

Ithaca food hubs help reduce food waste

Written by Shawnee A. Barnes

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Michael Charnoky runs one of four food collection stations for the Friendship Donations Network at his home on East Falls Street. The network is looking to collect food from any one who is growing more than they can eat in their garden. / SIMON WHEELER/Staff Photo

Drop-off locations • Sundays: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at 411 N. Cayuga St. • Tuesdays: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at 222 E. Falls St. • Wednesdays: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at 212 Wood St. • Thursdays: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at 523 N. Aurora St. (Aurora Pocket Neighborhood) For a map of the food hubs visit: friendshipdonations.org.

ITHACA — For growers, harvest time is here and that could mean more fresh fruits and vegetables in the local food pantries, thanks to “neighborhood food hubs” scattered around the city.

There are two weeks left for home gardeners to drop off their extra produce at the four food hubs organized by the Friendship Donations Network.

Drop-offs occur four times a week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The next drop-off is today at 212 Wood St.

The neighborhood pilot program was launched in June in an effort to reduce waste and connect neighbors and communities with fresh, healthy and local foods, program coordinator Meaghan Sheehan said.

“We were looking at ways to expand our donations,” said Sheehan who hopes the program will continue next year.

The nonprofit rescues food from supermarkets, bakeries and farms that would otherwise be thrown out or wasted and distributes it to food pantries.

Although she’s still compiling how much fresh food was donated over the summer, Michael Charnoky, who runs the Tuesday drop-off on East Falls Street, said it can be at least 20 pounds a week. He expects more, now that it’s harvest season.

“It’s hard to say,” Charnoky said. “Last week we got a whole tray of tomatoes.”

A cooler is stationed at each location where it is picked up by a volunteer who takes it to a larger cooler before being redistributed to area food pantries, local meal programs and individuals.

The pilot project runs through Oct. 1.