



Jodie Vanwert: A Community Advocate in Action

“Because it takes a village,” Jodie Vanwert, Food Community Advocate, said effortlessly when asked why she is passionate about supporting those in our community experiencing food insecurity. After just a short conversation with Jodie, it was easy to see that she is truly the village behind many of her Whitney Point neighbors.

Jodie graduated from the Food Bank’s Community Advocates Training (CAT) program in 2023, but her passion for helping others has deep roots, spanning from the implementation of a community garden, to helping at our Whitney Point Mobile Food Pantry and working for Meals on Wheels. She has observed the spectrum of food insecurity and is passionate about educating others on the complexities of hunger.

“I was a post office employee, and while delivering mail I realized how big of a need there is in our community, and how much stigma there is around food security, that some simply will not ask for help. I would see a single mom or senior struggling to make ends meet and couldn’t just turn a blind eye; I had to do something.”

— Jodie

And that’s exactly what she did. “After semi-retiring I started to help with the Food Bank food trucks,” Jodie shared. She helps each month as a flagger, a volunteer who holds a flag, so drivers know when and where to stop through the drive-thru pantry. “I flag because over time I have built a relationship with many of the people who

(continued on page 3)



You Helped Save More Than 3 Million Pounds of Food from Going to Waste



Not only are you supporting programs that provide meals to those experiencing food insecurity, but you are also helping reduce food waste through our Food Recovery Program.

Before 2020, the Food Bank worked with retailers across our six-county service area to procure food that would otherwise be disposed. With the onset of the pandemic, everything changed.

Thanks to you, we were able to re-launch the Food Recovery Program in the fall of 2023. This made a huge difference by allowing us to partner with CHOW and the Friendship Donation Network to secure more than 3,461,100 pounds of donated food from retailers, translating to over 884,000 meals.

“So much has changed for our retail partners since the onset of the pandemic. We are currently working with each of the 58 retailers to understand their

needs when it comes to picking up food donations as well as providing food donation safety education,” explained Kathleen Pasetty, Food Recovery Coordinator. **“In addition to this, we are also exploring how we can ensure all of our pantry partners have equitable access to these wonderful opportunities so that items like fresh produce are available regardless of location.”**

“ I am finding this work incredibly gratifying because no matter who I am talking to, food insecurity and food waste reach everyone in one way, shape, or form. By donating food, we can better serve the families in our community, all while reducing waste and costs associated with the disposal of otherwise good food. ”

**— Kathleen Pasetty,
Food Recovery Coordinator**

Jodie Vanwert: A Community Advocate in Action



(continued from page 1)

attend, and it allows me to check in on them and show them that we care.”

Jodie also delivers food from the Mobile Food Pantries to two single moms and a grandmother who is raising her grandchildren. **“I was a single mom and I know how hard times can be. The first time I delivered to one of the moms, she cried because she was so overwhelmed with the quality of food available to her and her children,”** she recalled.

As a leader in our community, Jodie is a great example of how Community Advocates are not only temporarily helping their neighbors through action, but also raising the voices of those who are underrepresented in the anti-hunger movement.



If you are interested in getting involved as a volunteer, contact Austin LaFever, Volunteer Coordinator, at volunteer@foodbankst.org or (607)796-6061 ext. 4043.



Corning Credit Union Employees Pay It Forward

It's a chilly winter morning as the Food Bank's Mobile Food Pantry truck pulls into the Victory Highway Church parking lot. Food items are seamlessly unpacked from the truck onto pallets as the sun begins to shine over the hill into the valley.

But the sun is not the only thing that is bringing warmth to our community during this monthly event. As you look around, it's hard to miss a group of Corning Credit Union (CCU) employees who exchange smiles and laughter as they sort food items into smaller boxes that will soon be loaded into cars.

"I was really surprised how much need there is in our community, just based on the number of families we served today," shared Jennifer Harvey, a first-time CCU volunteer. **"I have volunteered at the Food Bank's warehouse before, so it was really great to see the full circle of volunteering and how it makes a big difference for our neighbors."**

CCU has been a long-time partner of the Food Bank, but in recent years their teams have supported our programs by volunteering at repacking shifts at the warehouse and lending a helping hand at the Victory Highway Mobile Food Pantry.



"It is important to all of us at CCU to support our community because this is not only where we work, but also where we live. The folks we serve are friends, neighbors, and CCU members. From the beginning, we have had such a great partnership with the Food Bank, and by supporting the in-house repack shifts and Mobile Food Pantries, we can make an even larger impact in our community."

— Marc Shuart, CCU Market Development Manager

CCU employees have provided more than 628 hours of service to the Food Bank during 2023.

The Food Bank relies on corporate partners, like CCU, to help build and sustain our communities. **If you are interested in partnering with the Food Bank or looking to organize a group repack event as part of a team-building opportunity, please contact Meghan Parsons, Chief Development Officer, at meghan.parsons@foodbankst.org or (607)796-6061 ext. 4045.**

the Harvester

Food Bank of the Southern Tier

388 Upper Oakwood Ave
Elmira, NY 14903
607-796-6061

foodbankst.org



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

This newsletter is sponsored by:



Board of Directors

OFFICERS

Kathleen Rasmussen, Chairperson
Mary Pat Dolan, Immediate Past Chairperson
Fred Van Sickle, Vice Chairperson
John Bayne, Treasurer
Erin Summerlee, Secretary

MEMBERS

Elizabeth Brando

Barry Brenton
Anis Fadul
Andy Fagan
Marty Heysham
Jamie Kaffenbarger
Jamila Michener
Krista Niles-Updyke
Amanda Smith-Socariss
Alison Wolfe

Our tax ID number is 20-8808059.