



Supporting Food Programs Beyond the Crisis

How Your United Way Gifts Sustain Food Programs Year-Round

Article written by Julisa J. Stone-Szpaicher | Tuesday, November 11, 2025

If you had to choose, would you purchase food for your family or pay the rent? For 42% of Cayuga County families, this is a decision that they face regularly throughout the year. Twenty-nine percent of your neighbors live above the poverty threshold, yet they struggle to survive and often work multiple jobs to make ends meet. These families are called ALICE, which stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. ALICE families are the majority of those turning to food pantries and soup kitchens to keep food on their tables.

Since the start of the year, federal funding cuts have drastically impacted agencies that support emergency relief, education, health, human service, and feeding programs. These previous cuts paired with the current crisis around the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has increased the number of neighbors who are turning to food pantries and soup kitchens. Recently, CAP Seneca / Cayuga (2025) shared in a Facebook post that in just two days last week, their food pantry served 240 individuals between 90 families—a 411% increase compared to a set of two days in October. The sentiment is felt by food pantries and soup kitchens across Cayuga County, New York, and our nation.

This is where YOUR United Way donation steps in.

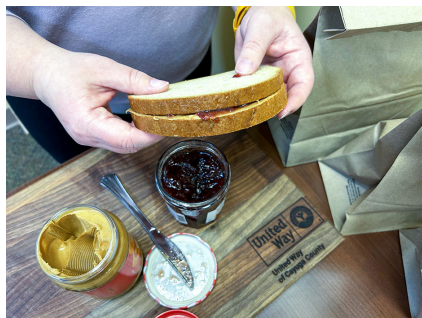
From the dollars received last year, your United Way of Cayuga County is supporting three Member Agencies who ensure bellies are full across our community. The best part about your United Way gift is that it will support agencies for an entire year—guaranteeing a revenue stream to sustain their programs beyond the current crisis.



SS Peter & John Episcopal Soup Kitchen, 2025

New to the United Way family is SS Peter & John Episcopal Soup Kitchen in downtown Auburn. Annually, volunteers at the Soup Kitchen serve more than 36,000 meals. To run a successful soup kitchen, you need electricity to turn on the lights, to ignite the burners on the stove, and to power kitchen equipment such as electric mixers, microwave, and a fryer. Your United Way gift keeps the electricity on and feeds nearly 700 neighbors every week.

Harriet Tubman Liberation Foundation's Safe & Warm program is also new to the United Way family. Every Friday, volunteers prepare sandwiches in the morning to distribute to your neighbors from their Drop-in Center at Westminster Presbyterian



Church from 3pm – 5pm and is available to any Cayuga County resident. With the recent federal cuts for programming, the Drop-In Center is seeing a lot of new faces—individuals and families. When talking about food insecurity beyond the city limits, Program Coordinator Ashley Teucke shared “the largest location of people is in the Auburn hotels. It is where the County puts them. Homeless in Port Byron, Weedsport, Southern Cayuga, they’re having a difficult time because there is not a lot of resources out those ways.” If community members from rural communities can make it to the Center, their volunteers are ready to support them.

Your donations have been supporting feeding programs through The Salvation Army since 1922. While their Food Pantry is restricted to a specific zone in Auburn, their other programs are open to all of Cayuga County. Each week, their team hosts a Food Giveaway from their downtown location in Auburn that includes bread and other goods. Each month, they host a Fresh Food Giveaway with produce and dairy products. Once the giveaway ends in Auburn, they pack remaining fresh items and host a second distribution at New Hope Bible Fellowship in Niles for County South neighbors. Twice a week, volunteers host a soup kitchen for anyone needing a hot meal. Your gifts support the costs of pantry and soup kitchen items as well as the coordination of all these programs year-round.



VIDEO

Your United Way gift provides a guaranteed Monthly Income for Member Agencies to serve your neighbors beyond this crisis and year-round.

The US Office of Management and Budget (2025) announced on January 27th a “temporary pause” for their Emergency Food & Shelter Program (EFSP)—meaning that \$25,500 for food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters has not been released to support Cayuga County residents. The loss of EFSP funding and the current SNAP crisis has put many of your neighbors and food pantries in tight financial situations. Did you know that your United Way gift supports the Community Building Mini-Grant program, providing a one-time grant of up to \$1,000 to support any 501©3 serving your Cayuga County neighbors?

Since November 1st, your United Way Community Building Mini-Grant Committee has approved two \$1,000 grants addressing the current food crisis. Calvary Food Pantry in Auburn is purchasing food to fill baskets for families. Serving families in the Southern Cayuga School District, King Ferry Food Pantry will be utilizing their funding for their backpack food program for your rural neighbors.

Your gift today will ensure food on tables across Cayuga County all year long.

Yes, food pantries and soup kitchens need your help today and we hope that you can donate food and other resources. As you’re making your contributions—don’t forget that this crisis is temporary. These agencies need support year-round and your United Way dollars ensure their programs are sustainable beyond today.



DONATE TODAY



**SS Peter & John
Episcopal Soup
Kitchen**



• CAP Cayuga/Seneca. In just a few days, our Food Pantry has served more than 90 families – providing nutritious food to nearly 240 individuals. [Status update with 7 photos]. Facebook. (2025, November 6). <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14LXWZxbwNn/>
• Office of Management & Budget (OMB) Memorandum and Executive Orders (Jan/Feb 2025). EFSP website. (2025, January 27). <https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/websiteContents/index.cfm?template=latestNews.cfm>
• Teucke, Ashley. Personal Communication. (2025, November 10).