

WINTER 2018

the Harvester



food bank
of the Southern Tier

Working Together To Build And Sustain
Hunger-Free Communities Throughout The Southern Tier



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EVERYONE'S JOB



On Sundays you'll find Pastor Mike Kelly in churches across three counties; but during the week, you'll find him out in the community collecting donations for the Food Bank. In two years, with the support of his flock of parishioners, local businesses and community members, Pastor Mike has raised more than \$16,000 for our BackPack Program.



Pastor Mike pounds the pavement for BackPacks like it's his job. But, then, Pastor Mike believes it is his job. "God says, 'Feed the people.' I mean, it's pretty simple. Feed the people. Well, okay. We're going to do that."

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food bank
of the Southern Tier

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Friends,

As we head into the holiday season, I am filled with gratitude for the relationships we have built this year and all that we have accomplished together.

We are on track to distribute more than 12 million pounds of food this year, including three million pounds of fresh produce. Our partner agencies and direct services programs are serving more than 16,000 Southern Tier residents each week. Beyond weights and measures, we have grown our outreach, finding new ways to extend services to people struggling to make ends meet.

WSKG public television shined a spotlight on hunger and poverty in the Southern Tier this fall, with

their *Chasing the Dream* series, which I was privileged to host. I am encouraged that so many viewers have tuned in to learn more about the people and programs that are working to lift our neighbors up out of poverty.

Your encouragement and support have allowed us to pursue *our* dream to end hunger. I'm particularly grateful for, and humbled by, the donors and doers across the region who generously share their time, treasure and talents in our mission to build and sustain hunger-free communities across the Southern Tier.

I'm pleased to share that our network of supporters is growing. People of all ages and walks of life who have a passion for hunger relief are coming together to find new solutions that work.

Because of you, I head eagerly into 2019 to see what more we can accomplish together. In the meantime, may your plates and hearts be full this holiday season.

With gratitude,

Natasha R. Thompson
President & CEO

FROM DOERS TO DONORS



A couple years ago, Ben and Elizabeth Giordano found themselves in an enviable position.

"When we were doing our budget, we decided we had some extra income," Ben says. "Just because we have a little excess doesn't mean we need to spend it. Other people need it more."

So, the Giordanos, of Endwell, became Full Plate Partners — a society of Food Bank donors who give monthly through automatic payments.

In 2012, Ben founded Freshy Sites, a web development firm in Binghamton. Six years later, he employs 19 staff members who manage more than 1,000 websites.

Ben knew about the Food Bank from volunteering at offsite repacks, and Freshy Sites also hosted a BackPack RePack for its staff.

"Through that, I learned this area has so much food insecurity. And that's how I got to know the Food Bank can leverage donations so well," he says.

A donation of \$10 a month provides one meal a day for someone in need. A monthly donation of \$120 provides 360 meals a month.

The Giordanos enjoyed their repack experiences but demands on their time are many, with a rapidly growing business and three young children at home.

"We knew we could do food drives and volunteer, but we are super busy. We thought, maybe the best thing we could do is give monthly," Ben says.

"We live in a house with little kids. And the idea of little kids not having enough food, it's heart-breaking."

Monthly giving gives the Giordanos the peace of mind of knowing they are helping feed children while they are busy raising their own.

Become a Full Plate Partner at www.foodbankst.org/give-monthly.

EVERYONE'S JOB *continued from page 1*

Pastor Mike has served at Newfield United Methodist Church for four years, Reynoldsville UMC for nine years and began serving at Corning Grace UMC in July.

Feeding people has always been a major part of Pastor Mike's life. Prior to leading churches, he attended the Culinary Institute of America and was Director of Food Service and Executive Chef at Cayuga Addiction Recovery, where he is still a consultant. While there, he fed people in need and taught them how to eat well.

Although his job title has changed throughout the years, his mission to "feed the people" has not. He now enjoys teaching the youth in his congregations about what food insecurity means. He challenges them to understand hunger and poverty and inspires them to make a difference however they can.

Pastor Mike found a passion for the Backpack Program through his wife Pam, former Director of Food Service at Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga BOCES. She saw firsthand the need for the Backpack Program, which provides children with nutritious, easy-to-prepare, kid-friendly foods to take home on



FROM DONORS TO DOERS

Susan Tabrizi started volunteering at food pantries with her husband, David Helmer, when she was a graduate student in Long Island. It provided a way to give back and offered a connection to the local community.

The pair moved to Lansing 10 years ago when Susan accepted a professorship in political science at Wells College and they began donating to the Lansing Food Pantry. After Susan attended a Hunger 101 poverty simulation, she and David joined our Circle to Feed Hope — a group of donors who make leadership gifts annually.

"We thought, 'Is my pebble in every pool making a difference? What if we throw a bigger stone into the pool?' So, we made a larger donation to the Food Bank. It's my second year of being able to do that and it has brought focus and intentionality to our giving."

weekends and school breaks, when they may be at most risk of being hungry.

For years, Pastor Mike donated through his friend, Q-Country radio personality Chris Allinger, whose Walkin' the Country fundraisers raised more than \$120,000 over four years for the Backpack Program. Chris hung up his walking shoes after his last trek in 2015, and Pastor Mike thought, "How are we going to fill that void?" So, he picked up the torch.

Now, Pastor Mike not only raises donations but builds community while organizing galas, candy sales, spaghetti dinners, pancake breakfasts and other food and fund drives. While he's drumming up financial support, he engages residents and business owners in conversations about hunger in their communities.

His grassroots campaigns drive home the message that people are struggling and the community has an obligation to help. "I find it incredible that, in the richest nation in the world, we have kids going hungry," he says.

Dollar by dollar, Pastor Mike and his congregations are changing kids' lives and teaching others to do the same.

Looking inward, Susan still felt she and her family could do more.

As a Lansing school board member, Susan attended a holiday Backpack RePack for elected officials in Ithaca last December. In January, she brought her children, David, 13, and Lily, 9, to the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Serve and Learn event at the Food Bank Warehouse. Now, David and Lily volunteer regularly at the Lansing Food Pantry.

Susan says, "We're no longer just writing the check. We're asking, 'What are we doing with our hands, our heart, our time, our energy?'"

Recently, Susan has taken her giving to another new level. She's on a mission to bring a summer meals program to children in Lansing.

"We have a fabulous rec program in town, very affordable - windsurfing, archery, robotics, quilting, as well as all the sports," Susan says. "The thing is, there is no food there. We are seeing an increase in requests for free and reduced-price lunch in the schools. So, what happens to those kids in the summer whose families can't provide lunch?"

Susan has teamed up with Nancy Myers, director of the Lansing Food Pantry; Linda Pasto, a retired nursing instructor; Susie Gutenberger, Lansing librarian; and Jennifer Bertron, Food Bank Community Collaboration Coordinator to develop a plan. We're excited to see what Susan and her family will spearhead next, and how many more kids will get nutritious meals when school is out next summer.

RETHINKING RESOURCES



Marketing major Gabby Picca spearheaded an Ithaca College program that allows students to donate to the Backpack Program with their leftover college currency.

Solutions to hunger are often as simple as rethinking how we can better use our excess resources.

Last year, Gabby Picca, an Ithaca College junior from Westchester, New York, noticed students making frivolous food purchases in campus stores just to use up money in their Bonus Bucks college accounts before it defaults back to the college at the end of the school year.

"I found myself purchasing random food items that I had no need for. I was buying solely because I didn't want my extra Bonus Bucks to go to waste," Gabby says. "I looked around the store and there were so many other students doing the same thing. I thought to myself, all this food could be going to someone who actually needs it."

Gabby worked with the college to create a system for students to donate their unused Bonus Bucks to the Backpack Program. The six-week campaign raised more than \$11,000 in food and funds in June, far exceeding Gabby's expectations.

Gabby, a Marketing Communications major, wants to extend the program to other local colleges in the region.

"There is a huge hunger problem right here in our own backyard, on our campuses," Gabby says. "It's our job here as visitors to this community, as college students, to take care of the community we're in. There's only so much you can do as an individual. When you work together with a team of enthusiastic people, you can accomplish so much more."

PHILANTHROPISTS IN TRAINING

Madeleine Meier and her student peers spent a couple hours packing food in our warehouse this summer. But they spent the year learning how the Food Bank, and other non-profit organizations, work in our community.

The S. Roberts Rose Fund was established at the Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes to provide students opportunities to dig deeper into volunteer service by giving them a voice at the grantmaking table.

Students from Elmira, Horseheads, Elmira Heights and the Corning area participated. Madeleine, a senior at Notre Dame High school, has been a part of Rose's Youth Philanthropists (RYP) since freshman year.

"It has opened my eyes to the efforts of my community to address social issues, and it's really cool that youth get to give back to other youth," Madeleine says. "RYP also taught us what goes into funding organizations, and why we should be funding an organization like the Food Bank."

Katie McConville, Community Foundation Scholarship and Youth Philanthropy Associate, leads the young philanthropists in monthly meetings, special projects and volunteering opportunities each year.

"Our network of non-profits here is so unique. My goal is that the kids see there are so many people giving back, and so many ways to give back," Katie says.

Members of RYP volunteered and presented a donation for the



Emma, Olivia and Madeleine, members of Rose's Youth Philanthropists, repack food at the Food Bank in June.

Food Bank's Backpack Program in June, after reviewing grant applications from organizations that impact youth in Chemung and Southeastern Steuben counties.

The gift from RYP will provide nearly 2,000 packs of food for kids in the Backpack Program. We hope the experience will give these students a lifelong love of philanthropy. We expect to see these eager faces leading community efforts in the future!



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