



End Hunger Connecticut! Establishes “Full Shelves Initiative” Program to Support State Pantries and Food Kitchens’ Food Purchases

Hartford, CT — April 28, 2021 — End Hunger Connecticut! (EHC!) is excited to announce the establishment of the Full Shelves Initiative, a program created in conjunction with community-based food pantries, kitchens, and home-bound older adult food distribution organizations. The program is funded by a \$250,000 Innovation Grant [awarded to EHC!](#) by ACME Market Foundation’s Nourishing Neighbors Community Relief Initiative.

The Full Shelves Initiative’s primary function is to establish a buying group for community-based food pantries, soup kitchens, and other nonprofits throughout Connecticut. This program will provide contracted pricing for the approximately 30 percent of food needs not covered by the existing CT Food Bank or donation process. Collectivizing pantries’ retail purchases will leverage their buying power to secure pricing contracts with regional food wholesalers. As a result, pantries will save on purchased goods, develop more efficient buying practices, and be introduced to and establish best practices for ordering, storing, and distributing products.

“I am very proud to be a part of the EHC! team and to head up this vitally important program to support our pantries and non-profit food suppliers in the state,” said Full Shelves Initiative Resource Director Patrick Dowling. “For too long, these hard-working organizations have had to fend for themselves to complement the great work being done by Connecticut Food Banks. We see great opportunities in building a sustainable framework to encourage efficiency and reduce stress in sourcing quality food in communities in every corner of the state.”

The program’s goal is to harness pantries’ purchasing power, as well as to create a forum to share institutional knowledge and individual strengths with each other. EHC! is working with hundreds of dedicated, passionate, hard-working people who now have an additional resource to bring greater food security to all corners of the state, Dowling said.

“The Full Shelves Initiative complements the mission of EHC! to make system changes that will increase food security in Connecticut,” said EHC! Executive Director Robin Lamott Sparks. “The more we can help our grassroots partners stretch their dollars and ultimately serve more families in need, the closer we will get to ending hunger.”

End Hunger Connecticut! is dedicated to eradicating hunger and promoting healthy nutrition through outreach, public education, and advocacy. EHC! enhances the visibility and coordination of food assistance programs crucial to any effort to improve food security by partnering with several state and local officials, schools, and community-based organizations. This project is the first of its kind in Connecticut and engages multiple key partners eager to break ground.

What others are saying:

Jill Meyerhoff, Executive Director for FISH of Greater New Haven/Pantry to Pantry

“Full Shelves Initiative has the potential to help Food Pantry Executive Directors think outside the box when placing orders with the many distributors available to purchase food from.

FISH of Greater New Haven has had the good fortune to benefit from the program since its inception. Don’t wait too long to start; you will see the value in this program right away!”

Deena Youngs, Director of Operations Filling In The Blanks, Norwalk, CT

“Filling in the Blanks is excited to partake in the Full Shelves Initiative. We are working closely with Patrick Dowling to leverage the best pricing as a collective buying group, which will allow Filling in the Blanks to distribute more healthy food options to even more children living in low-income, food-insecure households in Fairfield County.”

Peter Keast, Director, Community Relations & Development, St. Vincent de Paul, Middletown, CT

“Food pantries across Connecticut perform very differently. There is no school of food distribution management that pantry organizers attend before they take the reins. The good people in this business have one thing in common: the desire to meet food and hunger needs in the communities that they serve. But the learning curve and structure of each pantry is very diverse. Unfortunately, we don’t learn from each other as a practice because there is no structure to facilitate that end.

End Hunger CT! is taking a big step towards supplying a vital service to food pantries across the state. They are looking at the way needs are being met now and building a buying collaborative so that when food pantries run out of a product they need, it can be bought at a wholesale price negotiated with vendors in advance and potentially delivered without additional cost to the food pantry; saving not only dollars between wholesale and retail, but also in valuable time.

The Amazing Grace Food Pantry is very encouraged by this major first step towards offering buying power and availability of food in a new kind of way. A way in which the CT Food Bank can supply for some needs, and for other needs a small amount of fundraising can mean healthier, fresher foods for families in need.”

About EHC!

End Hunger Connecticut!, the only statewide anti-hunger nonprofit in Connecticut, is dedicated to eliminating hunger and promoting healthy nutrition through outreach, public education, and legislative and administrative advocacy. By partnering with national organizations, state and local agencies and leaders, schools, and community-based organizations, EHC! enhances the visibility and coordination of federal food assistance programs that are crucial to any effort to improve food security while increasing both family well-being and the amount of federal funding available to the state. EHC! also engages in strategic outreach, capacity building, and provides technical assistance on food and nutrition programs. Its bilingual (English & Spanish) SNAP Call Center also operates 7 days/week and is available for extended appointments for anyone in need of SNAP assistance, even during the challenges of COVID-19. Call toll-free for SNAP assistance at (866) 974-SNAP (7627), learn more about statewide work and services at www.endhungerct.org, and follow on social media (@endhungerct).

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