

And the award goes to...

We were honored to present two awards at our spring event, *The Get Together*, on March 21.

The Thomas C. Ferraro Legacy Award recognizes an individual with visionary leadership, an entrepreneurial spirit, and a deep commitment to Foodlink's mission. Congratulations to **Sister Beth LeValley!**

The Rosa Wims Community Partner Award recognizes an organization that partners with Foodlink to provide exemplary service to our community. Congratulations to the **YWCA of Rochester & Monroe County!**



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NEWS

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Although **Foodlink has been around more than 45 years**, we are constantly in a state of **learning and growing**. One of our strongest attributes — and core values — **is our willingness to adapt and try new things to alleviate poverty and food insecurity**

in our region.

This past holiday season, a local advocacy group brought to light new data about the many hardships that families face in our region. As **we all grapple with life on the “other side” of the pandemic**, I can’t help but think of one of the most common phrases heard among anti-hunger advocates around the country: **“Hunger is a political choice.”**

It should not be an inevitability that more than **120,000 people in our region do not regularly have enough food**. But, here we are. In the last two years, several programs designed to lift people out of poverty during the height

of the pandemic have expired, and unsurprisingly, food insecurity has risen. The data provided by the Children’s Agenda — and our data that shows a **steady rise in visits to food pantries** — supports this.

This was not by happenstance. It was a political choice. So, our **work continues, and is more critical than ever**.

In this issue, you will **learn more about where we have been, and what lies ahead with our advocacy efforts** to ensure those food insecurity statistics reverse course. We also spotlight some **major changes ahead at the Foodlink Community Farm**, and two recent honorees at our spring fundraiser, The Get Together.

I hope you enjoy learning more about us — just as much as we enjoy learning and growing to better serve our neighbors.

Julia Tedesco
President & CEO

REGIONAL STATISTICS

Food insecurity on the rise

In our 10-county region, we have seen a rise in food pantry visits to our network. We examined data from the past three years, and noticed about a 16% increase.

Families with income under \$100,000*

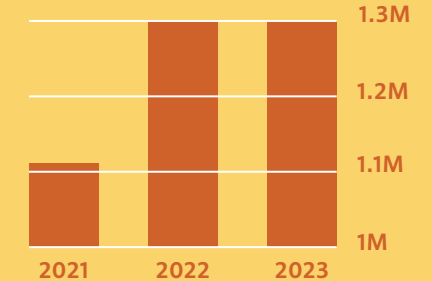
61%
ration food until
their next paycheck

66%
struggle to afford their
rent or mortgage

64%
work instead of going
to child’s activities

56%
can’t afford
mental health care

**16%
RISE**
from 2021
to 2023



*According to the Children’s Agenda parent poll for Monroe County (December, 2023)

The future of the farm

The Foodlink Community Farm on Lexington Avenue is the largest urban farm in Rochester. It sits on 1.3 acres (soon to be more!) of land near the old Rochester subway bed in the Edgerton neighborhood. For more than a decade, we have invested in this formerly vacant lot to create a vibrant growing space that helps families in Northwest Rochester access healthier food.

The farm consists of a few distinct sections:

- 1) A community garden** for 70+ local families — mainly New Americans from Africa or Southeast Asia who have settled in Rochester. These gardeners take considerable pride in our space and are the driving force behind why it looks as beautiful as it does in the summer and fall.
- 2) A commercial growing operation** for several of Foodlink's programs, including our Community Cafe, the Curbside Market, and the Foodlink Community Kitchen.

Throughout the growing season, you may see fresh herbs from our garden incorporated into student meals or a cafe lunch special — or fresh fruit or honey for sale on the Curbside Market.

- 3) A park and play space for children**, which ensures that this space can accommodate multi-generational households, and anyone interested in urban agriculture.

In the years ahead, we will invest more than \$1 million into this space. Our plan is to continue to expand the farm's footprint and increase access to fresh foods — while also creating unique workforce development and educational opportunities for Rochesterians who have a similar passion for urban agriculture. We will build a new Edible Education Center that can be the focal point of much of our community-based programming, as well as a state-of-the-art greenhouse that can extend the growing season and provide entrepreneurial opportunities.

Foodlink's Community Farm has an opportunity to be a catalyst for significant change in Rochester's Northwest quadrant. The investments that we plan to make to our farm campus will make this a place that is widely used by our neighbors, the New American community, and school groups throughout the city. There will be no other place in our community that can better demonstrate how to reimagine vacant properties and turn them into opportunities for everyone through educational workshops, job training programs, entrepreneurialism, recreation, and more! 🧡



SPEAKING OUT

Advocacy in action

Foodlink's growing advocacy committee had the opportunity to flex its muscle in Albany earlier this year. When **Gov. Kathy Hochul unveiled her 2025 Executive Budget proposal, it presented significant cuts to crucial programs that help fund New York's emergency food network.** Knowing how damaging this would be to Foodlink and our network of food pantry and meal program partners, we sent multiple staff members to Albany in February to advocate for more support.

Benefits Navigation Coordinator, Whitley Hasty, joined other advocates and lawmakers at the New York State Capitol on Feb. 14. **Learn more about how you can be an advocate by visiting FoodlinkNY.org/advocacy** 🍴



TELEVISION SPECIAL

Nourishing Lives

Foodlink once again partnered with WROC-TV Channel 8 to produce its “Nourishing Lives” **fundraising special in January.** The program garnered public support for many Foodlink programs and services, and spotlighted the Foodlink Community Farm, the Foodlink Career Fellowship program and more. **Scan the QR code to view our videos.** 🍴

