

SPRING 2019

food
bank
of the Southern Tier

the Harvester

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



Robin Derick, left, and Joanna Gleason, Turning Point Food Pantry Coordinator

TIME FOR GROWTH

..... 2

EFFICIENCY LEADERS

..... 3

COMMUNITY BUILDING

..... 4



PREScription FOR NUTRITION

After a series of major heart issues, Robin Derick would happily never set foot in a physician's office again.

But in order to get free produce weekly from the Turning Point Fresh Farmacy fruit and vegetable prescription program, she willingly participates in a customized health plan developed by Keuka Family Practice, where her doctor literally wrote her a prescription for fresh produce.

"I hate going to the doctor," Robin says. "But I did because they said 'fresh fruits and veggies.'"



continued on page 3



food bank

of the Southern Tier

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A MOTHER'S DAY GIFT THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

This Mother's Day, honor or remember Mom and any special person in your life with a donation that makes a difference in the lives of mothers in our community today.

Starting April 26, Wegmans Food Markets and our Board of Directors have joined together to match all donations, dollar for dollar, up to \$10,000, during our Mother's Day Matching Challenge!

The Food Bank will send your honoree a note of your generosity.

Every dollar you donate to the campaign online and via mail will help lift the heavy burden so many mothers bear when their families are facing hunger.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! The Food Bank accomplished so much in 2018. While the problem of hunger still remains, we were able to deliver almost 10 million meals, which we couldn't have done without you. 2019 is shaping up to be a year of growth and realignment as we strive to meet the changing needs of our community.



After earning distinction as Food Bank of the Year in 2017, we spent a great deal of time in 2018 evaluating our delivery of services and resources. While food banks across the nation look to us as a model, we remain committed to continuous improvement to better serve our clients and our partner agencies.

We started thinking differently about the way we approach our work and the value we bring to every community we serve. Instead of focusing on independent programs like BackPack and Mobile Food Pantry, we wondered what would happen if we took a more holistic approach to the unique needs of each of our counties and worked closely with our partners there to determine the best use of our food resources.

We realized that, outside of food, our greatest resource is the relationships that we have built and fostered over many years throughout the region. Those relationships are many, and include food pantry coordinators, volunteers, donors, elected officials, school staff, businesses, other non-profit agencies, and the thousands who seek our services.

As a result, we combined key functions from Agency Services, Community Programs, and Advocacy & Education into a new Community Impact Department. This team will focus on all the ways we add value today and the opportunities we have to impact food distribution, education, advocacy and collaborations with our network of partners.

To that end, we will have three Programs and Partnerships Coordinators, each assigned to a specific part of our six-county service area. These team members will have deep knowledge of their assigned communities as well as a keen understanding of our services, which will allow them to identify opportunities for new and expanded programs and partnerships to meet their region's specific needs.

We have also created a Health & Nutrition Department which will focus on the connection between hunger and health. This new department will identify opportunities to develop stronger connections with our health care providers across the region, support our network of partners with nutrition education resources, and better serve our clients who suffer disproportionately from chronic diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure.

I anticipate that many people will not find an organizational restructure very exciting, but to me it's a prime example of how our Food Bank is constantly looking at ways we can best steward the resources entrusted to us to have the greatest impact on the most people. I am optimistic about this new approach to our work and what it will mean for the communities we serve in years to come.

Thank you for supporting our work in the past and during this exciting time of growth.

In partnership,

Natasha R. Thompson
President & CEO

PREScription FOR NUTRITION

continued from page 1

Robin, a heart attack survivor, receives just \$778 a month in disability. She lives in a small trailer on a hilltop in Avoca with no electricity or running water, and her only heat source is a small wood-burning stove she must feed every four hours. Recently, a small increase in her disability payment resulted in a decrease in her Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, leaving her with less funds to buy the nutritious foods her health requires.

Because of her chronic heart condition, Robin had to quit her job as a school bus driver and has relied on the food pantry ever since. The addition of weekly produce from Fresh Farmacy takes away some of the stress she has felt to afford the foods she needs to maintain a heart-healthy diet on limited funds.

"You go to the store with \$100 and try to eat heart-healthy for a month. It doesn't happen," Robin says. "Fresh Farmacy frees me up to buy the other healthy items I need, like extra virgin olive oil or canola oil instead of cheaper, less healthy kinds."

The Fresh Farmacy prescription program was created last fall by Turning Point, a Food Bank partner agency in Bath. Turning Point used a Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) Seed Grant, administered by the Food Bank, to develop an innovative way to confronting emergency food delivery and the nutritional needs of people with low incomes.

Tess McKinley, director of Turning Point, says Medicaid is focusing more and more on prevention as a means to curb healthcare costs. "The Seed Grant provided the ability to start the program and demonstrate our worth. Our goal is to sustain the program with Medicaid funding. We would be saving Medicaid a lot of money if we can help people eat healthy and have better health outcomes."

Tess continues, "People are eating a lot of junk because it's all they can afford on SNAP, and they are unhealthy because of it. Eating whole foods and plant-based



Pantry Coordinator Joanna Gleason, right, helps Robin Derick pick out the produce she receives as part of the Fresh Farmacy prescription program.

foods lowers rates of high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity and cancer, and can reduce heart disease. Medicaid spends billions of dollars on people going to the ER. But if you pay for prevention, you pay a lot less in the long run. If we show value, Medicaid will pay for our services."

Fresh Farmacy participants must report to a participating medical provider for regular check-ups and Turning Point staff for check-ins. Turning Point monitors the progress of participants for six months, helping clients get to medical appointments and working to solve other barriers to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Turning Point has recently expanded the Fresh Farmacy prescription program to Canisteo and Hornell, treating the whole person through access to healthy foods with the support of the healthcare community.

NEW ROLES FOR DATA AND EFFICIENCY

As part of our department restructuring this year, two staff members have transitioned to new roles to support data-driven decision-making and focus on efficiency of our programs.

As Community Impact Manager, **Jennifer Bertron** will work directly with the partners and clients we serve to analyze and evaluate our programs with the goal of continuous improvement so valued by the Food Bank. Jennifer will lead efforts to ensure each county has the appropriate resources to meet its specific needs.

Ryan Mattoon transitioned to Logistics Manager to ensure our Food Bank effectively serves our network of partner agencies as they continue to grow. As our new Programs & Partnerships Coordinators work to strengthen relationships in each county, Ryan will ensure logistics are streamlined so we can steward and maximize our resources as effectively as possible.



COMMUNITY BUILDING

Community commitment feeds Lansing pantry

Hunger relief happens when people with big ideas and a knack for pooling resources combine their shared passion for helping their neighbors. This compassion has been the fuel behind the development and growth of the Lansing Food Pantry.

The pantry operates free of charge in the Community Recreation Center on East Shore Drive in Lansing, serving about 80 families a month.

"We're very fortunate here. This is the Taj Mahal of food pantries," says new pantry coordinator Toni Adams. "There's plenty of parking, a central location, and enough space."

Until five years ago, the food pantry set up each month in the community room of a local church. All the pantry supplies were kept in a closet.

"It was very difficult for volunteers – mostly older – to set up and take down each time," says Rosemary Sciarabba, a volunteer of more than a dozen years.

Rosemary and Nancy Myers, who retired recently after more than 15 years as pantry coordinator, hatched a plan to find a permanent home for the pantry and the Community Rec Center seemed like the logical choice. Rosemary and her husband, Andy, lifetime Lansing residents, were already deeply invested in the Center.

The Community Rec Center is a passion project for Andy. In 1986, Andy, a hockey dad, saw there weren't enough facilities to accommodate teams. So, Andy, a founding partner of Sciarabba Walker Certified Public Accountants, began a fundraising campaign to create an ice rink. He raised \$300,000 in pledges in 30 days. "Ten years later, 90 percent of those pledges were honored," Andy says.

"He just never gives up," his wife Rosemary says.

In 1996, The Rink opened and in 2001 The Fields were built. Governed as a not-for-profit organization, the Rec Center hosts thousands of youth and adult athletes each year and has become a center for community activity. Locals can purchase a gym membership and home-school groups play on the indoor fields in cold winter months.



Andy and Rosemary Sciarabba have been integral in establishing a permanent home for the Lansing Food Pantry in the Community Rec Center

The pantry also has a commercial grade freezer and refrigerator which allow for storage of frozen products, meat and dairy. Rosemary says the move to its own space also created autonomy for the pantry. A close-knit volunteer group grew even more connected, committed and able to respond to the community needs in their own space. During the government shutdown in January, they opened the pantry for a special distribution for TSA agents working without paychecks.

And in 2014 the Lansing Food Pantry moved into their dedicated space down the hall. It is clean and well-lit, is welcoming and provides a sense of community and comfort. There's even a bright red bookshelf full of free books for kids. Toni is proud to have shopping carts from the Lansing Market, so clients can have a better shopping experience while they pick out their groceries.

"It's amazing what we've got going on in this little community," Andy says.

The Rec Center is also home to the Lansing summer rec program, and plans are currently underway for the Rec Center to become a Summer Meals site, where kids can get free meals and snacks while they're there.

Andy says community support was always a focus at Sciarabba Walker and also in his post-retirement real estate ventures. Concerned about a lack of services for seniors in Lansing, Andy and a few partners opened the Lansing Market in 2011, which was the only grocery store at that time in Lansing. Other stores and businesses followed, and Andy is doing whatever he can to encourage that growth.

"The community has been good to us," Andy says. "This is how we give back."

2018: YEAR IN REVIEW



9.5 Million

number of meals served



2,300,182

lbs. fresh produce delivered



3,075,404

lbs. delivered through Mobile Food Pantry



18,523

people served weekly



42,667

volunteer hours served



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