Fall 2024

the Harvester

You Create Welcoming and Nourishing Spaces for All

You help ensure pantries and School Food Centers are a welcoming space for everyone. We believe this is vital especially for those experiencing hunger in our community.

Since 2016 the Food Bank of the Southern Tier has been implementing the Just Say Yes (JSY) Healthy Pantry Initiative, a program supported by the New York State Department of Health. The initiative provides support from the Food Bank staff along with resources that promote nourishing foods, like baskets and chalkboards, nutrition tips, and recipes. This has directly resulted in increased ordering of more fresh produce, legumes, and whole grains.

“This program has given us a unique opportunity to establish a strong partnership with our food pantries and School Food Centers.”

- Matt Griffin, Director of Health and Nutrition for the Food Bank of the Southern Tier

When Ithaca High School opened its School Food Center, the director of their site, Rachel McDonald, worked to integrate the Healthy Pantry Initiative. Rachel notes, *“The program really helped to make*

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the space inviting and made it easier to showcase the healthy choices."

Rich and Pam Russell from the Valley Food Pantry in Waverly have found the baskets provided by the program make it easier to display items, which has made a meaningful difference. *"It is just like being in the grocery store, and when clients see the items, we find they actually take them,"* notes Rich.

Sharing recipes, increasing willingness to try different foods, and providing a connection with community resources and outreach are some of the benefits you help offer through the Healthy Pantry Initiative. The Meal Kits and recipe ideas have been a huge hit. Rachel shares that teachers from their school community have really embraced the program and encouraged students and families to use the center. Teachers have even shared their own delicious recipes, based on the available products, like Mr. Shyne's Fish Taco recipe.

Rich and Pam Russell, Valley Food Pantry in Waverly, New York. The Valley Food Pantry has been in operation since 1978!

"Our students and families are gaining so much more than access to healthy foods, and the connections we have been able to make are making meaningful changes in lives," notes Rachel.

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Interested in Planned Giving?

What's planned giving?
It is a way of planning your finances to take care of loved ones and organizations that are important to you. It can include wills, trusts, and retirement accounts, but most times, it is done through a will, which is a tool to ensure your wishes are honored after you pass.

Isn't that just for wealthy people?
There are lots of options for planned giving — many people leave a gift in their will to causes they are passionate about, and this allows your values to live on. Gifts of all sizes have an impact on an organization.

We Are Stronger Together


Mary Pat Dolan and her late husband David.

"When I worked at the local Department of Social Services, our clients often applied for Food Stamps because they needed help feeding themselves and their families. While food assistance programs are crucially important, the provided funds often do not last the whole month. The only real choice was to refer clients to food pantries and other outlets for more food. I learned that the Food Bank is the reason that the whole system of pantries and meal sites had such a variety of nourishing food to offer. So, I started giving and gave what I could when I was able.

When I joined the Food Bank of the Southern Tier Board in 2003, I discovered a staff of truly committed individuals working very hard to make the Southern Tier a better place for all of us. And I wanted to help in any way I could.

That made it an incredibly easy decision to include them in my estate plans. My late husband, David, and I discussed our top giving priorities and then asked our attorney to make that work in our wills. The whole process was very easy! It gives me joy to know that the Food Bank, along with everyone who is important to me, will continue to have our support after I am gone.

Now, every time I enter the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, I know I will forever be a part of an organization that makes a real difference in people's lives. They give every person the respect and dignity they deserve, and to me, that is extremely important."

- Mary Pat Dolan

How is it done?
Making a will is as simple as a trip to your attorney, and updating your will could be as easy as making a phone call. You can structure a planned gift in many ways, for example, including the gift as a percentage of your estate.

For more information on planned giving and sample language you can share with your attorney, visit: **FoodBankST.org/orchardkeepers.**

ORCHARD
KEEPER'S SOCIETY

What's the Orchard Keeper's Society?
It is our way of showing our gratitude to all who have taken the step of remembering the Food Bank of the Southern Tier in their will.

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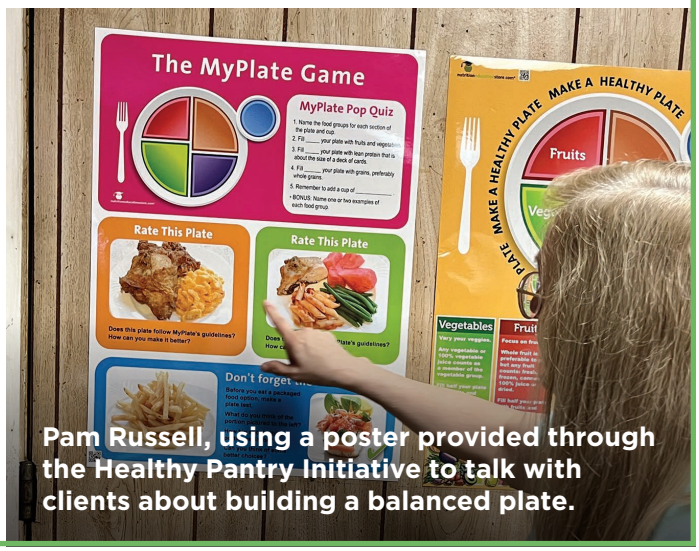
Sites use recipes provided by the Food Bank's Health & Nutrition team, and volunteers also research healthier recipes using the foods their pantry is offering. Pam shared two recent recipe ideas that clients are receiving; Stovetop Cinnamon Apples and Curried Lentils.

Rich can see how the recipes make a difference. When their pantries first started offering collard greens, people were hesitant to take them. "Yet once simple ways to prepare collard greens were shared, most everyone will take them now, and even ask for them," notes Rich.

The posters and signage to encourage nourishing foods have made a difference, too. The signage provides a tool for volunteers to work with clients and provide nutrition tips. "The Healthy Pantry Initiative got us thinking of healthier meal ideas we could share with clients. It is one of the best things we ever did, and our clients have gotten a lot of benefits out of the program," concludes Pam.

You make a difference. THANK YOU! Together, we can build and sustain a hunger-free Southern Tier.



Pam Russell, using a poster provided through the Healthy Pantry Initiative to talk with clients about building a balanced plate.

foodbank of the Southern Tier

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

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