



EMPOWERING ADVOCATES

By Anne Lee

For generations, my husband's family ran a dairy farm in Broome County. But a few years ago, we just couldn't make ends meet with that anymore. When the dairy prices were very low and had been for a while, we had to choose between paying bills or having sides to feed our children with dinner. We have five kids, ranging in age from eight to 17. We are fortunate to always have meat because of the farm, but we had no money to buy anything else. We didn't have any money to do anything for Christmas that year, either. My friend's mom volunteered at the Food Bank's Mobile Food Pantry in Richford, and told me, "Hey, you should go down there and get some food."

At first, I thought to myself, *no way*. As farmers, we tend to be proud people — we're the ones that are supposed to be helping others, not people helping us. But it was to the point of having to get help; we needed it. I went to the food distribution, and it was so much easier than I thought it would be. Everybody was so incredibly friendly and kind. They were thanking me for taking

the food, and I was thanking them for giving it to me. They also gave me so much information about food resources in my area, and I was happy to be able to give back and spend some time volunteering there, too.

The biggest misconception people have about hunger is that it couldn't happen to you.

In a million years, I'd never thought that I would need help to feed my family. But the Food Bank is here for a reason; and, as my mother said, "You take a helping hand when you need it and give back when you don't." We were always helpers. And I know that there will be a time when we're not going to need help anymore and we're going to be able to help other people.

I joined the Food Bank's Community Advocates Program this year, and it has been such a wonderful experience for me. The program participants, and the co-leader, all have lived expertise of food insecurity

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Food Bank of the Southern Tier
388 Upper Oakwood Ave
Elmira, NY 14903
607-796-6061
foodbankst.org



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Our tax ID number is 20-8808059.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



In our 40th year of service, my team and I have been reflecting on what our mission of building and sustaining hunger-free communities truly means. Over the decades, our collective understanding of the problem of food insecurity, and how to best solve it, has evolved. Providing meals is foundational to our work and alleviates an immediate need, but it is only one aspect of the mission. To truly build and sustain hunger-free communities, we must work to understand the root causes of food insecurity and take steps to address them. We must also recognize that food insecurity is about so much more than needing food; it is about dignity. This is why we have made a commitment to center our neighbors in need at the heart of our work by recognizing their expertise in both the causes of hunger and the solutions to solve it. We believe that there is great wisdom within the very communities most impacted.

With your help, we have been working hard to ensure that food is available for all who need it, without exception, while also empowering individuals to uplift their communities. Our Kids' Farmers Markets are a wonderful way to increase access — for the entire school community — to fresh produce in a stigma-free setting. We are proud to support our dedicated pantry partners combatting hunger with creative community-based strategies, like delivering free grocery items right to the door of anyone who needs it. And through our Community Advocates Program, we uplift the voices of lived experience, nurturing bonds for a shared good, developing the kind of relationships, skills, and social capital that leads to true community transformation.

Over the past few difficult years, we have clearly seen how interconnected we are with each other and our communities. We have been reminded how important human connection is for all of us, and how deeply we miss it when it is gone. With your incredible generosity, we have come so far together providing not only meals, but support and opportunities for connection to the many households we have the privilege of serving each week. Thank you for your commitment!

In partnership,

Natasha R. Thompson
President & CEO



Community Impact

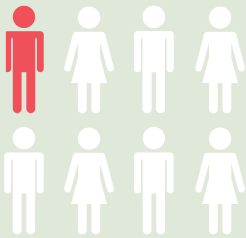
Data from the pandemic years tells a story both of startling need and of the Food Bank’s ability to meet that need. In 2019, before so many aspects of life were upended, we distributed 13.3 million pounds of food through our programs and network of hunger-relief partners. In 2020, as the world reeled, the demand for food support increased dramatically. Concurrently, we experienced a significant increase in donor support, allowing us to meet that demand and distribute an enormous 17.6 million pounds of food to our neighbors.

The government’s pandemic response included expanded public assistance, which also increased food access for struggling households in our region. For some, food insecurity proved to be a difficult, but temporary hardship that dissipated by the end of 2020. For others, hunger has been a long-term experience. When emergency response programs ended, many people were thrust back into the struggles they had long known. It is in this context that we analyze the 2021 data, looking at the 14.8 million pounds of food we distributed in relation to both 2020 and 2019. The current level of need speaks to the fact that as life

returns to a semblance of pre-pandemic normalcy, we must remember that for many in our service area, food insecurity *was* their pre-pandemic normal. Over these past two years, health, economic, and nutrition disparities have been magnified both around the world and in our own backyard.

Compared to baseline information from 2019, the 2021 need for food support remains elevated, and we have maintained an increased level of service to meet it. In this time, we have also increased our capacity to build hunger-free communities, achieving impacts that have more lasting meaning than pounds or pallets. Challenging circumstances have given rise to innovation, including new programs and partnerships to achieve the core outcomes of healthful food, increased access to available food, and strategic collaboration with partners across the Southern Tier. These strategic investments are critical to moving from crisis functioning to long-term recovery and growth for our communities. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the Food Bank has been able to set aside reserve funding to continue to meet the heightened need, with an eye, always, toward a hunger-free future.

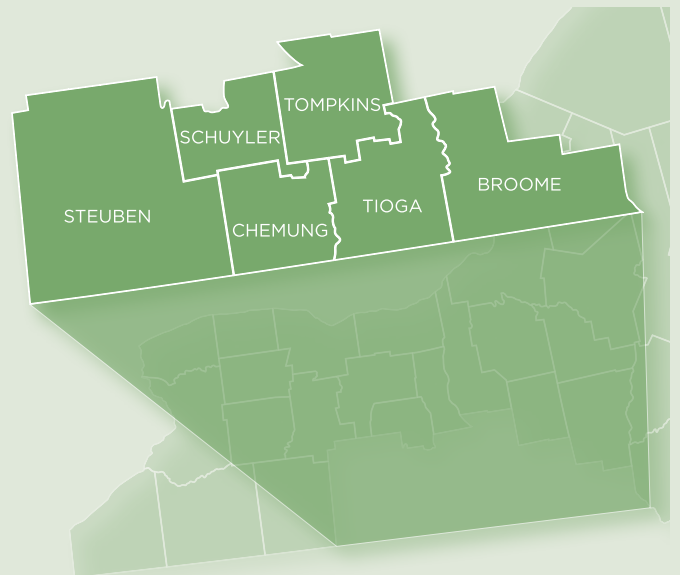
THE NEED



→ **1 in 8** people in the Southern Tier are at risk of hunger.



→ **18%** of Southern Tier children (or 1 in 6) are food insecure.



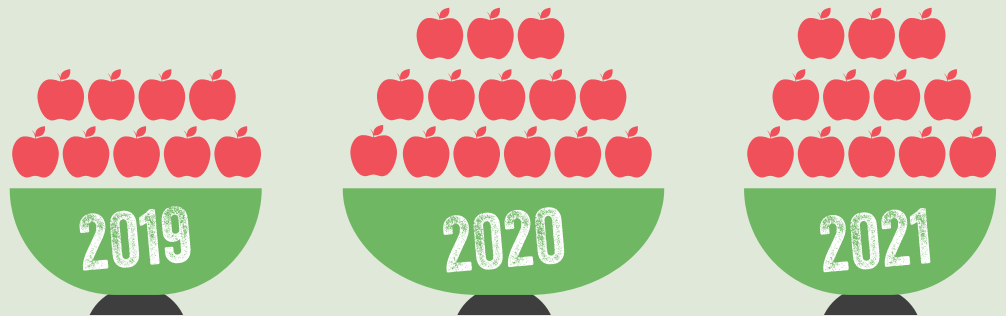
With your help

WE'RE FIGHTING HUNGER

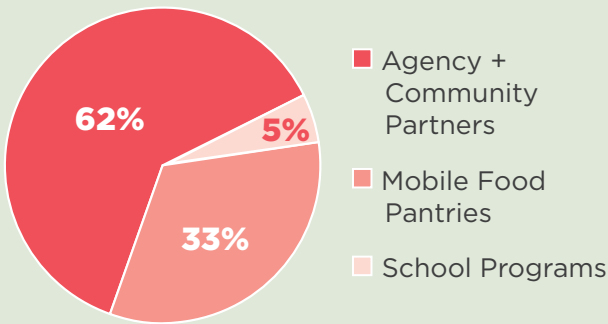


→ In 2021, we distributed **14,835,041** million pounds of food. This is the equivalent of **10,597,350** meals.

- **16%** less than 2020
- **12%** more than 2019



2021 MEALS DISTRIBUTED



- We distribute food in multiple ways: our agency and community partners, Mobile Food Pantries, and school-based programs.
- In 2021, we received **1,039,172** requests for food across all programs and partners.
 - Partners providing on-site meals responded to **452,205** requests for food.
 - Our network providing grocery items responded to **586,967** requests for food.

- **1 in 3** grocery requests — or **39%** — were for children.
- **1 in 6** — or **16%** — were for seniors.
- Of the total pounds distributed, **2,469,524** were fresh produce.
- More than half of client survey respondents reported choosing healthy food options often.

Over **90%** of client survey respondents said that distribution staff and volunteers were friendly, and they felt treated with respect.

CHALLENGES DRIVE INNOVATION

In 2021, our school-based food support included:

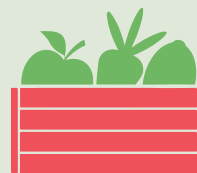
5 College Pantries



2,689 children received BackPacks of food from **42** partner school districts



9,652 healthy snacks distributed at **26** partner school districts



7,857 households received produce boxes from **18** partner school districts

21 Kids' Farmers Market sites — up from **9** in 2020 and back to pre-pandemic levels!



→ Strategic investments supported core outcomes of healthful food, increased access, and strategic collaboration through:



Network & Program Capacity Building

Developed Diaper Bank program with **10** pilot sites and **259,325** diapers distributed.



Client-Driven Services

Trained **100** advocates and **5** Community Advocates Program participants.



Healthcare Partnerships

Launched **HealthMeetsHome** with **10** participant households and **52** medical students.



Service Insights

On-boarded **13** additional partner agencies to FreshTrak for a total of **43**.



"The Food Bank had a huge impact on my life. It allowed me to connect not only myself but a lot of other people in my community with fresh, high-quality food. Then I joined the Food Bank's Community Advocates Program, which connected me with a passionate group of people that I'm planning to keep in touch with. The Program inspired me to pursue the advocacy work that has always been important to me and gave me the skills to inspire others."

- Charley, Tompkins County

YOUR TIME, TALENT, TREASURE, AND VOICE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

25,181 volunteer hours in 2021, up from **16,921** in 2020 and **20,698** in 2019

11,373 financial donors

340 education workshop participants

34 Board and Committee Members



“My wife and I fell on hard times and needed help from the Food Bank. I wanted to give back, so started volunteering. Hard times affect everyone at some point, and there is no shame in needing help. Sometimes you’re in a position of needing help, and sometimes you’re the one providing it. I feel a real sense of accomplishment from volunteering at the Food Bank.”

- Randy, Chemung County

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION*

SUPPORT & REVENUE	2021	EXPENSES	2021
Food-in-kind assistance	\$11,366,706	Program	\$18,681,049
Grants and contracts	\$5,160,925	Fundraising	\$992,726
Contributions	\$5,236,045	Management and general	\$655,285
Program fees	\$541,929		
Other income	\$25,036	Total Expenses	\$20,329,060
Total Support & Revenue	\$22,330,641		

*These are preliminary numbers as of May 2022. Audited financials will be approved in June and available at www.foodbankst.org



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EMPOWERING ADVOCATES *continued from page 1*

and financial hardship. The program's activities include public policy discussions, media training, and engaging our friends and families to share ideas to strengthen food support services. In this program, I formed such strong bonds with other Southern Tier residents and developed my voice to be an advocate for community empowerment.

We ended up selling our dairy cows to open a custom butcher shop instead.

Farmers like us might not have monetary funds to donate, but we would love to share meat products with our local pantries. I am passionate about changing policies and systems to make this possible. America is experiencing a supply-chain issue and our neighbors are experiencing hunger; meanwhile, the way to solve this is right in our backyard.

YOUR SUPPORT STRENGTHENS COMMUNITIES

For Nordia Hoff, nourishment starts, but does not end, with sharing food. As the pantry coordinator at the Friendship SDA Church in Elmira, Nordia goes above and beyond to meet her community's physical and emotional needs.

The pantry started during the pandemic to meet the magnified need for food support. With the Food Bank's help, their pantry now has a selection of free grocery items, is open multiple times per month for on-site pickups, and is available at all times for deliveries. The low-income area surrounding the church is home to many residents with transportation barriers, in addition to generations of economic disenfranchisement. The deliveries have proven crucial.

"I don't exclude anyone," Nordia shares. "If somebody calls me and says they need groceries, I do whatever I can to get it to them. We've helped people who, until yesterday, had a good job, but today they are struggling. We have clients in our church community, and we have clients not in our church community. I've brought food to families that are home sick with COVID, to moms who have disabled children and can't get around easily, and to people who don't have working cars. Whoever you are and whatever you are dealing with, I want you to know that we are here for you whenever you need us."

Nordia is a member of the Food Bank's Agency Advisory Committee and is committed to creatively serving the community. She previously worked in the mental health field and brings that experience to her current interactions with clients. "So many people are really struggling these days," she says. "I would love to start hosting wellness seminars. We are small but growing. I hope to continue to increase the connections we have and the support we provide to the people we serve. With help from the church team and the Food Bank, there is no limit to what we can do for our communities."

Devin McLaughlin, a Programs and Partnerships Coordinator at the Food Bank, adds, "Along with the Friendship SDA Church, Nordia makes the lives of everyone she serves a little bit brighter. It's a joy to partner with such innovative grassroots groups."



YOUR PARTNERSHIP FEEDS FAMILIES



When you walk into B.C. Cate Elementary School, it is immediately apparent how loved and valued the Kids' Farmers Market is in the community.

"In the winter, we set up the tables with produce in here," Principal James Nolan explains. "And in the springtime, we do it out in the garden. The

children have a wonderful time choosing their vegetables, trying foods they might not otherwise eat, and bringing that home to share with their families. Working with the Food Bank to do this in our school has been a great experience."

In this Montour Falls community, many families struggle with food insecurity and access to nutritious foods. Additionally, the rural Schuyler County area can present transportation barriers for people who want to feed their children healthy foods but may not be able to easily get to a supermarket. B.C. Cate Elementary had been participating in the Food Bank's Backpack™ program when they decided to expand their hunger relief efforts to include the Kids' Farmers Market. Now, on a monthly basis, the Food Bank delivers fresh produce to the campus. The students help set up the market, and then each class takes turns visiting the tables decked out

with tomatoes, onions, zucchini, potatoes, and other seasonal, fresh items.

For students, selecting their items and tasting new foods is a fun, joyful learning experience.

The second graders utilize practical mathematics and learn about the region in discussions about where the food comes from. For the three and four-year-olds, the market is an exciting opportunity to test out their knowledge of shapes and colors.

"The Kids' Farmers Market is an innovative way to get more fresh produce into under-served communities," says Sarah Keenan, a Programs and Partnerships Coordinator at the Food Bank. "It's a way to provide food support for all who need it. This is a vibrant part of the school community, accessible to all."

Indeed, the program is widely enjoyed, as evidenced by the smiles and laughter as students excitedly share their bounty; nourishing bodies and building hunger-free communities in the process.



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