

WINTER 2020

food
bank
of the Southern Tier

the Harvester

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



The Food Bank Warehouse Team. Not pictured, Michael Champlain and Bonnie McCartney

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PIVOTING TO PERISHABLES

Behind each emergency food box, food distribution, and pantry is a team of 15 Food Bank employees that manage all Warehouse activities at the Food Bank of the Southern Tier. This is no easy feat, especially during a pandemic.

Before March 15, it was not uncommon for a bulk of our 55,000 square foot Warehouse to be stocked with non-perishable food items, but as the supply chain issues across the globe began to impact grocery and food products in New York State, the Food Bank Warehouse team had to pivot in more ways than one.

"As news spread about the pandemic's impact on the non-perishable supply chain, we knew that we needed

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This surely has been a year for the books! So much of our world has changed as we were challenged by the onset of the pandemic.

Over the year, we have become increasingly aware of how intricately related and valuable the human connection is for all of us. Because of your generosity, we have been able to serve those struggling during the worst economic downturn in recent history.

You have helped guide our work and reminded us, time and time again, that humanity is alive and well throughout the Southern Tier.

Your ability to care for others, whether through a financial gift, the gift of time, or the gift of advocacy, has allowed us to serve an unprecedented number of families over the last year.



Thank you for your continued support! I hope in this newsletter you see the value your gift brings to not only to the Food Bank, but to our friends and neighbors.

In partnership,

Natasha R. Thompson
President & CEO

YOU CAN FILL TABLES THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

TIOGA DOWNS VIRTUAL TURKEY DRIVE

This year we celebrate the 11th anniversary of the Tioga Downs Virtual Turkey Drive! Now more than ever, our neighbors across the region need your support. From Thursday, November 5 through Thanksgiving Day, you can supply families across our region with a holiday meal by visiting www.foodbankst.org.

Triple your gift by making a contribution on Triple Turkey Thursday, November 19!



MEET JINGLES!

Jingles, the Ultimate Selfless Elf, has been working hard to make this holiday season one for the books. Selfless Elf is taking on a whole new look this year (red and green included). To learn more as we approach the holiday season, visit www.SelflessElf5k.org to see how you can join in on the festivities.



PIVOTING TO PERISHABLES

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to adjust our expectations and methods of distribution, starting with the food product we were receiving,” reflected David Patterson, Warehouse Operations Director.

The team’s prediction was correct. Upon New York State’s shutdown, the warehouse observed a 300 percent increase in demand, but normal shelf-stable orders were cancelled because there simply was not enough supply.

“At first, we could fulfill emergency box orders with what we had in stock and with the support of our volunteers, but very quickly we knew we would have to close in-house volunteer shifts to keep everyone safe. This caused us to develop Food Hub partners, where volunteers packed non-perishables for emergency requests off-site,” shared Dave.

In addition, the team turned to government programs like The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), that supplies no-cost USDA food product, and Nourish New York. Both programs provided perishable food items, like meat, dairy, and produce, leading the Warehouse team to shift how food was stored and distributed.

“Our 10,000 square foot refrigerator and freezer was simply not enough to handle the produce, meat, and dairy,” said Dave. “So, we rented a refrigeration trailer to help provide extra space.”

While the Food Bank’s goal is to encourage a selection of choice, social distancing guidelines lead the team to move away from Mobile Food Pantries and transition into distributing the perishable items quickly through Community Food Distributions.

“Our 90 Mobile Food Pantry locations allowed individuals to walk up and select the items they wanted. We also were able to offer it in more rural locations, because we serve between 80 – 175 households



Bonnie McCartney, Production Assistant, packs senior food boxes in the Warehouse Production room.

at a Mobile Food Pantry. However, with traditional walk up Mobile Food Pantries shutting down, we needed to scale our operation to serve more households, which lead us to serving 500 families at 10 Community Food Distribution locations across the service area,” explained Dave.

Initially, the Warehouse team felt the weight of the 300 percent increase, without expanding the number of staff, but as time continued on, it was vital to bring on an extra driver and warehouse support to help the team process upwards of 117,000 lbs. of food each day.

In September, the shelves that remained bare for months began to refill with pantry staples. At the same time, the team has learned much during this unprecedented period.

“I am very fortunate to be part of a great team who has rallied around each other to get through the tough periods, but this work has been done by more than just our team, including all my Food Bank colleagues, our agency and food hub partners, our volunteers, and our donors. Every person played a vital part to our success,” said Dave.

YOU'RE NOURISHING NEW YORK FAMILIES AND SUPPORTING FARMERS



Commissioner Ball attends a Food Bank Community Food Distribution in Windsor.

The Nourish New York Initiative is proven to be a lifeline for families and farmers across the state who have been struggling with changes brought on by COVID-19.

In May, Governor Cuomo instituted the program after many farmers were not able to sell their agriculture items due to the pandemic. Since

then, Nourish New York has provided \$25 million in funding to food banks, with \$1,054,000 provided to the Southern Tier, to purchase food items like produce, meat, eggs, and dairy products from New York State farmers and processors.

“The Nourish NY program was put into action incredibly quickly to address the basic needs of our families and our farmers. Almost immediately, the program made a significant impact on our communities, helping to bring food to those in need through the purchase of excess product that our farmers found themselves no longer able to sell,” said Richard Ball, Commissioner of Agriculture for the New York State.

The Food Bank of the Southern Tier has purchased 700,000 pounds of surplus food from New York farmers since the launch of Nourish New York. This includes 268,000 pounds of dairy products and 108,000 pounds of produce.

“Nourish New York has allowed us to incorporate more nutritious, fresh foods, into our weekly Community Food Distributions and our partners’, like pantries and meal sites, menu. Not only do our families appreciate these products, but we are pleased to be able to support our New York State farmers who have always been so generous to us in the past. This is truly a win-win program,” explained Natasha Thompson, Food Bank of the Southern Tier President and CEO.



From Left to Right: Mark Bordeau, Natasha Thompson, Senator Gillibrand, Senator O'Mara, and Monica Dykeman.

ADVOCATING FOR OUR KIDS

On Wednesday, September 2, the Food Bank truck bays transformed into a stage of advocacy as the Food Bank welcomed Senator Kirsten Gillibrand as she proposed the extension of Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) through the end of the school year. P-EBT is a federal program that provides nutritional resources to families in need, who have lost access to free or reduced-price school meals due to school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This solution is about making sure all kids who would normally get a free or a reduced-cost lunch have access to food during this pandemic. We want to have this in place through the whole school year, so that they can have nutritional food, even if they are not in school every day,” said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand.

In addition, Mark Bordeau, the Director of Food Service for Broome-Tioga BOCES; Monica Dykeman, School Foods Grant Coordinator at Tompkins Cortland Community College; New York State Senator Tom O'Mara; and Natasha Thompson, Food Bank President & CEO, spoke about the valuable role P-EBT has played for supporting children throughout the Southern Tier.



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