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Calvary Food Pantry: Families just getting by are our heroes

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A year ago, I established a monthly dialogue with the community, about my pantry and the wonderful people who are a part of this caring gathering of individuals. I explained how we existed. With the guidance of David Wilcox, the Lake Life editor at The Citizen, our articles made people aware of hungry individuals living among us often with lives of silent desperation. They are your neighbors and cohorts at work or church, whose lives takes a drastic turn, through no fault of their own. I can paint faces of despair from those who must ask for support from my pantry. But let me tell you, though, in all 28 years of my service to the hungry, I have never seen such troubling times as these past few months. Never have I seen such despondency.

These families, living on the edge, are my Heroes for Hunger this month. My examples are several women and men I know who are hungry but carry on their lives with perseverance, fortitude and a gentle strength, in the face of tremendous odds. They are parents who feed their children well, nourishing their future, giving them a head start to prosper, but they go to bed hungry and disheartened, at the end of the month, every month paying bills to stay afloat. They support their families often with two or three jobs and still can't eat well but make sure their children do, often with only a microwave or hot plate to cook on. They are challenged each month when additional curve balls are thrown their way by the loss of a job and financial insecurity, death of a loved one, dramatic health occurrences as sudden illness, and then the threat of homelessness. I have seen them become frustrated, taciturn and scared, but, even under enormous pressure, they are resolved to do whatever it takes for their families. Additionally, they don't whine about their plight. I have never heard them complain. You know who you are. I salute you. I will support you at all times.

One symbol of my promise to provide nutritional sustenance this summer is my vegetable garden now at the Faatz-Crofut Home for the Elderly across the street. We are getting the garden ready to plant. The first group of volunteers, from Welch Allyn, will build two new beds on June 10. My families can't afford vegetables on their supplement programs. (Remember [last month](#) when Miriam, one of my volunteers, went on the 30-day SNAP (food stamps) challenge and struggled during the winter months to afford anything fresh?) I have wonderful backup, though, until the garden produces this summer. We have the CNY Food Bank's Produce Rescue Program and, over the course of the summer, the Auburn Farmers Market will give us produce each week. Then there are committed farmers as Bob Horsford and Sharon and Ben Vitale who support us. Again, if you have a good nutritional recipe, I need it. It will support my efforts. I simply say to the community that I will provide a safety net for any one who asks, but I need the community's continued help to do so. I work with these stalwart individuals, these everyday people, who with quiet dignity are getting on with their lives in the best manner they know how to — my heroes.

- There will be a Tupperware party fundraiser on Friday, June 6. Our first time. We get 40 percent of the receipts! Tables will be filled with the most amazing goodies. Thank you.
- The Calvary Food Pantry Board has eight candidates for our June 20 elections.
- Our rummage sale was very successful because of Martie N.'s efforts and help from 20 volunteers. Did you know that we shipped out, the same day, all unsold items to local charities?
- Please volunteer, donate or reciprocate to the area food pantries listed with this article.