



Food Bank, Meals on Wheels combining organizations to feed more Western New Yorkers in need

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BUFFALO, N.Y. (February 28, 2019) – The Food Bank of Western New York, Meals on Wheels for Western New York and the Meals on Wheels Foundation of Western New York announced today that they are forming a joint organization in order to tackle the root causes of hunger while better reaching underserved populations and more efficiently meeting the needs of the community. The new organization, known as FeedMore WNY, will expand on Meals on Wheels' and the Food Bank's current programming with plans to add new services, including child summer and afterschool feeding programs, food pantries for mobile seniors and workforce development training through the establishment of a community kitchen.

Effective immediately, Meals on Wheels and the Food Bank are operating as FeedMore WNY under a joint services agreement with a unified CEO, leadership team and staff. A single board of directors will oversee the FeedMore WNY agency and FeedMore WNY Foundation. Former Food Bank President and CEO Tara A. Ellis has been named president and CEO of FeedMore WNY. Christine Procknal, former president and CEO of Meals on Wheels, will serve as alliance project director and oversee the transition. The New York State Attorney General will need to formally approve the merger, a process which can take up to a year.

FeedMore WNY will employ more than 110 employees. No jobs were eliminated as a result of the two organizations combining operations.

"Both Meals on Wheels and the Food Bank have a longstanding tradition of working together to feed our community," Tara A. Ellis, president & CEO of FeedMore WNY, said. "After decades of collaboration, coming together was not only a natural evolution, but the best answer to how we could make an even greater impact and touch even more lives."

FeedMore WNY expects to distribute at least 10 percent more food to Western New Yorkers in need in its first three to five years as a unified organization. It will accomplish this through the creation of more feeding programs targeted to better reach underserved children and seniors. The organization also plans to launch culinary and warehouse training opportunities to provide hard and soft skills to individuals with high barriers to employment.

"The Food Bank and Meals on Wheels are among the most highly respected nonprofits in our community," Jerry Sheldon, FeedMore WNY board chair, said. Sheldon previously served as chair for the Food Bank of WNY Board of Directors. "Despite their individual successes, our community still has many unmet needs. Our goal is to utilize the strength of this new alliance to attack the root causes of hunger, serve new clients and help fill unmet needs. The synergy of the two nonprofits' missions will serve our community more efficiently and allow for the development of programs, as well as a community kitchen that neither nonprofit could do on its own."

According to Richard A. Grimm, III, FeedMore WNY Executive Committee member and former Meals on Wheels for WNY board chair, "Meals on Wheels is thrilled about the opportunity to partner with the Food Bank. This merger will strengthen both organizations, but more importantly the Western New York community. In particular, the people that we serve will benefit the most."

Both organizations have dedicated teams, including staff and volunteers, who are committed to supporting the mission of helping those in need throughout the community. "We are both well-known and respected in the communities we serve and we are each financially sound," Christine Procknal, former president and CEO of Meals on Wheels, said. Procknal will serve as alliance project director overseeing the transition. "This is the perfect time for us to form an alliance. Together we will develop new and innovative ways to serve our communities and alleviate hunger. Together we will feed more."

"The role of any charitable organization should be to maximize its service to the community which it serves," David A. Smith, FeedMore WNY Executive Committee member and former Meals on Wheels of WNY Foundation chair, said.

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“Nowhere is this more true than in providing food and sustenance to those unable to provide for themselves. Unfortunately, Western New York still has too many residents from children to seniors to family units in need of this basic life-sustaining requirement. It is out of this recognized, unmet need that our two organizations are coming together to more effectively provide an integrated, holistic approach to feeding those in need.”

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About FeedMore WNY

FeedMore WNY offers dignity, hope and a brighter future by providing nutritious food, friendship and skills training to its Western New York neighbors in need. Through its Food Bank Distribution Center and partner hunger-relief agencies, as well as its Meals on Wheels and other targeted feeding programs, FeedMore WNY alleviates hunger and assists community members of all ages throughout Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara counties.

*****Tara Ellis, Christine Procknal, Jerry Sheldon, David Smith and Richard Grimm (via phone) will be available for media interviews on Thursday, February 28, from 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. at the Food Bank, located at 91 Holt St., Buffalo, NY 14206. Please call the Media Contacts listed below to schedule an available time.**

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