

## Increasing Services to Combat Increased Food Security

*Susan Lintner, Executive Vice President of Equitable Access and Advocacy*

According to Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap study, food insecurity exists in every community in the United States, including the Regional Food Bank's 23-county service area. Rising costs of living in our region have left 1 in 9 people (331,830 individuals) living with food insecurity. This number reflects an increase of nearly 90,000 neighbors experiencing food insecurity from last year, when 1 in 12 individuals were food insecure. Food insecurity rates amongst children are even higher, with 15% or 1 in 7 children unsure of where their next meal is coming from.

This news is alarming. To respond to this call, the Food Bank must provide an additional 17 million meals to our neighbors each year, and our strategic plan provides us with a roadmap of ensuring these needs are met.

The Food Bank can't do this by simply doing more of what we've always done. The stakes are too high. We're creating innovative programs and operational efficiencies to help meet the need. This includes efforts to expand our warehousing capacity, build our transportation fleet, develop new programming to meet the needs of neighbors where they are, and expand our support to our network of partner pantries. In the coming pages, you'll learn about what the Food Bank is doing to make sure that every neighbor in need has access to the healthy, culturally responsive food they need to thrive.



Since 2020, Nourish New York has made it possible for the Food Bank to stimulate the state's agricultural economy by allowing us to purchase fresh, local food from New York State growers and producers and provide it to our neighbors in need. In the past year, we've received nearly 3 million pounds of New York State grown and produced eggs, dairy, produce, meat, applesauce and pasta!

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## From the CEO

Dear Friends,

We have a lot of exciting things happening at the Regional Food Bank. Our new distribution center in Orange County will be complete this fall. And as you will notice, we freshened up our brand to coincide with this expansion. Both big changes, and other initiatives we have been working on, are all tied to the overarching goal in our strategic plan – to ensure equitable access throughout our 23-county service area.

We have great reason to make these changes now. While the pandemic has receded, many of the challenges and issues we faced continue to persist. Sadly, the food insecurity gap has widened tremendously over the past 18 months. Namely due to the high cost of living, families and individuals are still faced with hard choices – paying rent, childcare, utilities, transportation, health care and prescription costs, and purchasing food. Many people living paycheck to paycheck simply cannot afford healthy and nutritious foods.

Feeding America recently released the national 2024 “Map the Meal Gap” statistical survey. The numbers are really bad, and sadly what we expected. The amount of money people facing hunger need to be food secure is at a 20-year high. In our service area, we have gone from 1 in 12 people facing hunger in 2023 to 1 in 9. That’s 90,000 additional people who are food insecure in one year! The numbers are sobering, and they echo everything we have heard throughout our 23 counties. They re-confirm our strategy, that we have to do more to serve neighbors in need, and at times will have to do even more with less.

In 2024, we have already delivered 3.5 million more pounds of food than in 2023 YTD. We have developed a new County-by-County strategy that considers the new Feeding America statistics. The plan is dynamic and exciting, and mixes service area wide resources with hyper-local solutions. The whole Food Bank team is committed to its implementation and all levels of cross functional collaboration, specifically with community partners.

We cannot serve the people we do without a team effort and without partnership. I am proud of the work of everyone here at the Regional Food Bank and the daily commitment to our important mission. We appreciate all of you who support us and this work.

In service, I am.



Tom Nardacci  
CEO | Regional Food Bank



The Regional Food Bank DOES **NOT** ENGAGE IN OR ALLOW ANY TELEPHONE SOLICITATION ON ITS BEHALF. We receive financial support through our fundraising events, voluntary contributions, and mailing requests to our donors. If you receive a call from someone asking for money for the Regional Food Bank, please notify us at 518-786-3691. Thank you!

Newsletter Team: Betsy Dickson, Joanne Dwyer, Elizabeth Gifford, Susan Lintner, Tom Nardacci, Nick Pisani, Bethany Stiles, Deshon Tucker, and Ellie Zehnder.

Hunger's Hope is published twice a year. If you receive two copies of this edition, please pass one along to a friend and notify us.

Regional Food Bank  
965 Albany-Shaker Rd., Latham, NY 12110 • 195 Hudson Street, Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY 12520 • [www.regionalfoodbank.net](http://www.regionalfoodbank.net)

# THE BUSINESS CORNER

## Corporate Friends Are Essential to the Food Bank's Work

Many businesses contribute generously to the Food Bank's work. In this edition, we highlight two great corporate supporters.

**ADEN BROOK** is a newer friend to the Regional Food Bank and the impact they have made will last a lifetime. Aden Brook will be our new neighbor when our Orange County Distribution Center opens later this year and owned the land where we are building. Our expansion in the Hudson Valley region and this facility would not be possible without the support of Aden Brook and owner Nick Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick made a transformational gift of \$645,000 to ensure the Food Bank was able to purchase the plot of land for our new facility. Once used as farmland, it was his wish that the land continue to serve its purpose by providing essential food resources to those in need for years to come. We are profoundly grateful for the partnership of Aden Brook and Nick Fitzpatrick and their team's dedication to the Regional Food Bank's mission.



The **MVP ARENA COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP** is a partnership between two long-time supporters of the Food Bank's mission: MVP Health Care and Albany County. This new partnership was formed to improve the health and wellbeing of the community and has committed \$375,000 to the Regional Food Bank to help close the meal gap in Albany County. This funding will be allocated over three years, with \$125,000 annually dedicated to bolstering three key programs - \$65,000 per year to sponsor our Senior Food Delivery Program in Albany County; \$35,000 annually to expand our Retail Store Donation Program, enabling us to rescue and distribute surplus food from local grocers to our network of agency partners; and \$25,000 per year to support operations at our Patroon Land Farm, where approximately 100,000 pounds of fresh produce is harvested and delivered to our



partner agencies. We are so grateful to be a part of the MVP Arena Community Partnership. We thank Albany County Executive McCoy and MVP CEO Chris Del Vecchio, CFO Karla Austen, and their teams. They understand by working together we can nourish our neighbors.

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*For every neighbor in need*



As we move closer to a Fall opening of our new distribution center in Orange County, we are excited to more equitably serve our partners and neighbors in the Hudson Valley

Since the pandemic, the Food Bank has placed a high priority on direct delivery programs and expanding the capacity of our partners. For under-resourced areas, this improved access to food makes an incredible difference. We now serve nearly 50,000 more people each month through these programs.

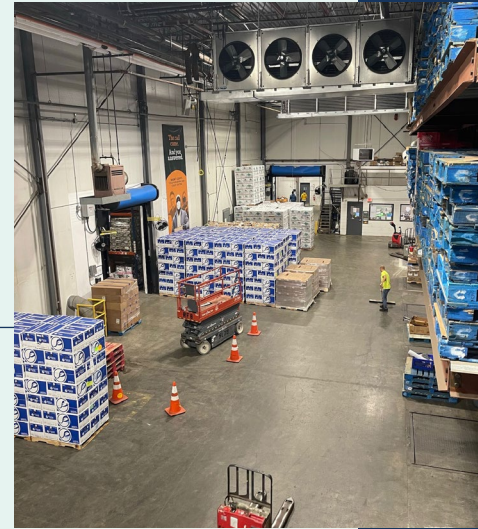


PRIMARIUS

The Regional Food Bank has successfully upgraded to a cloud-based version of our inventory system, Primarius. So far, the results have been remarkable. With more customization options, accurate real-time data, faster transactions, and enhanced reporting, we're better equipped to serve our Agency Partners and neighbors in need. With this upgrade, along with other technological enhancements, we are poised to meet the ever changing needs of our communities.



This summer, the Food Bank piloted the Rural Non Congregant model of the Summer Food Service Program, delivering nearly 30,000 easy to prepare meals directly into the hands of kids that need them.



We added cooling units to our main receiving dock. The space will maintain cool temperatures all day, every day, allowing additional storage space for highly desired perishables.



We recently implemented Service Insights with many of our partners, an electronic neighbor intake system designed to increase pantries' efficiency, improve the neighbor experience, and gain knowledge about the neighbors served across our network. The more we know about our neighbors, the better we can meet their needs and ensure we are providing nutritious food that meets their tastes and preferences.

When our partners visit the Food Bank to pick up their orders, they have the chance to "shop the dock" for perishable foods like fruits & vegetables, salads, dairy, and more. But many of our partners on the outskirts of our service area access our delivery sites, where a Food Bank driver delivers a tractor trailer filled with partner orders. We recently piloted "Shop the Lot" to increase equitability of our services! We added several pallets of perishable foods, allowing agencies to "shop" for these items and bring them straight to their neighbors. Once we assess the process, we look forward to bringing this option to delivery sites throughout our region!



# Agricycle

Liz Gifford, Director of Green Energy and Waste Management

Many people wonder what the Food Bank does with donated food that is past its prime. While our priority is feeding our neighbors in need, preventing food waste is another important part of our mission. When product isn't safe for distribution, we set aside that food waste for local farmers, composters, and wildlife rehabilitators. Despite these efforts, there's a small amount of product that remains unusable even by these partners. That's where Agri-Cycle steps in.

Earlier this year, we began utilizing Agri-Cycle for packaged food waste disposal. Excessively dented cans and boxed or bagged food past its expiry are picked up weekly and run through a de-packaging machine, separating the organic waste from the packaging. The resulting organic 'slurry' is pumped into an anaerobic digester at one of their farm partner sites.

Anaerobic digestion causes microorganisms to break down organic material in the absence of oxygen. The resulting methane and other gases are captured by the digester and combusted to generate electricity, heat, and fertilizer. It can be argued that anaerobic digestion is even 'greener' than composting food waste because it eliminates harmful greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

We're proud to contribute to recovering, reusing, and repurposing items that would otherwise go to landfill. It's a sustainable solution to a common challenge we all face.



timesunion.com / Table Hopping

## MAC & CHEESE BOWL

Saturday, October 19 • Cohoes, NY

Stations will span five blocks on Remsen Street where guests will enjoy samples from 30 local tasting stations. VIP Tickets include a tasting from a number of local breweries and cider makers.

**TICKETS ON SALE NOW!**



\$23/General • \$44/VIP

## • Holiday Gift Alternative •

Looking for a unique holiday gift? Our holiday gift alternative program offers people an opportunity to provide a special tribute gift to family, friends, or business associates in lieu of giving more traditional present. For a minimum donation of \$5.00 per gift, the Food Bank will send a special card to designated recipients notifying them of the special and unique contribution made in their names. Choose from a variety of specially designed cards for the holiday season. We can fill out and send the cards for you, or we can send them to you to personalize yourself.

❄️ *We also have designs for birthdays, memorials, and more on our website* ❄️



### To order Gift Alternative Cards:

1. To purchase online, scan the QR code or visit <https://regionalfoodbank.net/gift-alternative-cards>
2. OR call the Food Bank at (518) 786-3691 weekdays between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. to order by phone (by check or credit card).

View more card designs online!

## YES, I WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN MY COMMUNITY!

S/F 2023

Please use my tax-deductible gift to help children, seniors, veterans and other people facing hunger.

- \$25 which equals 100 meals     \$50 which equals 200 meals     \$100 which equals 400 meals  
 \$250 which equals 1,000 meals     \$\_\_\_\_\_ to provide as many meals as possible  
 I have enclosed a check (Please make payable to Regional Food Bank of NENY)  
 I would like to give by Credit Card

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ CVC # \_\_\_\_\_ Donation Amt. \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City / State / Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign me up to receive the monthly eNewsletter! Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me information on how I can include the Food Bank in my will or other long-term estate plans.

You may also make your donation online at [www.regionalfoodbank.net](http://www.regionalfoodbank.net) (choose designation Newsletter)

Please update your name & address if the information on the reverse side of this form is incorrect. Otherwise, you may leave it blank.



(tear gently)



## Meet the Volunteer Team

*Ellie Zehnder, Director of Volunteer Services*

The Regional Food Bank Volunteer Department never stops running! Seven days a week thousands of volunteers help sort donations at our two Distribution Centers and the Patroon Land Farm. This team of 14 not only schedule, train, and engage volunteers, but they work right alongside them, proving our mission is only accomplished through community collaboration. Additionally, they speak about the importance of food banking and volunteerism at schools, corporations, job fairs, and media events. Working with members of our community every day, they are often the first exposure people have to the Regional Food Bank. Thank you, Volunteer Department, for your unwavering passion, patience, and hard work!



Albany County pictured L-R: (front) Alan McLeod, Ellie Zehnder, Benny Kirkwood.  
(back) Patrick O'Connor, Bekah Johnson, Sam King, Andrea Williams.



Orange County pictured L-R: Sammie Bartul, Mike Jasper,  
Nicole Hill, Jackie Dolan, Corey Almeida, Tom Conti.



Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York  
965 Albany-Shaker Road • Latham, New York 12110

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(tear gently)



(tear gently)



## Your name and personal information are safe with us.

Please be assured that in our 41 years of service, we have never rented, sold, or loaned our donor list... and we never will.



Over the past few months, we have worked on developing a bright, fresh brand that feels authentic to our mission and is community oriented, optimistic, a reflection of our positive culture, and speaks to our commitment to serve.

The Food Bank has experienced a lot of change over the past 5 years, particularly the incredible growth to face the effects of the pandemic and the continued need in our community. Our look may be changing, but our mission to alleviate hunger, prevent food waste, and nourish the communities we serve remains the same.

We are so excited to share this change with you and we are grateful for your continued support!