

Contact Us  
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## Make your year-end contribution now

The Schenectady Foundation makes an impact with every dollar granted, and in every program or initiative in which we're an investor. Please consider how your gift will make the greatest impact possible.



- Because we're especially impressed with how community partners are making progress on equitable access to healthy food. You see summaries of their programs on pages 2-3 of this newsletter. With your help, the Foundation can continue its multi-year commitment to making Schenectady a food-secure community.
- Because looking toward 2023 — **our 60th year of making Schenectady County a better place to live** — we must create a systemic and sustainable network to advance the well-being of every member of our community, not just those in obvious visible crisis.
- Because your gift invested in the Foundation grows over time as it earns income that goes back into your community year after year.

**Your gift helps, for now and for good.**

## Did you know?

### Donating Individual Retirement Account funds may offer a special tax break

If you're age 70½ or older, you may use Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) from your IRA to The Schenectady Foundation or other tax-exempt organizations, without paying income tax on the distribution. When transferred at age 72 or older, the transaction may satisfy required minimum distributions and accomplish other tax goals.

The primary benefit of a QCD is that the transfer doesn't count as taxable income. This is especially beneficial if you do not itemize your tax return, and cannot claim charitable deductions.

# gifts & grants

## Moving Upstream

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has.”*

— Margaret Mead

We all recognize issues that seem to persist. Lack of access to affordable quality housing, education, and healthy food are a few that surfaced on a recent survey of more than 800 Schenectady County residents.

It is one of our cultural values to come to the aid of the unfortunate and under-resourced. But have we too often paddled downstream to help someone in jeopardy, rather than to work upstream to prevent or reduce their need for help? This is the theme of a book by Dan Heath called *Upstream: How to Prevent Problems Before They Happen*. Heath notes that much more emphasis should be placed on changing how systems work — fixing things **before** they become problems.

In our work improving access to healthy food, we are increasingly listening to users of the emergency food system and engaging them in changing that system to help them thrive, not to just survive. Going forward, we will consistently work at shifting systems through the lens of residents and by understanding the experience of “system users.”

In the words of a participant in our “One Schenectady” systems change initiative:

*“Every story has an ending and right now a lot of us are caught up in stories whose endings are not so happy. We want everyone to be included in the story of prosperity.”*

If the COVID crisis taught us anything it was that we had to make big changes to meet complex needs. As we head into 2023 — the 60th year of The Schenectady Foundation's service to this community — you can be assured we are committed to doing that difficult upstream work.



Robert A. Carreau, Executive Director



Ariel White displays the strawberries available in June through the Greenmarket's Food Box Program.

## What's inside

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*Our work to end hunger  
Seven organizations  
awarded \$561,000*

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*Three reasons to  
make your year-  
end donation now*



# Schenectady: working to make our community food-secure

**A** once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, surging unemployment and lengthy school closures all added up to a crisis the likes of which we'd never before seen. The Schenectady Foundation, along with non-profit and government partners, sprang into action, and distributed food and other vital household items to address residents' critical needs. More than two and half years later the emergency has subsided, but the need persists.

**Here's what we've done since March 2020:**

**\$1.8M Food security funds granted**

**24 Organizations supported**

**17,526+ # pantry visits**

**13,598+ # home deliveries of food**

**And, here's what we will do going forward.**

- Establish a Schenectady County Food Policy Council focused on having our food system working better together.
- Assess the level of food security, and continually work to remove barriers to accessing healthy food.
- Work toward a more equitable system for food justice.

**Here's what our food justice partners are saying:**

*"We're serving a population that is definitely feeling the pinch. These are people where a dollar or two more for eggs really matters."*

*– Dustin Longmire, pastor at Messiah Lutheran*

*"By working together we can do more than any one of us alone. The Schenectady Foundation not only supports the collaborative work of (our) coalition in Schenectady, but facilitates coordination among stakeholders including other nonprofits, private, and government."*

*– Natasha Pernicka, executive director of the Food Pantries for the Capital District*

*"There's been a dramatic increase of those in need of food. We used to have 75-80 folks coming in on any given day – now we have between 150-165. With the cost of food, if you're working at minimum wage – it's almost impossible to have food to last."*

*– Ron Butler, pastor at Grace and Mercy Church of God in Christ*



*Lisa Makepeace helps tenants of the Ten Eyck public housing development get food at a monthly pop-up pantry in the lobby. Thanks to a grant from The Schenectady Foundation, the Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority will begin building permanent food pantries at Ten Eyck, Schonowee Village and Lincoln Heights.*

## Foundation invests \$561,000

**Collective action is key for making a food-secure community**

**I**f there's one thing The Schenectady Foundation understands, it's that you can't achieve measurable impact by working in silos. That was foremost in mind when selecting seven new projects for funding for its Equitable Access to Healthy Food grant program.

"The best thing about this year's grantees is their desire to collaborate with others, and their focus on engaging the users of the system we want to improve," said Kristi Milligan, director of grants and community programs for The Schenectady Foundation.

Cooperation is necessary, particularly as inflation is taking its toll on family budgets. "SiCM has observed a significant increase in the output of each of our food programs," said Amaury Tañón-Santos, executive director of Schenectady Community Ministries. "The rise in costs of fuel and food is having a dramatic impact on families throughout Schenectady. They are also having an impact in SiCM's ability to procure the high-quality, nutritious and culturally relevant foods our guests have come to expect."

This year's grants, added to \$450,000 invested in 2021, all point toward the goal of building a healthier, more sustainable food system.



**The recent grant recipients are:**

The \$51,000 award to **The Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority (SMHA)** will support the creation of food pantry stores at three public housing developments and is expected to serve 447 tenants. Tenant volunteers will assist in running the pantries, giving them access to a choice of foods that best fit their dietary needs.

SMHA began operating a pop-up food pantry in 2021, initially serving 9% of tenants. By mid-2022, that percentage had increased to 37%. The need for these pantries was obvious.

"We initially thought access to healthy food for our aging and disabled residents was a problem created by the COVID-19 pandemic," said executive director Richard Homenick. "We quickly discovered that food insecurity among our low-income families is a long-term problem only made worse by the pandemic and rising food costs. With this grant we are now on our way to creating a permanent solution to this problem that will serve over 400 of our downtown residents."

**Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schenectady County's (CCE)** \$150,000 investment will drive the second year of "Healthy Living 360," a multi-sector collaboration engaging Schenectady residents to understand and combat the root causes of food insecurity. The project brings together ARC, CCE, and the city school district to work directly with vulnerable families to educate them to utilize more nutritious food in their homes.

**The Food Pantries for the Capital District** will deploy \$100,000 to ensure that no food pantry will have to turn away those coming in search of food and to increase the awareness of food assistance resources. The Food Pantries provides information and referral to pantry locations, and makes food deliveries to pantries and families throughout the County.

**Schenectady Community Ministries (SiCM)** will utilize its grant of \$100,000 to collect data to better understand the impact its food access programs have on household stability and community health. SiCM takes a systems approach by involving users of the food system to understand their real needs and to identify and remove barriers to food access.

**Free Food Fridge** plans to expand its efforts in the City of Schenectady with a grant of \$75,000. The group already operates two free food fridges in the Electric City, and the funding will allow it to set up additional refrigerators in high need neighborhoods filled with produce, shelf stable food and other supplies for people to take as needed.

**The City Mission of Schenectady's** \$50,000 grant will expand its agricultural project started last year, when it began growing lettuce and other vegetables for lower-income residents. The Mission will grow tomatoes, herbs, Swiss chard and other veggies in a local greenhouse. Residents will learn how to grow and prepare food, and to market their produce to develop a source of income.

**The Schenectady Greenmarket Food Box Program** will receive a grant of \$35,000 to expand its food box program, which subsidizes the cost of produce from local farmers so that low-income residents can more readily access a variety of healthy foods throughout the growing season. In turn, farmers are able to sell their products at a sustainable cost — an example of how all participants in the food system need to work together.