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Greenport Hospital Combats Food Insecurity With New Partnership

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Robert Galinski (Director of Nutrition SBELIH), Linda Sweeney (VP of Foundation/External Affairs SBELIH), Anne Howard (Co-Director of Food Rescue North Fork), Stephanie McEvily (Co-Director of Food Rescue North Fork), and Holly Cato (Food Rescuer). (Nicole B. Brewer photo.)

Greenport's Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital is getting innovative in its fight against food insecurity through a partnership with Food Rescue US North Fork.

SBELIH will now donate their freshly prepared, unused food such as sandwiches, salads, parfaits and baked goods each week to food pantries across the North Fork to combat hunger and food waste in the area.

“Healthy food is hard to sell,” said SBELIH Director of Nutrition Robert Galinski. “The whole system with Food Rescue US North Fork is seamless. Our staff is passionate about their involvement and look forward each Wednesday afternoon to seeing the rescuers, packing up prepared leftover meals, and passing them along to those in need. That makes me feel good.”

Southold's Center for Advocacy, Support and Transformation's food pantry will be one of the facilities to receive the meals, according to Karina Hayes, manager of CAST's food relief program.

Ms. Hayes said CAST currently serves 1,429 families and 3,565 individuals. Through the month of February this year, the non-profit has already served 70,480 meals.

"Our programs just continue to grow. The amount of need in our community is substantial and that has not decreased at all, actually, it's increased," she said. "We definitely are in need and we definitely appreciate organizations like Food Rescue US, North Fork division that are able to bring some of these meals to us."

Food Rescue US was formed in Fairfield County, Conn in 2011 to help fight food insecurity. The organization has provided more than 100 million meals and kept more than 126 million pounds of excess food out of landfills according to the group's website. The non-profit operates as a web-based app, available at app.foodrescue.us.

On the local level, volunteers collaborate with various establishments such as restaurants, grocery stores, and institutions such as SBELIH to salvage edible food that would otherwise be discarded. The rescued food is then distributed to nearby social service agencies, effectively addressing immediate needs while also curbing food waste.

Linda Sweeney, a vice president at SBELIH who manages the hospital's foundation, met with Food Rescue US North Fork's co-directors, Anne Howard and Stephanie McEvily, in January to arrange the partnership, according to a press release from the hospital.

"I thought 'why not get the hospital to donate the excess prepared foods from lunch that would ordinarily be discarded?'" Ms. Sweeney said. "It took no time at all to get started. Through this and other programs, I'm happy that the hospital can give back to our community in so many ways."