



# The Good Food Exchange



**Spring 2013  
FDN is 25!**

## Message to our community from FDN president Linda Finlay Thanks for helping us rescue food and reduce hunger for 25 years

**Friendship Donations Network**, which reduces hunger in our community by rescuing and distributing up to 600,000 lbs. of mostly perishable food a year, celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

It's a remarkable feat that couldn't have been accomplished without support from you, our community, as well as the efforts of Sara Pines, FDN's visionary founder and sole operating officer for the first 22 of those years (see profile, p. 2).

Sara recognized early on that many of our neighbors could not afford to feed their families. At the same time she saw large quantities of fresh, nutritious day-old food from area supermarkets and other venues being sent to landfills because it was no longer saleable. She persuaded those venues to allow her, and eventually other volunteers, to collect and distribute that food to those who needed it, and did outreach to area food pantries, churches, and other places.

Sadly, since then the need to alleviate hunger has only continued to increase.

Today about 2,100 people a week and their families depend on the food we collect and distribute to 30 food pantries and other meal providers in our community.

Fortunately much of that need is being met today because of several hundred

community volunteers and the generosity of donor organizations like: Wegmans, GreenStar, Tops, Neighborhood Pride, P&C Fresh, Ithaca Bakery, BJ's, Cornell food venues, Regional Access, West Haven Farm and others.

Three years ago, a board of volunteers stepped in to help share the work with Sara. Our goal was to form a stable structure that would allow Friendship Donations Network to continue its work as long as it is needed.

We believe we've succeeded. We now have an active board of 12 members and additional committee members with a variety of needed skills, a website ([friendshipdonations.org](http://friendshipdonations.org)), a paid part-time staff person, our wonderful coordinator Meaghan Sheehan Rosen, and a strategic plan for our future.

And last year FDN was granted 501c3 status as a nonprofit, qualifying us for grants and permitting our supporters to make donations directly to us.

We're still a very lean organization, with a modest budget and the elegantly simple structure that Sara devised, and we plan to stay that way. Volunteers are the heart of FDN, and their dedication enables us to operate very efficiently.

Now I have wonderful news I'm excited to share with you. Jerry Dietz, one of FDN's longtime supporters, has established the Just Be Cause Center for Non-Profit Development in the building that formerly housed Ithaca Paint and Decorating, and is renting it at a modest fee to honor the memory of his wife, Judy Dietz, our board's past president, who died last September.

For the first time we will have our very own space, a covered area for trucks to

load and unload food, and a place to sort food donations. We'll have increased storage space in our CoolBot — an energy efficient walk-in cooler — to store fresh fruits and vegetables donated by area farms and home gardeners as part of our gleaning program. And we'll have our own small office as well as a meeting room to share with other nonprofits.

We continue to think about the needs of our community. We're pleased that some volunteers are now taking food to people who are homebound or lack transportation. We're hoping to increase the number of farms and stores that donate food and to serve more school and afterschool programs and sites where low-income people work.

So, Happy Anniversary, FDN, and congratulations to you, our community. We've relied on you, and you have been magnificent in your support for us. Because of you, we can say that ours is truly a community project. ♦

### **Friendship Donations Network**

**Meaghan Sheehan Rosen,**  
Program Coordinator

### **Board of Directors**

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**Jane Mt. Pleasant**  
**Lenny Nissenson**  
**Sara Pines**  
**David Stotz**

### Message from Meaghan

**Greetings, gardeners!** Please consider sharing your garden bounty with FDN this growing season. Contact us to schedule a pickup or delivery of your excess produce: 607-216-9522.



## Profile: Sara Pines, FDN founder

**Sara Pines**, who founded Friendship Donations Network 25 years ago, has the rare ability to see a need and do something about it.

In the 1980s, while taking a break from backpacking in Southeast Asia, she volunteered to form a food and supplies network for Mother Theresa’s home for abandoned, sick and dying children in Nepal.

She sought food, linens and medical supplies by posting signs in hotels. “Every day I would collect and deliver what had been donated,” Sara recalls. “The Sisters said I was a very good beggar.”

In Ithaca during the 1980s, she hunted for free food as a volunteer cook with Loaves and Fishes, which offers hot meals, hospitality and support to those in need. She discovered that supermarkets stored nutritious food barely past its prime, before throwing it away.

“It was a great discovery,” she says. She convinced supermarkets to donate food that would otherwise be discarded in landfills and recruited volunteers to pick up and deliver it to area food pantries. “Now Friendship Donations Network serves 30

programs seven days a week, feeding our poorest people,” she relates.

Three years ago Sara realized she needed more help to run FDN. An active board, on which she and 11 others serve, was formed and a part-time paid coordinator, Meaghan Sheehan Rosen, was hired. Now FDN can seek grants and accept donations as an official nonprofit with 501c3 status.

Sara was born in Palestine in 1936 to parents living there who were U.S. citizens. In 1940, one of Mussolini’s warplanes dropped a bomb on her neighborhood, killing her father and 200 others and destroying her family’s home.

In 1946, forced to leave the region, she and her mother relocated to Brooklyn, where relatives took them in. “We were impoverished,” Sara recalls.

Perhaps that experience, more than any other, has made her empathize with and work to help those with few resources.

As a young woman determined to get an education, she applied to Brooklyn College. “They rejected me because I only had my general high school diploma, so I went to night school and made up my academic credits,” she says.

In college, a friend introduced her to Aaron Pines. “He came to a party I was at, and that was it,” she says. “When he graduated dental school and I graduated college, we got married.”

The couple eventually settled in New York City’s Greenwich Village in the 1960s, where Sara joined a women’s consciousness-raising group and met feminist writer Susan Brownmiller and political firebrand Bella Abzug. “We demonstrated against sexual harassment and rape, and for equal employment and pay for women,” Sara recalls.

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rescuing food, reducing hunger

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http://friendshipdonations.org

www.facebook.com/FriendshipDonations

She also pursued a master’s degree in social work at Hunter College, worked for the Department of Social Services and had two children, Elizabeth and Daniel.

In the late 1960s Sara’s husband accepted a job running a dental clinic at a psychiatric center in Willard, N.Y., and the family moved with him. “We looked around to see where we wanted to live, and Ithaca was it,” says Sara.

She opened a private practice in feminist therapy, then earned a Ph.D. in human services studies at Cornell.

A cofounder and former resident of Ecovillage, Sara, now 76, visited the Middle East this March.

How has she accomplished all she has? “She’s a person with tremendous determination and perseverance, but also patience and clarity of purpose,” says FDN vice president and treasurer Art Pearce.

Sara describes herself more bluntly: “If I say I’m going to do something, I will!” ♦

-by Linda Brandt Myers

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