

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE FOOD PANTRIES FOR THE CAPITAL DISTRICT



BREAD OF LIFE FOOD PANTRY

COALITION MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

In September of 2015, Judy Becker had a mission trip with the Schenectady Community Ministries (SiCM). She was so impressed with the ways in which they served their community that she returned to her church and pitched the idea of creating a food pantry there. Judy had noticed that one of the school districts in their area in Rotterdam had a high number of students in the backpack program. So in the beginning, Messiah Lutheran Church was only serving city schools. When the idea to increase their service area was introduced, Bread of Life Food Pantry was born.

There are six volunteers, plus Judy, that help with the pantry's daily operations. Two of those are her granddaughters, who have been working in the pantry since they were five and six years old.

Most recently, Bread of Life was awarded a grant from the prestigious Schenectady Foundation. This has allowed them to expand their once 100 sq. ft. pantry to a welcomed 1,000 sq. ft. Although it was a big move, the new location is located only a few blocks down the road. Judy recalls this being one of their greatest accomplishments so far.

"IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE PANDEMIC, WHEN SENIORS ACROSS NEW YORK STATE WERE ENCOURAGED TO STAY HOME, THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF MESSIAH STEPPED UP TO MAKE SURE OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED WOULD CONTINUE HAVING FOOD ON THEIR TABLES. AFTER THE INITIAL SHOCK AND CONFUSION OF THE PANDEMIC FADED, OUR ELDERS RETURNED AND SOON EXPANDED OUR BREAD OF LIFE FOOD PANTRY INTO UNUSED SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS TO MEET INCREASED NEED. OUR FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEERS CONTINUED TO SHOW UP IN A NEW WAY, WEEK AFTER WEEK, WORSHIPPING IN A MANNER THAT FED THEIR NEIGHBORS IN BODY, MIND, AND SOUL. THE PANTRY BECAME A PRIMARY PLACE TO CONNECT, SERVE, FIND SUPPORT, AND SUPPORT OTHERS IN TURN."

-REV. DUSTIN WRIGHT



Pastor Dustin Wright, Jill Becker, Karen Keenan, Judy Becker, Betsy Ryan (left to right)



Bread of Life Food Pantry's new location

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Bread of Life is always in need of canned meats, soups, sliced bread, and peanut butter. Laundry detergent and pet food have also been requested more often recently.

Usually open by appointment only, they also have two days open to the public each month. One Monday evening every month from 4:00pm-8:00pm, and one Saturday a month from 9:00am-1:00pm. However, if someone needs food assistance, they are never turned away.

The pantry was previously located inside Messiah Lutheran Church. It has now moved to Trinity Reform Church in Schenectady.

BREAD OF LIFE FOOD PANTRY
705 Curry Rd.
Schenectady, NY 12306
(518) 355-2311
MESSIAHSCHENECTADY.ORG

HUNGER HEROES + THE ALBANY PATROONS

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

OUR SINCEREST GRATITUDE TO EACH OF THE 2022 HUNGER HEROES TEAMS FOR ALL THEIR HARD WORK AND PARTICIPATION THIS YEAR, AS WELL AS THE ALBANY PATROONS BASKETBALL TEAM FOR LENDING A HAND DURING DROP OFF DAY.

The Hunger Heroes Food and Fund Drive is an annual competition that runs in conjunction with Capital Region CANstruction. The Hunger Heroes program invites teams of all shapes and sizes to collect food and funds to benefit The Food Pantries for the Capital District and is the official kickoff to Capital Region CANstruction, which will take place in the fall. This provides everyone with an opportunity to be a part of the significant impact of the regional event, and all food and funds collected contribute to the CANstruction totals later in the year.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2022 HUNGER HERO TEAMS:

ACEC New York
Bergmann/CED
C2 Design Group

The Essex Street Warriors
Girls Can Do!
JMT of New York

McLaren Engineering Group
Ryan Biggs Clark Davis
Simplify Medicare



2022 HUNGER HERO TOTALS:

7,107
LBS. OF FOOD

919
LBS. OF NON-FOOD ITEMS

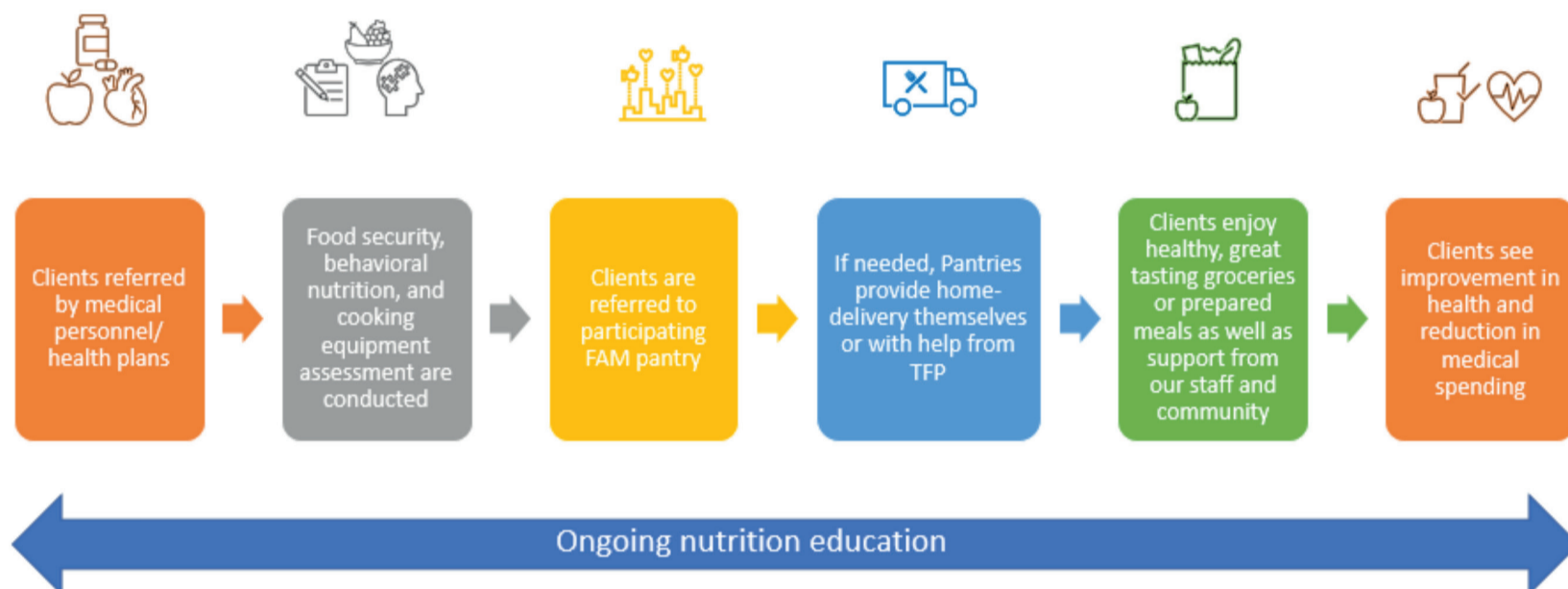
\$10,146
DOLLARS RAISED



And a special thank you to coach Will Brown and the Albany Patroons basketball team for helping unload, sort, and weigh donations during drop off day. They even held a benefit basketball game where they collected a total of three donation bins worth of shelf stable food, totaling 239 pounds!

FOOD AS MEDICINE

PROGRAM FEATURE



THERE ARE STRONG CORRELATIONS BETWEEN FOOD INSECURITY AND CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS. THESE INCLUDE, TYPE 2 DIABETES, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, HEART DISEASE, OBESITY, KIDNEY DISEASE, EYE DISEASE, AND NERVE DAMAGE.

Nutritious food is a major part of health care, and through The Food Pantries' Food as Medicine program led by Special Initiatives Manager, Alex Alam El Din-Meeks, we're able to empower people facing food insecurity to take charge of their own health. The Food as Medicine interventions advance health equity by transforming the healthcare system's role to increase access to, and the utilization of, the best available and affordable food in order to improve the overall health of communities. Through this program, dietary health is improved with the increased consumption of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, while the intake of sodium and sugar is reduced.

By working collaboratively, residents, health care institutions, county and community based organizations, and the private sector can build strong roots for food secure communities moving forward through increased access to healthy food and fresh produce. The program includes nutrient dense foods, perfectly portioned and balanced meals, nutrition education, integration with medical practices that address the structural determinants of poor health, and strong community engagement.

Here's how it works: individuals and families come to us with a referral from their doctor, similar to a prescription, and we connect them to medically tailored food packages that fit their health care needs.

IN 2021, 305 HOUSEHOLDS AND A TOTAL OF 5,817 PACKAGES WERE PROVIDED TO OUR COMMUNITY.

This would not be possible without the generosity of Barry Alan Gold Memorial Fund, CDPHP, The Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region, Hannaford Supermarkets, Healthy Alliance, The Hortense and Louis Rubin Community Fund, The Mother Cabrini Health Foundation, United Way for the Greater Capital Region, and many individual donors.

MEET THE TEAM

ALEX ALAM EL DIN-MEEKS | SPECIAL INITIATIVES MANAGER



"I REALLY DO THINK THAT FOOD IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT, AND THAT EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE GOOD, NUTRITIOUS FOOD."
-ALEX ALAM EL DIN-MEEKS

Originally from Putnum County, New York, Alex grew up in the restaurant business surrounded by food from a very young age. She spent a lot of time in the kitchen with her dad, and ever since then, she's had a positive association with food bringing people together.

Even so, Alex didn't develop a love for cooking and nutrition until college, where she studied dietetics and food science. Through three different internships during college, she developed a sensory analysis program for Shelburne Farm Creamery, worked on a goat farm run by refugees, and worked on a plate-waste study when the new school meal guidance came out for elementary schools. It was then where her love for community and nutrition developed. She decided to continue her education and received a master's in public health, with the idea of continuing to serve her community. She began focusing more on food security, food access, and farming structures.

While working at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Albany County (CCE SNAP ED Program), she was introduced to The Food Pantries for the Capital District through her participation in the coalition member meetings on nutrition education. Once the Food as Medicine program launched, she applied for the Special Initiatives Manager position and was welcomed to the team. Her primary focus is the Food as Medicine program, although she's also involved in the Healthy Pantry Initiative as well as the Healthy Corner. The Healthy Pantry Initiative helps establish what a healthy pantry means, sets goals to accomplish that meaning, and lends support along the way.

"IT'S REALLY A WAY FOR US TO GET AN IDEA OF WHAT OUR MEMBER PANTRIES ARE DOING TO BE HEALTHY, HELP SET A STANDARD OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HEALTHY, AND HELP THEM GET THERE."

Healthy Corner is a monthly presentation to the coalition on different topics regarding health. Alex now has ten years of experience in food security.

In her free time, she enjoys all things outdoors; snowboarding, hiking, backpacking, and camping, just to name a few!

THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO MADE A GIFT TO THE FOOD PANTRIES IN HONOR OR IN MEMORY OF A LOVED ONE

FEBRUARY 19, 2022 - APRIL 11, 2022

GIFTS MADE IN HONOR OF...

Father Ed Golding
Tracey Slupski

Jan Silverman Pollow
Debra Soley

Shaun
The Leibo Brothers Family

Lee Sweeney
Christopher & Diana Rulon

GIFTS MADE IN MEMORY OF...

Jon Goodman
Danielle Eddy
Barbara A. Mitchell

Rita Rule
Tracey Slupski

Pauline B. Walton
Valerie Walton

DID YOU KNOW?

Nearly the entire operating budget of The Food Pantries for the Capital District is paid for by contributions from our generous donors. We love our volunteers. In many areas, they give so much of their time and energy. And we love our donors too! Without your generosity The Food Pantries simply couldn't exist.

Help a neighbor:

- Make a one-time gift online at thefoodpantries.org
- Mail your check to: The Food Pantries, 32 Essex Street, Albany, NY 12206
- Call us at (518) 458-1167

You can often double or triple your gift if your employer has a Matching Gift program. We can help you find out if they do!

If you would like to speak to our staff about a multi-year gift intention, please contact Peter Koniuto at (518) 458-1167 ext 103, or peterk@thefoodpantries.org.

Have you considered including The Food Pantries in your estate plans? We'd love to hear about it! There are many ways of making a Legacy Gift to support this important work. Contact Peter Koniuto to learn more.

UPCOMING EVENTS

COFFEE + COMMUNITEA

Tuesday, May 31st
7:30am-9:00am
The Century House
997 Loudon Rd.
Latham, NY 12110

All volunteers of The Food Pantries for the Capital District are welcome to attend with RSVP.

Please RSVP to Angie Weber at aweber@thefoodpantries.org.

NEW YORK STATE FOOD AS MEDICINE PLANNING KICKOFF - VIRTUAL EVENT

Thursday, June 30th
1:30pm-3:00pm

Everyone is welcome to attend with registration. Register for the event [here](#).

For questions, contact Alex Alam El Din-Meeks at alex@thefoodpantries.org.

POTLUCK PICNIC

Wednesday, June 29th
12:00pm-2:00pm
Henry Hudson Park
169 Lyons Rd.
Selkirk, NY 12158

This event is for coalition members only.

Please RSVP to Libby Miller at libby@thefoodpantries.org.

THE FOOD PANTRIES ARE IN THE NEWS

THE BOW KNOWS WHO IS CHANGING THE WORLD PODCAST

"Feeding the Hungry: Who is Helping?"

Watch the interview [here](#).