Join Us for

CHEFS AGAINST HUNGER

FEEDING THE NEED ON LONG ISLAND

This fall,
Bohlsen Restaurant Group
will host eight special evenings at
Tellers Next Door
featuring **incredible chefs, specialty multi-course menus,** and **wine pairings.**

Gather around the table for an unforgettable dining experience while helping provide food to **Long Island families facing food insecurity**.

100% proceeds benefit Long Island Cares.
Your dinner can help make a difference in our community.

Fall 2026

Hungry for Change

Long Island Cares, Inc. The Harry Chapin Regional Food Bank



Amber knows what it means to make every dollar stretch. The Wyandanch mother lives with her twin children and 4-year-old granddaughter, and like so many families across Long Island, she works hard to make sure there is enough food on the table.

When Food Assistance Is at Risk, Families Feel the Impact

For about a year, Amber has turned to Long Island Cares on and off for additional support. She also receives SNAP benefits, which have become an important part of helping her family meet its basic needs.

At the same time, Amber is managing serious health challenges, including Crohn's disease and other medical conditions. She has applied for disability benefits multiple times but has been denied, adding another layer of uncertainty to an already difficult situation.

For Amber, the possibility of reduced food assistance is deeply personal. SNAP is not simply a line in a household budget. It helps determine whether there is enough food for her children and granddaughter while she balances other essential expenses.

continued on page 4

A Message from our President and CEO



As the year draws to a close, I am reflecting on my first full year as President and CEO of Long Island Cares. It has been a year of listening, learning, and seeing our mission in action through the dedication of our staff, volunteers, donors, Member Agencies, Board, and community partners. I am grateful for all we have accomplished together.

I am also mindful of the work still ahead. Many Long Islanders experiencing food insecurity are managing higher costs for food, housing, transportation, and healthcare. Uncertainty surrounding SNAP and other federal nutrition programs could place even greater pressure on household budgets and increase the demand for food assistance across our communities.

The need does not end with the holidays. Neighbors who turn to us in November and December may continue to need support in January and throughout the new year. With your help, Long Island Cares and our Member Agency network can continue to provide the food and resources our neighbors need.

The stories in this issue reflect our mission and values in action. You'll meet a Wyandanch mother caring for her children and granddaughter while managing serious health challenges. You'll learn why protecting SNAP matters and why food banks and federal nutrition programs must work together.

You'll also visit the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation pantry, where volunteers serve their community with collaboration, respect, and compassion. And you'll meet Graycen Kelly, our youngest donor, whose creativity and generosity show that everyone can make a difference.

As you read about Gather & Give, Chefs Against Hunger, our Youth Council, and year-end giving, you will see what your support makes possible. **Your donation can help stock a pantry. Your food drive can help a family prepare a meal.** Your volunteer time and advocacy can help more neighbors access the food and support they need.



"Your support helps make food available to your neighbors during the holidays and throughout the year."

Thank you for believing in our mission and standing with our neighbors. Because of you, Long Island Cares can continue bringing people and resources together to address food insecurity. You are an important part of this work.

Together, we remain Hungry for Change, and together, we are building a hunger-free Long Island.

With gratitude,

Katherine M. Fritz President & CEO, Long Island Cares, Inc. – The Harry Chapin Regional Food Bank

Long Island Cares calls to **Support SNAP**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, has recently been in the spotlight. It's the nation's largest nutrition program and widely considered one of the most effective anti-hunger initiatives. At its core, SNAP is simple: it helps people keep food on the table during times of need.

SNAP provides monthly grocery assistance through an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, which works just like a debit card. Recipients can purchase essential food items such as meat, yogurt, eggs, bread, and fresh produce at authorized retailers, including grocery stores, farmers' markets, and neighborhood bodegas. Eligibility is determined by income, household size, and other factors. Additionally, it serves as an economic engine. **Every $1.00 in SNAP benefits generates $1.59 in local economic activity,** supporting the businesses and workers that keep our communities strong.

For many families, SNAP is the lifeline that helps them stay afloat during times of rising costs or unexpected hardship. Contrary to misconception, most adults receiving SNAP who can work are working. 86% of SNAP households with working-age adults who aren't disabled have earned income in the past year. SNAP is a supplemental program that helps prevent families from having to sacrifice healthy food when they're stretching thin budgets.

Food banks are essential partners in the fight against hunger, providing immediate food relief. But charitable food assistance alone cannot meet the growing need. **For every meal a food bank provides, SNAP provides nine.** That scale is what makes SNAP indispensable. To effectively combat hunger on Long Island, we need both emergency food providers and strong federal nutrition programs working together.

Recent federal legislation has shifted major financial responsibility from the federal government onto states. For the first time in SNAP's history, states will be required to pay a share of SNAP benefit costs based on unintentional paperwork and administrative errors, known as payment error rates. Payment Error Rates (PERs) are oftentimes misunderstood. They are not measures of fraud, but rather a calculated average of overpayments and underpayments made by agencies. Through paperwork mistakes, families may receive too much and must pay it back, or too little and go without the funds they were counting on.

Starting as soon as October 2027, states will be required to pay up to 15% of SNAP benefit costs. For the state of New York, this is projected to cost **$1.1 billion**. Without the time and resources to improve systems and accuracy, states could be pushed into tough trade-offs, such as reducing or limiting SNAP eligibility or raising taxes for residents.

Long Island Cares stands with Feeding America in asking for a 2-year delayed implementation of the SNAP Cost-Shift. This will allow states more time to reduce SNAP payment error rates and ensure that the program can remain fully operational. Without thoughtful implementation, vulnerable groups such as families, seniors, veterans, and children are put at risk of increased food insecurity.

When families can reliably access food, children learn better, adults work more consistently, and communities grow stronger. Long Island Cares will continue to advocate for the protection and strengthening of SNAP and other federal nutrition programs that help our neighbors keep food on the table.

Learn more about our advocacy program.

Take Action to **Protect SNAP**



Contact your members of Congress and urge them to support a two-year delay of the SNAP cost-shift to states. You can reach your member of Congress by calling the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and sharing your zip code with the operator.

A delay will give states time to prepare and help protect access to the nutrition assistance that millions of families rely on. Without it, vulnerable households could face reduced benefits or loss of assistance, while food banks could be forced to absorb even greater demand.

Families Feel the Impact continued from cover

Her greatest concern is what changes to food assistance could mean for families with children. With the cost of everyday necessities continuing to rise, she says there is little room left in many household budgets to absorb another loss of support.

"Even with gas prices, we are paying for something we didn't do," she says, describing the financial pressure her family is already experiencing.

Her experience reflects what food insecurity looks like for many of our neighbors. **It is rarely about one expense or one difficult month. Health challenges, rising costs, and limited income can quickly collide,** forcing families to make impossible choices about what they can afford.

For families like Amber's, access to SNAP and community resources can help close that gap. And when those resources are at risk, the impact is felt not in statistics or policy discussions, but around kitchen tables across Long Island by parents, children, and grandparents simply trying to make sure there is enough food for the next meal.

Despite the challenges, Amber continues to do what she can to care for her family and find the resources they need. Long Island Cares is there when she needs additional food, providing one more source of stability during an uncertain time.

GATHER & GIVE



This Fall & Winter

Start a food drive today and help gather food so we can give hope.

As the seasons change, the need for food assistance continues to grow across Long Island. Through our **Gather & Give** campaign, individuals, businesses, schools, community groups, and houses of worship can help keep our shelves stocked for neighbors facing hunger.

This fall and winter, **your food drive can help provide much-needed meals** for children, seniors, veterans, and families during some of the most difficult months of the year.

Whether you collect nonperishable food, host a workplace drive, or rally your community, every item helps make a difference.



A Pantry Without Borders



"If we do not eat it, we do not give it out," says Lillian Kuo, stating the philosophy driving the food pantry at the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation in East Williston, where she is a volunteer and staff member.

What Lillian and her colleagues at the foundation do eat – exclusively – are fresh fruits and vegetables. That's the primary reason the Taiwan-based foundation connected with Long Island Cares in December 2020: They heard we are a primary source of the nutritious, fresh produce they make available to their visitors.

And who are their visitors? Perhaps surprisingly, most are from Hispanic communities in Hempstead, Uniondale, Roosevelt, Freeport, Westbury, and Baldwin. According to Melinda Chen, volunteer and coordinator of the pantry, only about five percent of the nearly 800 people who visit the Tzu Chi Long Island pantry each month are Chinese-Americans.

In the Tzu Chi tradition of serving others, most of the pantry volunteers are of Chinese descent. And they work hard: Visitors are served on the second and fourth Saturday of each month (except January and February, when the pantry is open only once a month) between 9:30 a.m. and noon. Because of the high volume, Tzu Chi requires visitors to reserve a time on their website: https://tzuchi.us/events/long-island-biweekly-food-pantry-2026

Visitors bring bags to carry home their produce; families of two or less receive one bag of food and families of four or more may take two bags home. Lillian says of the food provided to their neighbors, "They never realized eating vegetarian could be so delicious." Joe Chang, the foundation's director, adds, "We tell them to eat a veggie taco."

Lillian cites an abundance of visitors who have health concerns, including diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. That's another important reason Tzu Chi offers only plant-based foods.

Lillian says this is a challenging time for the pantry, with an increasing number of visitors seeking support because of a loss or reduction of SNAP benefits, high grocery prices, housing costs, fixed incomes, and paychecks that don't keep up with expenses.

> "We want to serve the community. We want to provide opportunity for the community," —Lillian

Lillian founded Tzu Chi at her home in 1995. Not long after, it moved to an apartment building in Great Neck, followed by another move, this time to Jericho. East Williston has been the foundation's home for several years.

The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation is grounded in four community programs: charity outreach, medical assistance, education, and disaster relief. Its guiding mission, says Lillian, is to "relieve suffering, promote loving kindness, practice compassion, and create a better world through selfless service."

The pantry opened in July 2020 at a Freeport church. Six months later, Tzu Chi began its affiliation with Long Island Cares after Lillian received an urgent email about the need for fresh produce. That same year, the pantry moved to its permanent home at the foundation's East Williston headquarters.

No longer the foundation's director, Lillian identifies herself first and foremost as a volunteer. Her formal roles include director of the charity mission, coordinator of Tzu Chi's choral group, and counselor at the Tzu Chi Academy at Oyster Bay High School.

Joe – who was born in Taiwan, as were his two colleagues – has been a volunteer at the foundation for 25 years and director for seven. He oversees Tzu Chi's medical services program and is a physical therapist. Like his colleagues, he is driven by the philosophy embraced by all at the foundation: "We like to do what we do."

And they do it with love, empathy, and zeal.

When Giving Back Gives Back
How One Volunteer Found His Purpose



When Matt first came to Long Island Cares, he was looking for a meaningful way to spend his time.

"I needed a productive outlet as I was getting sober and had time on my hands," he shared. "I was looking to fill my time and found much more than that. I found I like helping people. It was therapeutic to come here."

What started as a way to stay busy soon became something more. Matt saw firsthand how much need exists in his community and how simply showing up could make a difference.

> "If you can't donate food or money, donating your time is just as valuable." —Matt

"There is a lot of help needed," he said. "So, I keep coming back."

Today, Matt volunteers several times a week and has become familiar and valued by the Long Island Cares volunteer community.

For Matt, giving back also reinforced an important lesson: making a difference doesn't always mean making a financial contribution. Time can be just as meaningful.

"If you can't donate food or money, donating your time is just as valuable. It will be just as rewarding to you. Spend more time giving. It's a good thing to do if you have free time."

Matt came to Long Island Cares looking for a productive outlet. He found purpose, connection, and an opportunity to help his neighbors.

His experience is a reminder that **there are many ways to be part of the fight against hunger.** Sometimes change begins with a donation. Sometimes it begins with a food drive or speaking up for a neighbor. And sometimes, it begins simply by showing up and lending a hand.

Young Leaders. **Big Impact.**

The **Long Island Cares Youth Council** gives high school students the opportunity to **turn their passion for helping others into meaningful action.** As a Youth Council Ambassador, you'll lead food drives, assemble volunteers, and help provide food to local families facing food insecurity.

Along the way, you'll build **leadership skills, strengthen your college applications, and make a lasting impact in your community.**

Ready to lead the change?



A Young Life Being Lived for Others

For 13-year-old Graycen Kelly, giving back comes from the heart. The talented young artist has found a way to use her creativity and compassion to help others, particularly those struggling with food insecurity and serious health challenges.

Earlier this year, Graycen hit a new milestone: Now 13 years old, she is **the youngest donor in the history of Long Island Cares.**



Graycen earned that honor by **donating $300.50** – earned from the sale of handmade bracelets at an event honoring St. Patrick in March – that **provided 190 meals** to food-insecure Long Islanders.

"I wanted to turn a hobby that I love into something to give back," Graycen says.

And her reaction to being our youngest donor? **"I think it's so cool. I would never have thought I was the youngest."** Graycen's history as a humanitarian goes back to when she was only six years old.

"When I was six, I ran a lemonade stand at a community yard sale and donated the proceeds to Positively Pink, a breast cancer charity. Then, in the second grade at Dawnwood Middle School, I sewed cloth face masks – with the help of mom – and donated the funds to Positively Pink."

Graycen's heart to help has been nurtured by her parents, Christopher and Amanda.

"My mom and dad are also very involved in charitable and community causes. I think I would like to continue on if I am able."

Christopher is a Senior Vice President at TRITEC, a real estate company that developed, constructed and manages Station Yards in Ronkonkoma. He has a history of raising funds and collecting food for Long Island Cares, which set an important example for Graycen. Speaking of Graycen's bracelet fundraiser at Station Yards, he says, **"I think Graycen saw it as an opportunity to do the same."**

Amanda is a general education 4th grade teacher and team leader at Oxhead Road Elementary School in Centereach. In addition to raising funds from her sale of cloth face masks seven years ago at her school, Graycen also raised money at Oxhead Road. **"I am so proud of Graycen. She has always taken the time to think about and help others. When she raised money at the sale of face masks and lemonade, it was to benefit a teacher at her school who was battling breast cancer.**

> "I have always wanted to help people,"
>
> —Graycen



"As I see her confidence grow, I know she will continue to advocate for those in her community."

Graycen believes that an important way to do that is to utilize the artistic talent that led to designing the bracelets she sold for Long Island Cares.

"I learned from some friends and watched a lot of tutorials online. I really love art. All my family members are super artistic, from my siblings all the way to my nana."

To know Graycen is to understand that she has a deep-rooted vision for helping others. And as she continues to grow, there is no doubt **her compassion, determination, and example will inspire others to give back** and make a difference in their own communities.

"I have always wanted to help people," she says.

She proves it every day.

Help your community, scan the QR code to learn how to host a food drive.

Long Island Cares® INC
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To know is to care. To care is to act.
To act is to make a difference.
— Harry Chapin Founder, Long Island Cares, Inc.

Stay connected!

Year-End Giving

As the year comes to a close, Long Island Cares is preparing for one of the most important giving seasons of the year. For thousands of our neighbors facing food insecurity, the holidays can bring added worry about how to put nourishing meals on the table.

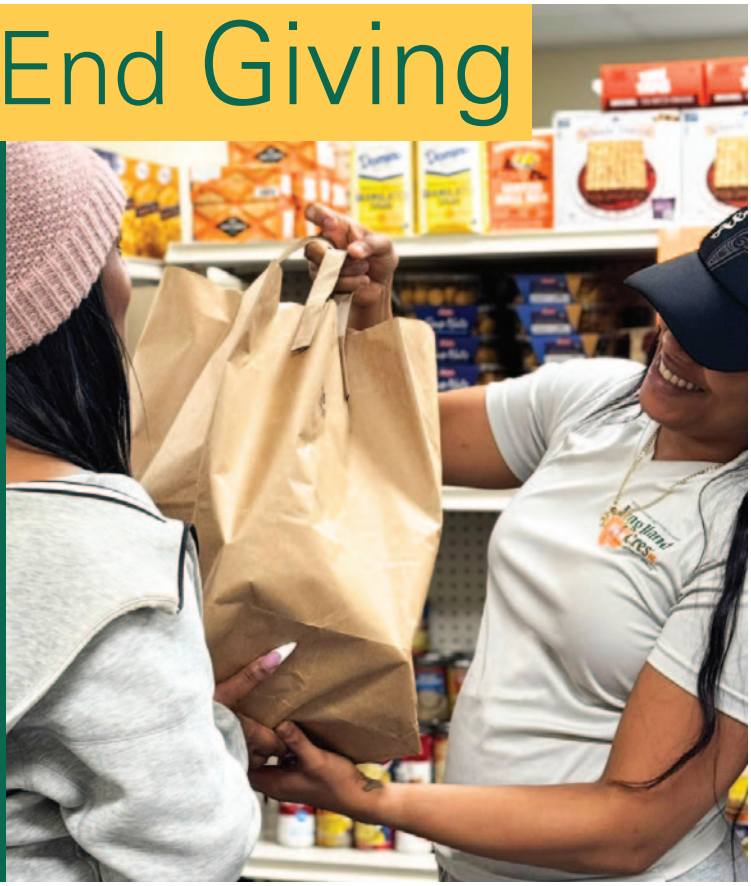
Year-end gifts help Long Island Cares provide food, resources, and hope to families across our region, not only during the holidays, but well into the new year.

And this year, **your generosity may have an even greater impact.**

We're excited to share an early glimpse of **a special year-end opportunity** currently taking shape with the Chapin family. One that could help make every gift go even further in support of our neighbors.

More details are coming soon. For now, as you consider your year-end giving, know that your support continues Harry Chapin's legacy of turning compassion into action and helping Long Islanders when they need it most.

Support Harry's legacy



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