

the Harvester



Your Support Grows Healthier Communities

Every seed planted by Farmer Mike Harris is an investment — not just in his business, but in the community. The owner of Broome County's Lone Maple Farm says the hard work is worth it knowing his produce goes to feed hungry children.

Celebrating nearly 50 years, the farm is not new, but its relationship with Food Bank of the Southern Tier is. Food Sourcing Manager Caroline Tolbert, who developed the partnership through the Healthy Harvest Initiative, explains that the program's goals are to provide healthy food while supporting local agriculture.

Lone Maple Farm's techniques are cutting-edge. Vegetables are grown hydroponically. Instead of soil, roots sit in water with nutrients. This method is environmentally friendly, resists unpredictable weather, and produces lush, nutrient-dense results.

Farmer Mike describes his plants as happy. "We give them everything they need. They have the highest nutritional value possible. They don't have any deficiencies or stresses."

That joy carries to the Food Bank and neighbors. Caroline, who calls Farmer Mike's lettuce unbelievable, laughed when she opened the first box — she was shocked by the size of each head.

Once received, produce is ordered by community and agency partners. One special location is the Kids' Farmers Market, which enables children to "shop" for their families while increasing their interest in fruits and vegetables.

"Kids and parents enjoy it," Caroline explains. "It's amazing to connect kids to healthier eating."

The relationship began this summer with lettuce. Fall saw the addition of broccoli and cauliflower. Going forward, Lone Maple Farm may also supply tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and more.

Partner agencies can't get enough of the fresh produce. Farmer Mike's hydroponic growing method means there is no off-season,

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



If I learned one thing this year, it's that need drives innovation.

Ongoing pandemic impacts, supply chain disruptions, and inflation have affected both the Food Bank and those we serve, with 2022 marking increased need in the Southern Tier.

Solutions include software to communicate directly with clients, share information, anticipate needs, and decrease stigma. Logistical changes brought drive-through distributions that ease access for those with health concerns, limited mobility, or small children.

New mutually beneficial partnerships help us reach additional populations and source healthy food. This year also saw our first-ever collaboration with the nine other food banks in New York State, resulting in much-needed funding from the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program.

I am grateful for the ingenuity of our team, dedication of our partners, resilience of our neighbors, and commitment of our supporters. In these times, when we all feel economic pressure, your generosity means so much. Thank you for believing in our mission!

In partnership,

Natasha R. Thompson
President & CEO

The Joy of Giving

The 13th annual Virtual Turkey Drive is live through Thanksgiving Day, with a generous matching donation from Tioga Downs Casino Resort.

In 2021, YOU helped provide more than 5,000 turkeys with all the trimmings through the Food Bank's network of more than 160 hunger-relief member agencies, including food pantries.

This year, we expect that number to jump to as high as 7,000, which is why we really need your help.

GIVE NOW at **foodbankst.org** to bring the holidays home to a neighbor in need.



Your Support Grows Healthier Communities

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so produce can be enjoyed all year.

Eating healthy can be expensive, especially when choosing organically grown produce.

"It's always been our goal to provide nutrient-rich food," Caroline says. "We have a budget that's part of the Healthy Harvest Initiative to constantly have produce available and help our neighbors make healthier choices."

The partnership benefits everyone. Farmer Mike says, "Our farm is truly grateful for the

opportunity to provide the freshest, highest quality produce to such a great organization."

"Buy local, eat healthy" is one of Farmer Mike's mantras. "By providing this lettuce to that child or family, we are giving them food that's really good for them," he explains. "The fresher the food, the better it is for our bodies. The impact will hopefully bring awareness and access — and decrease health issues in our community."

Understanding and Eliminating Hunger in the Southern Tier

Economic expert, Professor Chris Barrett, holds multiple titles at Cornell University. The same is true at Food Bank of the Southern Tier.

For years, he and his wife Clara have been donors and volunteers. Now, with a group of colleagues and students, Chris is assuming another role: researcher.

After focusing on rural populations in Africa and Asia, Chris recently turned to domestic food security and assistance. A resident of Tompkins County, he naturally struck up a conversation with Food Bank of the Southern Tier.

How do new SNAP-authorized retailers or changes in benefits affect pantry use? How do mobile pantries impact the use of SNAP or WIC? By analyzing local data, the team will answer these and other important questions.

"The research community knows very little about the intersection of public and private food assistance," Chris says. His team hopes to "identify these dynamics in a way that enables us as a community to better serve our neighbors."

"Food insecurity is largely a problem of economic justice," Chris explains. "I've

spent 30 years researching this topic.

The common denominator is a precarious situation." Many are a car accident or emergency room visit away from struggling.

But there's hope. Chris says, "The situation is difficult but improving." He credits successful federal and state programming, technological advances, organizations like the Food Bank, and community support.

There are many ways to advance the mission to eliminate hunger. "Be alert and sympathetic," Chris recommends. "If you know someone who needs help, encourage them to seek it. Help them navigate paperwork. Give them a ride." This can increase access and decrease stigma.

When Chris tells fellow researchers about his partnership with the Food Bank, the response is always the same. "Those who know uniformly comment that it's a really innovative organization," he says. "The dollars you invest in the Food Bank have a high return for your community."



You Help Feed Families, Including This Large One

Pantry of Angels in Steuben County isn't an agency that serves clients — it's a family of neighbors, friends, volunteers, and supporters.

At the heart of that family is Crystal McCannon, the pantry Director. "Those who come aren't clients," she explains. "They're people our group has come to love."

The pandemic required a creative solution because closing simply wasn't an option. Through trial and error, the team developed a drive-through system allowing them to distribute safely. It worked so well, Crystal says, "it's here to stay."

Every Thursday, cars line up. Volunteers load produce, canned goods, bread, meat, and dessert provided by Food Bank of the Southern Tier and other partners.



Recipients come from all around. During this transition, the pantry also waived residency requirements. As Crystal puts it, "It doesn't matter where you're from. If you need food, I promise you won't go without."

Between expanded service and high grocery prices, the pantry's numbers doubled this year. It's a challenge to maintain personal connections while serving so many, but Crystal and the 62 volunteers make time.

“We don't just provide nutrition, we also feed them love. We care about them and let them know they matter. Family is not always blood related. These are my people and I love them all.”

— Crystal

It's no coincidence that Crystal excels at building relationships; she is driven by both family and her faith. After nearly losing her life and newborn daughter 18 years ago, she promised God she would do something kind for others every day.

Looking to the future, Crystal sees more innovation, including a website to host cooking videos showcasing each week's items, and to share profiles of the pantry family. "These people just blow my mind," Crystal says. "And the Food Bank helps make it possible. I am so thankful."

