Food is at the center of many holiday celebrations. The planning, the shopping, the prep; kitchens filled with heady scents of roasting turkey, spiced pies, and baking bread. Coming together with families and friends over a table filled with traditional favorites and all the trimmings helps give meaning to the holidays.

But, for families struggling to make ends meet, food insecurity brings not just hunger but anxiety and isolation.

“There are families that just can’t do it. If you have a limited budget, you can’t spend $25 on a turkey, let alone all the trimmings,” says Terry Ross, a home health aide from Enfield. “It’s really depressing. Without the food, it’s not even a holiday; it’s just a sad day.”

Thanks to our network of donors and our partner pantries, thousands of individuals and families will celebrate the holidays with full hearts and bellies. Your support gives families like Terry’s so much more than just a holiday meal; it provides the means to experience traditions with loved ones and a reason to give thanks.

Terry lost her home in a fire nine years ago and has struggled to come back from the loss. When she had to take a lower paying job five years ago but didn’t qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, she needed help making ends meet. Through disability and retirement, she’s become a pantry regular.

Terry is grateful for the Enfield Food Pantry,
In May 2022, the Tri-Cities Opera in Binghamton will present a lyrical retelling of the classic children’s tale *Stone Soup*, encouraging community members to support local hunger-relief efforts. What a perfect pairing of art and action!

*Stone Soup* gets straight to the heart of our work here at the Food Bank with a moral that we all have something to contribute, and that pooling our resources has the power to provide something none of us can do alone. Everyone can understand hunger. There’s no better way to introduce children to the idea that we all have a role to play in providing for our communities. Every gift — no matter the amount — can have a significant impact.

I see parents bringing children to volunteer in our warehouse. I meet families who share the practice of philanthropy together. Children are learning that access to healthy food is a human right. That fills me with hope for the future. Together, we are creating a network of advocates who see that soup can come from a stone and that we can make a difference!

In partnership,

Natasha R. Thompson
President & CEO

Your Support Makes Holiday Memories for Neighbors in Need

continued from page 1

which opens its doors two days each week to anyone in need. Clients make their way through tables laden with quality meats, fresh produce and dairy, baked goods, and pantry staples from the Food Bank, as well as toiletries and other necessary household items.

More than just a place to get food, the Enfield Food Pantry — like so many other community organizations — provides community, where pantry director Jean Owens and the volunteer staff greet and get to know clients, Terry says.

“This place has been a godsend. I come here as often as I can,” she says. “Jean is amazing. She really cares. This is her passion,
It’s very important to Julie Monahan that her children understand the value of a dollar and the value of giving.

The Horseheads mother of two is the business development and sales manager at First Heritage Federal Credit Union and a volunteer member of a Food Bank board committee.

In addition to volunteering their time at the Food Bank, Kegan, 13, and Pyper, 8, donate half their weekly allowance as Food Bank Full Plate Partners, the Food Bank’s program for committed monthly donors.

“I ask them to spend, save, and give,” Julie says. “We looked at many options for ways to give as a family and we decided on the Food Bank. They truly realize the impact they are making, and they understand that the tables could turn and we – anyone – could be on the other side of the table.”

Pyper says, “Some people just don’t have enough food. I like that I’m helping kids and families in need.”

Kegan says he doesn’t even miss the money he gives because Full Plate Partner donations are automatically deducted monthly.

“It’s important to give back and the amount doesn’t matter,” he says. “Every little bit makes a difference.”

Kegan is right — every dollar donated to the Food Bank can provide three meals for our neighbors in need.

For more information on how to give monthly and pledge as a Full Plate Partner, log on to www.foodbankst.org/donate-monthly or contact Tina Culligan, annual fund coordinator, at 607-796-6061 ext. 4010.
NOURISH NEW YORK FEEDS FARM TO FOOD BANK PARTNERSHIP

Every fall, bright red apples come farm fresh to the Food Bank in giant totes from our local farm partners, like Stoney Ridge Orchard and Winery in Erin. Clients take away huge bags of the crisp fruit from our Mobile Food Pantries and agency partners, excited about the prospect of cobblers, pies, and sliced up treats.

More local produce and agricultural products are on the way, thanks to Nourish New York, a state agriculture program developed last year during the pandemic that helps our neighbors in need, as well as New York food producers. In 2020, the Food Bank received nearly $1.1 million for direct purchase of agricultural products from New York farmers, growers, and other food producers for distribution throughout our six-county service area. In June this year, the state legislature passed a bill to make Nourish New York a permanent program.

That’s “lifesaving” news for growers like Stoney Ridge, said manager Liz Heppner. Pandemic restrictions last year and land issues this year shut down the you-pick experience that has sustained Stoney Ridge for 10 years. This season, the orchard sent every apple harvested — 9-12,000 lbs. each week — to the Food Bank.

“That’s the only income we have this year. It’s going to be a huge help. It will get us through this year,” Liz said.

Demonstrating the power of legislation to combat hunger, 21 million pounds of surplus agricultural products have been purchased from more than 4,000 state farms and delivered to more than 1.3 million residents in need since the program began in April 2020.

“It’s the best thing that could have happened to us this year,” Liz said. “People might not realize that programs like this can save farmers.”

THE JOY OF GIVING

The 12th annual Virtual Turkey Drive is live through Thanksgiving Day, with a generous matching donation from Tioga Downs Casino Resort. In 2020, YOU helped provide more than 4,200 turkeys with all the trimmings through our partner pantries. GIVE NOW at foodbankst.org to bring the holidays home to a neighbor in need and stay tuned for info about Triple Turkey Thursday on November 18th.

Once again, this December, Selfless Elf: 25 Days of Selflessness offers creative ideas for families to learn about hunger and how to take action. The campaign presents selfless acts families can do together as they give their time, talents, and treasure during the holiday season. Stay tuned at foodbankst.org/selfless-elf for more about what Jingles the Selfless Elf is up to, and plan your holiday selflessness!

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

foodbankst.org

This newsletter is sponsored by:

True INSURANCE
A family owned business since 1973