



Autumn/Winter 2018/19

# The Good Food Exchange

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## FDN's first Fall Feast was so good, we want seconds

Friendship Donations Network's first Fall Feast fundraiser brought together about 100 guests and FDN volunteers for a night of great food, local beverages, music by Uncle Joe and the Rosebud Ramblers and dozens of raffle prizes from Tompkins County businesses and agencies.

The Oct. 13 event was FDN's premiere fundraiser and generated \$7,500 from ticket sales and raffle tickets to support our efforts of rescuing fresh, nutritious food from stores, campus dining facilities, restaurants, and farms and redistributing the food to local hunger relief programs. Establishing a signature event to supplement FDN's fundraising had been recommended by several local foundations that have generously supported us with several grants. Our 30th Anniversary year presented a perfect



opportunity to develop the first Fall Feast to raise community awareness and support for FDN's programs.

We are grateful to the contributions of Vicki Taylor Brous and Gregar Brous who provided hours of help and guidance to make our first Fall Feast such a success. They graciously hosted the event at their stunning New Park Retreat and Event Center, 1500 Taughannock Blvd., and organized a woman-led team of local chefs to prepare an incredible five-course feast from rescued produce and donated food. Among the menu's highlights were Spinach &

Parmesan Pinwheels, Sautéed Green Flatbread, Green Salad with Fennel & Heirloom Tomatoes, Butternut Squash Bisque with Crema and Zaatar, Caribbean Rice and Bean Cakes with Sweet Salsa, Roasted Eggplant with Poblanos Con Queso, Watermelon and Cantaloupe Granitas, Sweet Potato "Noodles" Stir-Fried, Greens & Peppers, Fall Vegetable Cassoulet with Roasted Tomatoes, and for dessert, Apple Cranberry Bread Pudding with Maple Caramel. Featured chefs were Katy Walker, Eileen Hughes, Samantha Buyskes, Julie Jordan, and Vicki Brous. Members of the Cornell Food Recovery Network staffed the event and provided excellent table service.

Our main sponsor was CSP Management, and our table sponsors were Cayuga Medical Center, CFCU Community Credit Union, Tompkins Trust Company, and Wegmans. In addition to attending the Feast, those organizations purchased extra tickets that were given as gifts to FDN volunteers wanting to share in the meal.

We're already starting plans for the second annual Fall Feast in 2019. If you have suggestions on how to make that a success, please let us know by calling Meaghan Sheehan Rosen at (607) 216-9522 or sending an email to [feast@friendshipdonations.org](mailto:feast@friendshipdonations.org). We're looking forward to seeing you at Fall Feast II. 🍷

**Thank you** to the Fall Feast Sponsors!



## Special thanks to the farmers...

who have donated over 50,000 lbs of produce to FDN this year, including the Ithaca Farmer's Market vendors who donate unsold produce at the end of market every weekend! Our gratitude to the following farms:

**Autumn's Harvest Farm**  
**Black and Gold Farm**  
**Black Diamond Farm**  
**Blue Heron Farm**  
**Bright Raven Farm and Apiary**  
**Buried Treasures Organic Farm**  
**Cornell Orchards**  
**Cornell Potato Breeding Program**  
**Dilmun Hill Student Organic Farm**  
**Early Morning Farm**  
**Full Plate Farm Collective**  
**Grisamore Farms**  
**Hemlock Grove Farm**  
**Here We Are Farm**  
**Indian Creek Orchard**

**Ithaca Organics**  
**Jackman Vineyards**  
**Kestral Perch Berry Farm**  
**Mandeville Farm**  
**Morning Song Community Service Farm**  
**One of a Kind Orchard**  
**Oxbow Farm**  
**Pearadise Farms**  
**Plowbreak Farm**  
**Polestar Farm**  
**Sabol's Farm**  
**Six Circles Farm**  
**Stick and Stone Farm**  
**Straw Pocket Farm**  
**Sweet Land Farm**  
**West Haven Farm**

## 2018 contributions at Neighborhood Food Hubs 4,108 pounds, 11 locations

Area gardeners have donated more than 25,328 pounds of lovingly-grown produce since the program began in 2013. For more information visit: [friendshipdonations.org/hubs](http://friendshipdonations.org/hubs).

Written by Tilden Chao

**A**s enticing scents from Ramona Cornell's cooking penetrate the evening air, kids from Ithaca's Urban 4-H program dash to the dinner table. Several eager hands reach towards fresh produce, and hungry teens grab a quick bite to eat before they head off to work for the evening. Whether it's fresh green beans, beautiful garden salads, or cold banana smoothies, program participants leave the table feeling energetic and satisfied. For nearly 40 years, the Urban 4-H program has served the needs of children and teens growing up in low-income urban complexes. Today, programs exist in Belle Sherman, West Village, and the Northside Community Center.

It wasn't always this way. Prior to the program's partnership with the Friendship Donations Network (FDN), program coordinators like Ramona Cornell had to scramble to keep food on the table. "I asked a lot of volunteers to contribute food, fundraised, and asked the school system to provide food for our program," Ramona explains. But with a reliable food supply from FDN, Ramona receives produce and sell-by foods consistently to put on the table. Ramona explains, "Without the food, the program wouldn't be as successful. The kids who are in this area are really hungry, and people are just trying to keep a roof over their heads and finish school."

Already in 2018, the Friendship Donations Network has saved the Urban 4-H program about \$1,700 that would have otherwise been spent on food. While other programs subsist on a shoestring budget, Ramona likens hers to dental floss. With a tight budget, the 4-H program often experiences financial challenges. The money the Urban 4-H program saves reduces budget pressures and keeps the program afloat.

Although delicious and nutritious meals are a highlight of the partnership, fresh food has blossomed into something larger in Ramona's program. Most of the children and teens in Ramona's program are Burmese refugees. As Ramona explains, "Many girls in the program cook at home. In their culture, food presentation is very important. So, we work on garnishes and plating." In this sense, teens are able to extract value from more than just a good meal, but also from the artistic experiences that the food offers.

Along with the program's diverse population comes occasional racial strife. During playtime, Ramona noticed children segregating based on race and actively antagonizing one another. But when it came time for food, children began to bond and form amends. "Let's make pizza!" one exclaimed. A playground rival agreed, "Yeah, let's make pizza!" And quickly, over pizza, children began to interact with one another and form a more cohesive unit than just moments before.

Beyond enjoyable meals and memorable anecdotes, food donations from FDN combat pervasive stigmas in our community. Many people fail to include food justice in the conversation about social



*Photo shows participants' "hands enjoying our Saturday brunches that last 3 hours. They have a lot of fun playing with fruit and arranging the food. The children prepare the food and set the table. Being able to supplement our food budget with the donations we receive allows us to provide extra nutritious food for the children and we often have fresh produce and bread to send home to share with families." – Tami Snyder, 4-H Urban Outreach staff member*

justice—many families simply don't feel comfortable or respected when receiving government-funded aid. While families are often reluctant to stand in line at food pantries or cash in food stamps at the local grocery store, 4-H program leaders can distribute food to individual families out of the public eye. When Ramona has surplus food, she tells her kids to distribute it to their families. "In this sense, it's more of a gift than a handout," Ramona explains.

Notably, the impact these donations have had on families in the community hits close to home for Ramona.

"As a kid, [my family] was one of the poorest families," Ramona explains, recalling standing in line at the food pantry and waiting for food.

"The government provided various canned meats. One was beef, with a cow on the can, chicken with a chicken, and pork with a pig. But then there was a picture-less can just labeled "meat"—and no one knew what was in that one."

From Ramona's experiences, I began to understand that the quality of food program participants receive is *humanizing*. While packaged ramen and generic cans may be common at home, program participants enjoy fresh, nutritious, and otherwise prohibitively expensive food with Ramona.

The partnership between FDN and the Urban 4-H program is more than about food. It's about enjoyment, experiences, and humanization of the food distribution process. Most of all, food fosters communities, creating cohesion in a diverse population of program participants. 🍎

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