it to help others.

The Food Bank's Community Advocates Training program is giving her that opportunity.

**"I'm excited to be an advocate for those who don't know and those who need," she says. "I was pleased that I was asked to take part. We're all different, and everyone has such interesting stories."**

Linda, who lives in Pine City, is still recovering from a series of challenging events. A back injury suffered on the job in 2002 ended her nursing career and shook her confidence, making it difficult to accept help even when it was offered.

**"When I was a nurse, I was laid off three times in five years, so I had to get help then," she says. "I had to get food stamps and Medicaid. That was hard."**

Despite having a need, Linda was at times reluctant and at other times flat out refused available help.

**"I twice had written letters to Social Services asking them to take me off food stamps because I was only getting a hundred dollars or something like that," she says. "I thought there was probably someone who needed it more than me."**

**"I felt like I was stealing. It felt dirty and wrong, and the judgment, I hate."**

The long road back included a 10-year wait to get Social Security benefits, which took its toll on Linda emotionally.

Now, armed with the confidence and knowledge from the Community Advocates Training, Linda finds herself motivated to help others, and herself.



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