The essential work done by FeedMore WNY is made possible by generous financial support from community members, local foundations and corporations, as well as through grants from the New York State Office for the Aging and Erie County’s Departments of Senior Services and Social Services.

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Meals on Wheels, Food Bank combining organizations to serve more of WNY

The Food Bank of Western New York, Meals on Wheels for Western New York and the Meals on Wheels Foundation of Western New York have formed 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, is serving as alliance project director and will help 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.

“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,” Tara A. Ellis, president & CEO of FeedMore WNY, said. FeedMore WNY expects to distribute at least 10 percent more food to Western New Yorkers in need in its first several 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.

“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,” Jerry Sheldon, FeedMore WNY board chair, said. Sheldon previously served as chair for the Food Bank of WNY Board of Directors. “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, “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 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,” Chris 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 feed more.”

“The role of any charitable organization should be to maximize its service to the community,” David A. Smith, FeedMore WNY Executive Committee member and former Meals on Wheels of WNY Foundation chair, said. “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.”
A message from the President & CEO

Welcome to FeedMore WNY! Our Board of Directors, Community Ambassador Council and staff are truly excited for this opportunity to better serve our vulnerable neighbors of all ages and tackle unmet needs in our community. Our team is already working hard to fulfill our mission of offering dignity, hope and a brighter future by providing nutritious food, friendship and skills training to its Western New York neighbors in need.

As FeedMore WNY, we will expand and improve upon our existing services, so clients of our Meals on Wheels program, food bank programs and partner hunger-relief agencies will continue to enjoy nutritious food and exceptional care. We also will create new opportunities to alleviate hunger. Our plans include more comprehensive senior feeding opportunities, such as a senior mobile food pantry, and the creation of child summer and afterschool feeding programs. Down the road, our goal is to launch a workforce development program that includes culinary and warehouse training opportunities targeted to unemployed and underemployed individuals facing high barriers to successful and sustainable employment. Through this initiative, FeedMore WNY can work to tackle hunger at its root and “shorten the line” of those in need of food assistance.

Though Meals on Wheels for WNY and the Food Bank of WNY have been collaborating for decades, the decision to join forces was made after much careful consideration. We toured and learned from national models where successful food bank and Meals on Wheels integrations already have taken place. We have studied hunger-relief programs with community kitchens that provided skills training to those they served and we will use those programs as best practice models. A task force comprised of board members, staff and community volunteers from Meals on Wheels and the Food Bank worked incredibly hard to ensure we asked all the right questions and conducted a thorough review of where the organizations are today and how best to position them for the future. Ultimately we enthusiastically agreed that, by coming together, we could make a greater impact in the community and touch even more lives.

I am truly deeply grateful to everyone who worked on making this next great step in eradicating hunger in Western New York possible. Most of all, I thank you. Without your support, we simply would not be here today. With your continued partnership, we can provide nourishment and hope to more children, families, seniors and veterans. Together we WILL feed more!

Sincerely,

Tara A. Ellis
President & CEO

Frequently Asked Questions regarding FeedMore WNY

What is FeedMore WNY?
The Food Bank of WNY and Meals on Wheels for WNY are joining forces to become FeedMore WNY. The goal of FeedMore WNY lies in its name: to feed more Western New Yorkers of all ages for whom securing nutritious food is a challenge. FeedMore WNY’s mission is to offer dignity, hope and a brighter future by providing nutritious food, friendship and skills training to its Western New York neighbors in need.

Why are the Food Bank and Meals on Wheels coming together?
The Food Bank and Meals on Wheels share complementary missions and a longstanding history of working together to feed the Western New York community. After decades of collaboration, combining organizations was a natural progression and the logical next step. As both organizations looked to improve and grow programs and reach more of our neighbors in need, we realized that we could accomplish far more together than we could hope to achieve on our own.

Are the organizations combining for financial reasons?
No. Both organizations are financially healthy and sound so this alliance is not based on financial necessity. The effort was not prompted by internal or external funding decisions or by recommendations by either organizations’ core funders. We do, however, believe it will be financially advantageous and lead to more flexibility to feed Western New Yorkers in need.

I have been working with someone from the Food Bank or Meals on Wheels. How do I contact them now?
For now you can still reach us at the same email addresses and phone numbers. As we continue to integrate, we will make sure any changes on our end do not impact your ability to connect with us and any new phone numbers, physical addresses or email addresses will be communicated to the community.

I receive food assistance and support from Meals on Wheels/the Food Bank. Will my services be impacted?
No. You will still continue to receive the high-quality care, nutritious food and friendship that you are used to. Your day-to-day interactions with Meals on Wheels, the Food Bank or one of the Food Bank’s partner agencies will not change.

Will any of your programs be eliminated?
No programs will be eliminated as a result of this alliance. In fact, the ultimate goal is to expand and improve on our already successful programming. We also will be creating new programs to help fill unmet needs, including child summer and afterschool feeding programs, more comprehensive senior feeding opportunities and warehouse and culinary training programs to help individuals with high barriers to employment.
Community and foundation support bolsters commissary capability with needed new equipment

Spanning half the size of a football field, the FeedMore WNY commissary makes it possible for our organization to serve more than 5,000 meals each weekday to Erie County’s homebound and mobile seniors. Since construction in 2009, we have seen our services grow and have adapted the commissary to better serve our community’s neighbors. In the ten years since it first opened, we have cooked and served more than 10 million meals out of our commissary. With such a high volume of meals being produced, some equipment brought over from the previous building needed to be replaced due to age.

In 2018, we were honored to accept support from many organizations committed to keeping our state-of-the-art facility in working order. Thank you to the following organizations for their support of our program:

- A heavy-duty mixer was provided by Meals on Wheels America, Bank of America Charitable Foundation, and the East Hill Foundation. Installed in our cold room, this vital piece of equipment is used in the creation of breads and birthday cakes.

- Maintaining a clean environment is a top priority for our organization. With the help of the East Hill Foundation, we were able to purchase a commercial washing machine and floor scrubber for use in the commissary.

- Alto-Shaam warming ovens were funded by the James H. Cummings Foundation. During production of our weekday hot meals, cooked vegetables and meats can rest at safe temperatures while in queue to be plated and placed in delivery ovens.

- Storage cages were funded by the Frank J. McGuire Family Foundation. Used for transporting items throughout our commissary, the storage cages keep employees safe by securely moving heavy items.

Caregiver Corner

SPRING CLEANING: HELP LOVED ONES WELCOME WARMER WEATHER

When spring arrives, many homeowners improve their living space through an annual spring cleaning. The change in season serves as a reminder to make small improvements, repair damage from the winter, and prepare for warmer weather.

Caregivers can help loved ones welcome the spring season as well. Here are a few tips and reminders that can make any home or apartment a little safer:

- Check pantries and refrigerators for expired or forgotten foods. Replace condiments that may have been open for a long period of time. Ensure that the refrigerator is running at a safe temperature below 38°F / 3°C, and that freezers are kept at 0°F / -18°C. Wash crispers and deli drawers if they are used.

- Replace batteries in smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, and night lights.

- Inspect medical cabinets for expired or spilled products.

- Sometimes simple actions can repair small problems. Emptying a vacuum bag, replacing a remote’s battery, or discarding debris in a toaster’s crumb tray can make these everyday items work more efficiently. Inspect oft-used appliances for damage and cleanliness.

- Check indoor and outdoor staircases for items that may block the way. Test all railings for stability.

- Install non-slip pads in bathrooms, under rugs, and on stairs.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we have gained some funding for the necessary renovations to our commissary’s temperature-controlled cold rooms.

Cold Room Renovation Project—35% funded

But we aren’t done yet—Your gifts are needed to help us prepare and deliver meals to the growing population who rely on the nutrition and unsurpassed care provided by our volunteers and staff.

The total cost of this project is $166,800. Help us complete this project by donating today.

Please call (716) 822-2201, ext. 43 or visit www.mealsonwheelswny.org/donate.

Thank you!