



HUNGER KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES

Name an ingredient, and Diann Scott can rattle off her favorite ways to prepare and serve it.

“I wasn’t born with a silver spoon, but I sure know how to eat off one,” she says. “I love food.”

On a sunny May day, Bridgette VanNorman, Windsor Human Development Food Pantry director, reads down a list of staple items and calls Diann’s attention to foods from the Food Bank she knows Diann will particularly enjoy.

“She’s not just serving food here; she’s serving the community with a personal touch,” Diann says. “It’s like going supermarket shopping here. She gives you a feeling of welcomeness, so you don’t feel like you’re taking.”

Diann says that’s critical, especially for seniors who often have to be convinced they need, and deserve, help with food.

Diann raised four sons in downstate New York and moved upstate after her husband passed in 2015. She lives on social security,

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TIOGA DOWNS STEPS UP SUPPORT TO BRING EASTER MEALS TO NEIGHBORS IN NEED

Hunger is hard. But holiday hunger is especially difficult and isolating because food is central to most celebrations and traditions.

That's why, this Easter, Tioga Downs Casino Resort provided 5,000 ham dinners with all the trimmings. Tioga Downs donated \$100,000 to the Food Bank for distribution of meals throughout the Food Bank's six-county service area.

"My mother grew up in this community, and I know the impact of having a full belly, especially for the Easter holiday," said Jeffrey Gural, owner of the casino resort in Nichols, NY.

The gift expands Tioga Downs' long-standing partnership with the Food Bank. The organization has supported the Food Bank's Virtual Turkey Drive for over a decade.

"Even after being closed for months, like so many of our partners, Tioga Downs Casino Resort has used creative ways to support our community," said Natasha R. Thompson, Food Bank president and CEO. "Their commitment to our friends and neighbors is incredibly inspiring."



Jeffrey and Paula Gural present a check for Easter meals to Natasha R. Thompson, left, of the Food Bank, in March.

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most of which is taken up by her mortgage, leaving very little left for food and other necessities at the end of each month.

"The idea of being retired and in good (financial) shape is just not real for most people," Diann says.

Diann, 70, says seniors often refuse to get help with basic needs, which they feel like they should be able to provide for themselves.

"We were raised different. Seniors — who need help the most — reach out less. They're the ones who are starving because of stigma; the guilt, the feeling of shame," Diann says. "I felt like I had a nice house; I would be taking away from other people who really need it, and yet, I was behind in my mortgage."

THE NUMBER CRUNCHER

Kathryn Miller is helping food pantries get the data they need to do the most good.

Our Food Bank is one of six helping the Feeding America network of food banks refine a database tool that provides insights on hunger in communities across the country. The FreshTrak system helps chart client service, as well as the varied needs of people using hunger relief services, so that food banks can better respond to the unique needs of the communities they serve.

Kathryn, service insights manager, is leading the charge on behalf of the Food Bank. Kathryn onboards partner food pantries to FreshTrak and provides training and technical help. The system allows clients to register at pantries by scanning a key tag, similar to those used at grocery stores.

“It helps us understand where hunger lives, and with that information we can respond to those needs. We can overlay data related to income, transportation, education, healthcare, poverty statistics, and we can have a better understanding of underserved populations,” says Matt Griffin, Food Bank director of Health & Nutrition.

Diann was uncomfortable attending food pantries in her own town. She tried the Windsor food pantry last fall.

“I came with reluctance,” she says, looking over at Bridgette. “And I was like, thank God for you.”

When Bridgette took over as food pantry director last year, she eliminated rules requiring clients to live within defined borders. She wants to remove any barriers that prevent people from accessing the nutritious food they need.

Bridgette and her son, Trevor, keep the pantry open five days a week, and they deliver to folks who can't get out. They take the time to get to know clients and

Kathryn says the system takes away the guesswork about who needs help and why.

“It's so great when a pantry that was initially hesitant about starting FreshTrak realizes the ease of gathering the data they need. Volunteers who were uncomfortable with technology have picked up the process and are amazed!” Kathryn says.

Kathryn is sharing her field experiences in work sessions with the Feeding America team for a roll-out of the new system early next year. Kathryn also designed the online and phone registration systems for Community Food Distributions when the pandemic forced closures of Mobile Food Pantries last year. The system allowed clients to pre-register for drive-up distributions, ensuring the Food Bank had enough food for all registered clients.



their individual needs. Serving people while preserving their dignity is Bridgette's driving goal.

Diann says this outlook and approach are key to ending hunger and food insecurity. She says, “If you could find more people like them, you'd solve it.”

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE, ELIMINATE THE NEGATIVE

Volunteer helps refine processes



Andrew Renken watched the line of cars snaking around the Steuben County fairgrounds as hundreds of families came to the Community Food Distribution in Bath last summer.

“This is good,” Andrew thought as he loaded groceries into cars. “It could be better.”

It’s not that he didn’t appreciate the massive undertaking to feed 500 carloads of neighbors at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s just that Andrew knew the process could be faster and more efficient.

As director of process of improvement for a Fortune 10 company, a U.S. Military Academy graduate, and former U.S. Army captain, Andrew can quickly size up a situation to achieve peak performance. As a Food Bank donor and volunteer, he wanted to give more of his time and talents.

“While volunteering at the distribution, I noticed the process was slow and saw a potentially easily implemented solution,” Andrew says. “Food Bank leaders tried the idea, and the distribution doubled in speed. After more than 14 years of consulting and leading process improvement projects across the country, I tend



Andrew worked with Janet Schroeder, Pantry of Angels director, to recommend ways the pantry could streamline services.

to see opportunities for improvement and love helping find solutions to problems.”

Andrew’s recommendation enabled volunteers to load food boxes more quickly, doubling the line’s speed. The process was less of a drain on volunteers, and it decreased wait times for clients.

Andrew and his wife, Rachel, a manager at Corning Incorporated, had only been in the Southern Tier community for a year when the pandemic increased local need by 20%.

“We felt God calling us to focus on helping meet the immediate physical needs of our new neighbors, so we began to support the Food Bank,” Andrew says.

He has also volunteered his consulting services at the Pantry of Angels in Lindley, the Corning Food Pantry, and the Salvation Army food pantry in Elmira.

“Andrew has been able to offer a free set of unbiased, objective eyes in client distribution, order delivery, and pantry operations to streamline service, increase capacity, and prevent volunteer burnout. He’s a trouble-shooter, a problem solver,” says Amanda Palme, Programs and Partnerships administrative manager. “He can come into any situation and improve the process. It’s a very creative way to give back.”



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