



Addressing Hunger Beyond Food Pantries & Soup Kitchens

Article written by Julisa J. Stone-Szpaicher | Thursday, October 9, 2025

The working world was designed for one parent in the workforce while the other parent maintained the household. The days when this work / home structure was effective have long passed—many families, if not most, today see both parents working or are single parent households. According to USAFacts (2023) study, more than 70% of women and 92% of men with children under 18 are a part of the workforce.



BTW Youth, 2024

With school days ending around 3:00pm while the typical workday ends two hours later, the need for safe, reliable childcare is critical—and so is dinner.

Booker T. Washington Community Center's (BTW) Before & After School Child Care is one of six childcare programs your United Way dollars support. BTW's After School program is available at their center as well as in all Auburn Enlarged City School District academic buildings. The program begins at the end of the school day and runs until 6:00pm each full school day.

After a long day of learning, youth are tired and hungry—thanks to your United Way gifts, kids can enjoy a healthy snack before participating in a variety of structured, educational activities. The youngest students enjoy doing crafts and gym time while older students can take advantage of tutors and participate in STEM activities.

According to an article published in the Journal of Food Distribution (Larson, 2002), the average American dinner time is 6:22pm. Which leaves working families with the looming question... When is dinner? By the time parents and guardians pick up their kids, typically between 5:30pm – 6:00pm, by the time they get home it is already past that average dinner time leaving parents to worry about preparing meals quickly or getting dinner out.



VIDEO

At BTW, part of their mission is to empower their children and community members to thrive through health programs—healthy bodies are nourished bodies. A unique and key element of BTW’s After School program is that they provide nutritious, hot meals for each student in their program. Meaning that parents and guardians are picking up their kids with full bellies which takes the stress out of mealtimes so families can focus on being together.

The benefits of parents and guardians with youth enrolled in BTW’s After School program are immeasurable. They know that their kids are in a reliable and safe space, completing their homework with access to tutoring services if needed, and being fed, which also alleviates some of the financial stress at the grocery store.

When most people think about solutions for food insecurity, they are imagining food pantries and soup kitchens. When you look at the United Way list of Member Agencies and programs, BTW is listed as Youth Opportunity and is often not thought of when it comes to addressing hunger in our community. There are many other ways that your United Way dollars are nourishing neighbors beyond those traditional solutions.

New this year to the United Way program list is Healthy Families through long-time Member Agency, Cayuga Counseling. This program is designed to strengthen communication skills among families. By improving communication, you are also increasing family bonding time and refining problem-solving skills which leads to decreased family conflicts through conversation. One of the key elements of the Healthy Families program is to teach these skills over a family meal.



Chef Nick & Youth, 2024

During the summer, youth enrolled in the City of Auburn Summer Recreation program participated in cooking classes provided by Finger Lakes Incubator & Commercial Kitchen (FLICK). They use their United Way dollars to purchase groceries, cutting boards, and safety knives to teach youth safe cutting skills and how to prepare a nutritious snack. Plus, kids get ingredients to prepare the snack at home for their families. Culinary exploration is important to Chef Nick and the FLICK team, so they incorporate a lot of cultural and ethnic snacks as part of the curriculum.

While they do not provide a full meal, other childcare programs supported by the United Way do provide snacks; such as the Auburn YMCA-WEIU’s School Age Childcare in our rural school districts of Weedsport, Cato-Meridian, Port Byron, and Moravia. While a program supported by United Way dollars, the E. John Gavras Center’s Essential Childcare provides healthy snacks thanks to a grant through the Auburn Enlarged City School District.

Your gift today will ensure that bellies are full so that Cayuga County youth are ready to learn, grow, and thrive.



DONATE TODAY



Larson, R. B. (2002). When is dinner? Journal of Food Distribution, 33.

USAFacts. (2023, December 29). How many mothers are in the US labor force? <https://usafacts.org/articles/how-many-mothers-are-in-the-labor-force/>