



Food Bank of WNY

Serving Cattaraugus, Chautauqua,
Erie and Niagara Counties

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Check Out Hunger helps provide more than 4.4 million meals for hungry families; latest Food Bank of WNY statistics reveal growing need

BUFFALO (March 9, 2016) — Western New York shoppers helped provide more than 4.4 million meals during the Food Bank of WNY's annual Check Out Hunger campaign. Customers of seven local retailers donated a total of \$741,721 to benefit their neighbors in need.

Dash's Market, Market in the Square, Tops Friendly Markets and Wegmans Food Markets ran their Check Out Hunger campaigns during the month of February, while Premier Gourmet, Premier Wine & Spirits and Price Rite completed their campaigns in November and December. Lexington Cooperative Market will hold its Check Out Hunger campaign in spring.

"Helping to eradicate hunger is a core part of our community mission at Tops," said Frank Curci, Tops Markets chairman and CEO. "Working closely with the Food Bank of Western New York allows us to move one step closer to our goal to ensure that no one goes hungry in our communities."

Check Out Hunger is the Food Bank's largest annual fundraiser and is essential to the organization as it continues its mission of procuring and distributing nutritious food and resources to the hungry in Western New York through its 329 member agencies.

"As we celebrate 100 years as a family owned company, we're especially proud of the many community partnerships we've built over the years. Feeding the Hungry is a priority for Wegmans, and the Food Bank is critical to filling that need for our neighbors here in Western New York," said Michele Mehaffy, Buffalo Consumer Affairs Manager, Wegmans Food Markets.

The donations from Check Out Hunger come at a pivotal time for the Food Bank, as the organization's latest year-end statistics show an increase in need across Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara counties. The number of individuals who rely on the Food Bank monthly has grown to 129,322 – an 11% increase since last year. The number of families assisted monthly has increased 8% to 44,445 and the number of children served has increased 3% to 45,103.

The number of senior citizens relying on the Food Bank monthly has grown at a distressing rate. Nearly 17,000 seniors are currently being assisted, which reflects a 29% increase since last year. The Food Bank attributes these increases to rising food prices, cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps), the growing senior population, and the Food Bank's continued commitment to better reach food-insecure populations throughout its four-county service area.

"As the need in Western New York continues to grow, we are especially grateful to our dedicated retail partners, their tireless employees, and their generous customers for coming together to help us feed our hungry neighbors through Check Out Hunger. We especially recognize the efforts of the cashiers, whose commitment to the campaign was one of the biggest reasons for its success," said Marylou Borowiak, President & CEO of the Food Bank of WNY. "It is the tremendous support of the Western New York community that allows us to continue to fight hunger one day at a time."

(The Food Bank of WNY is the primary hunger relief organization in Western New York, obtaining and distributing food to 329 member agencies including food pantries, shelters, soup kitchens, after school programs and senior citizen centers in Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara counties. Through these agencies, the Food Bank of WNY serves 129,322 individuals, including 44,445 families, 45,103 children and infants, and 16,972 senior citizens. For more information, visit www.foodbankwny.org.)