



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Helping the Hungry in Our Communities

PATTY RITCHIE August 11, 2015

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Have you ever had to wonder where your next meal will come from? For more and more Americans, hunger is becoming a reality. Today, it's estimated that one in 6 Americans relies on emergency food assistance, including thousands of people in Central and Northern New York. And, it's not just the impoverished. More and more frequently, working families are finding themselves having to look for assistance when it comes to putting food on the table.

Luckily, there are ways for those who have the means to lend a helping hand to those in our region who are facing tough times. Here are some of the best ways you can assist:

Donate to a local food pantry: Whether it's at a church, school, store or other location, throughout our region there are frequently opportunities to donate food and make a difference. Additionally, you can organize your own food drive by contacting the Food Bank of Central New York, which serves both the Central and Northern New York regions. For more information, visit their website at www.foodbankcny.org or call (315) 437-1899.

Do double duty: Did you know that last year, New York State farmers donated 10 million pounds of their products to food banks across the state? You can support our state's hardworking farmers—and the work they do to help feed the hungry—by buying their goods and donating them to a local food pantry.

Support a local "backpack program": Across our country, nearly 16 million children are facing hunger. To help combat child hunger, many local school districts have established "backpack programs," where backpacks are filled with nonperishable food items for students to take home for the weekend. Most of these programs rely on help from volunteers and those willing to donate goods. To help a backpack program in your region, contact your local school district for more information.

Volunteer your time: Don't have the means to donate food? One of the biggest ways you can help combat hunger is by donating your time. Food pantries across our region rely on volunteers to help keep their doors open. To help, contact your local food pantry and ask about volunteer opportunities.

When people don't have access to nutritious food, it can have far reaching effects—everything from social and emotional issues to loss of life. If you're able to, I encourage you to lend a helping hand and join the fight against hunger in our communities.