



**“Even people who are working  
sometimes can’t afford groceries.  
Everything is so expensive now.  
It really helps to have this kind of support.”**

Corinne, a guest at St. Mary of the Bay  
Food Pantry in Warren

## Pantry Provides Seasonal Support for a Hardworking Mom

Corinne is a single mom of three and works as a landscaper. In the busy months, the work is steady and it’s easier to juggle rent, bills, and food. But as the final leaves are cleared and fall bulbs are planted, it becomes harder to make ends meet. That’s when she relies on St. Mary of the Bay Food Pantry in Warren.

Corinne’s oldest is 24 and lives on his own, but she’s still got her teenagers at home. The pantry is a must for her family because she doesn’t qualify for SNAP. “As of last year, my income went over the limit by just \$50 and that cut me off,” Corinne said. “Too much for SNAP, but not enough to buy groceries.”

Corinne shared that in the past she’s had moments where she’d skip dinner so the kids would have it. She said if she didn’t have access to a resource like the food pantry, she’d probably still be in that situation.



**IMPACT:** Our network serves as an important safety net when families need an extra boost - even if it’s only seasonally.



## The Food Bank Welcomes CEO Melissa Cherney



Food Bank CEO Melissa Cherney

This August, Food Bank board and staff were thrilled to welcome Melissa Cherney, a leader in hunger relief, as our new CEO following the retirement of Andrew Schiff.

Cherney joins us from the Great Plains Food Bank of North Dakota where, as CEO, she led initiatives to expand food access, mobilize legislators, advocate for policy change, and strengthen community partnerships.

Cherney's dedication to ending hunger is deeply personal. As an undergraduate in Minnesota, she struggled with food insecurity. SNAP benefits helped her make ends meet, and she saw firsthand the difference that these critical supports could make.

**"I'm excited to join the Food Bank and be a part of such a strong statewide movement to end hunger," Cherney said. "I believe that together, we can make a lasting impact in every community we serve. I can't wait to work alongside all of you to advance the fight against hunger with bold action and shared purpose."**

From her personal experience to her strong record of advocacy and nonprofit leadership, Cherney leads with urgency, compassion, and innovation as the Food Bank navigates uncertainty on a national level, and unprecedented need here at home.

## More People Than Ever Rely on Food Pantries

This spring, the Food Bank marked a dire milestone, serving more people than ever before in its 43-year history.

**On average, our member agencies serve 89,000 people a month through our network of pantries and programs.**

Rhode Islanders are feeling the pressure of increased costs of living, including housing, food, utilities, and other expenses.

Meanwhile, the Food Bank is working hard to meet challenges of its own. Cuts to federal programs like The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) have meant trucks of valuable proteins bound for the Food bank were cancelled. And rising food costs have affected our ability to source food too.

Though the situation is difficult, the Food Bank remains committed to providing as much culturally relevant, healthy food as possible to our member agencies at no cost to them.



**IMPACT:** Your support makes it possible for the Food Bank to distribute as much nutritious food to families in need as we can.







Crossroads guests pose for photos as they check out the Healthy Habits materials prepared for them

## A Partnership with Crossroads Finds the Intersection of Housing Stability and Food Security

The Food Bank's Healthy Habits team partnered with Crossroads, Rhode Island's leading provider of housing and support services, to pilot Healthy Habits, Healthy Kitchen. The six-week nutrition education and cooking series was designed with input from Crossroads guests in the process of securing housing and focuses on building household skills. Our team shares simple, flexible recipes that work with basic ingredients, utensils, and limited cooking resources.



The 18 participants in the first round of classes are preparing for a fresh start, with Crossroads working to provide safe, affordable housing, and the Food Bank's community nutrition team helping them to build practical, long-term skills they can carry with them into their future homes. **The program covers key topics like food safety for the home cook; utilizing items readily available in food pantries; food budgeting; utensil safety; hot meal preparation methods; and more.**

After two successful series of classes, we're excited to continue our partnership with Crossroads as they find placement in permanent housing for more guests. Our goal is to bring these community nutrition classes directly to the residents, ensuring that anyone moving into their new home feels confident that they can prepare nutritious food for themselves.



**IMPACT:** Individuals getting a new lease on life will be better equipped to make healthy choices and maintain their independence.

## A Heartbreaking Injury Changed May's Life but Her Local Pantry is Helping Put it Back Together

For 28 years, May worked as a clinician and associate director for a program that supports children and adolescents with developmental disabilities. But in 2012, she was assaulted by a patient on the job and sustained critical injuries to her spine, head, and knees. Now disabled, she receives a small amount of monthly assistance and works part-time to supplement it, but it's still not enough to get by.

When her rent was recently raised, May wasn't sure she'd even be able to stay. When we met her at the Comprehensive Community Action Program pantry in Cranston, she was looking into applying for SNAP and rental assistance.

May says her disability check mostly covers rent, but there are still other bills to be paid. She prioritizes rent first, then medication, which, before discovering the pantry meant that she sometimes only ate a few days a week.

**"I've never taken help before - I always thought I was taking it away from people who needed it more," May told us. "It was really hard to come here the first time. I went home with my food and cried. But the staff here were so kind - they walked me through everything that first day. That helped so much."**

Now, May visits CCAP's pantry for things like vegetables, beans, and chicken. As a diabetic, she's committed to eating healthfully and stretches the food she gets from the pantry as far as she can.

"If someone was afraid to come to the pantry, I'd tell them to come. If you need help, it's for a reason."



May chose to change her name and photo to protect her identity



**IMPACT:** The support May receives at CCAP enables her to focus on her health and recovery, without worrying how she's going to eat.



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