

COMMUNITY ACTION

Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency: New Anti-Hunger Collaboration Initiative focuses regional efforts

JULY 26, 2015 6:15 AM • [CHRISTINA EHLERS | SPECIAL TO THE CITIZEN](#)



From its earliest days, the Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency has focused on hunger relief by providing food to those in need, initially through distribution of government surplus commodities, and today through its food pantries and assisted enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Most recently, CCSAA has launched a new collaborative effort to build the local capacity to fight hunger.

There is no magic bullet to alleviate poverty, but there is a network of supports in place within our community to respond to the immediate need for healthy food. These include food pantries, soup kitchens, community gardens, Meals on Wheels, congregate meal sites, nutrition educators, summer feeding programs, backpack programs and public assistance. The overarching goal of the new

Anti-Hunger Collaboration Initiative is to strengthen this network's capacity to respond to the growing need for hunger relief locally.

The Anti-Hunger Collaboration Initiative will implement strategies to reduce hunger and increase organizational capacity within eight partner agencies to operate volunteer-based hunger relief programs throughout the rural areas of Cayuga and Seneca counties. Our partners include Cayuga County Office for the Aging, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cayuga County, Harmony Food Pantry, King Ferry Food Pantry, Ovid Ecumenical Food Pantry, Seneca Falls Backpack Program, St. Alphonsus Food Pantry and SS. Peter & John Soup Kitchen.

Each partner agency has identified individual capacity barriers to be addressed through the Anti-Hunger Collaboration Initiative. We are supporting participating agencies by helping to develop volunteer handbooks, providing volunteer management training, supporting recruitment and retention of volunteers, providing nutrition education for clients and helping to create new volunteer opportunities through fundraising and service activities.

Through the Anti-Hunger Collaboration Initiative, CSCAA is developing a volunteer-based mobile food delivery service to reach isolated rural residents. This will provide homebound residents who are unable to access local food pantries with healthy nutritious food to help alleviate hunger. Volunteers, donations and recovered food will support this program to make it a community-driven program.

The agency has had great support from individuals and community organizations throughout Cayuga and Seneca counties for food drives and events to bring awareness to hunger issues. We will continue to plan events to increase food and monetary donations in order to respond to increasing area needs. This August, we are planning a back-to-school food drive and promoting healthy lunch items and snacks. In September, we will concentrate on service in remembrance of Sept. 11 and the dedicated people who gave their lives for our freedoms.

CSCAA's food pantries in Auburn and Waterloo partner with their respective regional food banks, including the Food Bank of Central New York in Syracuse and Foodlink in Rochester, to receive USDA food and to purchase bulk food at a discounted price. These food banks enable local food pantries to distribute large quantities of food in order to meet community needs. Your monetary donations to our food pantries are used to purchase food at a lesser price per pound from the food banks, ensuring that your dollar goes further in helping those in need.

Volunteers are needed to support CSCAA's hunger relief efforts as well as those of our partner agencies; we are seeking individuals who are able to work as part of a team, follow directions, maintain confidentiality, relate to all socioeconomic segments of the community, work with both professional and nonprofessional individuals, and treat everyone with respect, compassion and concern.