



# The Good Food Exchange

## FDN's Partnership with Unity House Exemplifies Spirit of the Season

By Ivy Miller

**T**hanksgiving and the holiday season are fast approaching, bringing with them the beauty of brisk mornings and the spirit of giving, gratitude and change to every corner of our community.

Over at Friendship Donations Network that spirit has found its way into the nonprofit's blossoming partnership with Unity House, an Ithaca-based community service organization that supports and improves the lives of people in recovery, coping with mental illness, and/or diagnosed with a developmental disability.

The story began a little over a year ago, recalls Friendship Donations program coordinator Meaghan Sheehan Rosen, describing how the two organizations first began working together. "FDN volunteers were tabling at an Earth Day event at Boynton Middle School," Rosen says, "when James Beaumont, who was representing Unity House, approached us and asked if we could use any more volunteers."

"When I encountered FDN at the Earth Day event," says Beaumont, assistant manager of Without Walls Day Rehab at Unity House, "I thought it would be amazing if we could get our folks who struggle finding a job, or who simply have time on their hands, involved with this cause."

Since then, FDN's mission of keeping fresh, nutritious food out of landfills and reducing hunger in the local community has been strengthened by the hard work of Unity House clients, who now volunteer in both weekly and on-call positions at Friendship Donations.

Their efforts are part of the Unity House goal to seek ways for the people it serves to participate and give back to the local community.



*Mike, one of the Unity House clients who now regularly pick up food donations for FDN, says he enjoys volunteering because it's fun and he likes helping others in need.*



PHOTOS: Ivy Miller

*Volunteering with FDN is a great way for Unity House clients such as Brandon, right, to gain work experience, learn reliability and give back to the community, says Unity House staff member James Beaumont, left.*

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— James Beaumont,  
Unity House

"We make monthly trips to [help out at] the Museum of the Earth and the Sciencenter, and we've done cleanups at local creeks and parks," says Beaumont.

However, because there are limited jobs for people with mental disabilities, some clients at Unity House have little or no work experience, he says. Volunteer work is a great way to build their resumes and help establish a routine, at a pace that's tailored to each individual's needs.

Unity House clients now help FDN by transporting food donations both regularly and on-call when needs arise. They also donate their time on Wednesday mornings, cleaning and organizing

the Friendship Donations food storage space in the Just Be Cause Center, in downtown Ithaca.

"With over 30 food pantries and venues that FDN serves, help is always appreciated," comments Sheehan Rosen.

Mike, who picks up food donations from Tops Friendly Markets on the first, third and fifth Monday of each month, along with a Unity House staff partner and sometimes with

*Continued on back page*

## FDN Applauds New Federal Goals for Reducing Food Waste

FOOD WASTE is an enormous problem, costing millions of dollars and harming the environment. This September the Obama administration announced the first-ever national goal for reducing food waste, targeting a 50 percent reduction by 2030.

Fortunately, our community is way ahead of the game. Friendship Donations Network rescues more than 500,000 lbs. of good food a year from our landfills and redistributes it to pantries and programs that serve of 2,100 people weekly in our area. We have been rescuing food and reducing hunger since our founding 27 years ago by Sara Pines.

“We are excited about this new federal initiative, and we expect that it will enable to us to have an even greater impact on reducing food waste locally,” says FDN program coordinator Meaghan Sheehan Rosen.

FDN plans to use the federal initiative as a way to reach new potential food donors, and to educate the community about the resources available to prevent good food from being wasted.

## FDN's Partnership *continued*

Mike's friends Paul and Robert, says he enjoys volunteering “because it's fun and I like helping other people in need.”

Brandon, a Unity House client, likes helping to reduce waste while getting surplus food to those who need it. “Food shouldn't just be thrown away,” he says. In the past he has helped collect food donations for FDN from the Statler Hotel and Regional Access, and in the process improved such skills as job readiness,

patience and dependability, says Beaumont.

“Volunteering not only teaches our clients reliability,” Beaumont says, “but also gives them the opportunity to give back to the community and experience the positive feelings that come with that.”

Coincidentally those are the same feelings he says he gets each day when he works with the people Unity House serves. ■



## 2015 Neighborhood FOOD HUB REPORT

**15** Hubs    **8,268** lbs of produce    **11,000** lbs donated since 2013

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the 2015 season of FDN's Neighborhood Food Hubs!

For more information, photos and to see a list of everyone involved, visit: [friendshipdonations.org/hubs](http://friendshipdonations.org/hubs).

The newsletter of **Friendship Donations Network**, printed in-house @ the Just Be Cause Center.

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## Volunteer Spotlight

**Gary and Helen Hurlbutt**, a retired couple in the local community, are dedicated volunteers to Friendship Donations Network. Together, they work hard to help FDN save fresh, nutritious food that would otherwise be thrown away and deliver it to local food pantries. *To read more, visit our website.*

## Visit FDN at the Ithaca Alternative Gift Fair!

Sat, Dec 5, 2015

11 AM—6PM

The Space @ Greenstar



Bypass the annual stress of holiday shopping and accumulation of “stuff” while honoring friends and relatives with donations to causes that fit their values. Gifts start at \$5, and each gift comes with a greeting card and an insert about the organization you are supporting. **Can't make it? All of the gifts can be purchased online from December 6 through 31 on the fair's website: [www.ithacaaltgiftfair.org](http://www.ithacaaltgiftfair.org).**