

**Saturday
January 31, 2026**

**The Landmark on Main
Port Washington**



Since 2011, WSFF has raised \$450,000+ for local families in need—and the music (and mission) keeps going!

\$45

General Admission

**Join us for a night where
every note counts.**



**TURN UP
THE VOLUME.
TURN DOWN
THE HUNGER.**

Winter 2026



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

Sharada Venkatachalam was born and raised in India, where she instilled in her family a strong commitment to education. She promised her son that if he were accepted into an Ivy League school, they would make the move to America. In 2004, they fulfilled that promise and embraced a new beginning on Long Island.

From Pantry to Garden

Her husband soon found work right across the street from the **Long Island Cares food bank** in Hauppauge. Sharada continued her fulfilling teaching career. But one day, as she passed the food bank, she paused. **"Hungry? How could that happen in America?"** she wondered. Curious, she wanted to learn more and was moved by **Harry Chapin's** mission and the work being done in her own community.

Inspired, Sharada rallied her neighbors and collected canned goods. **"Long Island Cares even told us how many pounds we raised. It was mind-blowing! Every drop in the ocean counts,"** she said.

Life shifted dramatically when her husband retired and the COVID-19 pandemic shut down schools. As a substitute teacher, Sharada suddenly found herself without steady work and without health insurance. For the first time, **her family needed help.**



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A Message from our President and CEO

As we start this new year, I am honored to greet you for the first time as President and Chief Executive Officer of Long Island Cares. Taking on this role fills me with gratitude and humility. For 45 years, our organization has been shaped by remarkable leaders, beginning with our founder, Harry Chapin. His belief in justice, compassion, and community still guides us today. I am also grateful for the Executive Directors and CEOs who followed him, each helping Long Island Cares navigate change while staying true to our mission.

As we welcome 2026, we carry that history with us, but our focus is firmly on the future. The need across Long Island continues to grow. We see it in families working hard to make ends meet, in older adults like Sharada whose story in this newsletter reminds us that dignity matters in every bite, and in neighbors who volunteer with us even while facing significant challenges of their own. The effects of the federal shutdown, rising costs, and reductions in key assistance programs continue to ripple through our community.

**Your generosity, your belief in
our mission, and your support make
everything we do possible.**

My early weeks as CEO have been centered around listening and learning. I have spent time in our satellite centers, the warehouse, our mobile distributions, and in conversations with volunteers like Paul, also highlighted in the newsletter, who has found independence and pride through service. I have also heard the passion of partners such as the Bohlsen Restaurant Group, whose Chefs Against Hunger dinners nourished far more than their guests. They helped strengthen our entire community.

This issue of *Hungry for Change* reflects who we are at our core: a community that supports one another, believes in a hunger-free Long Island, and understands that hope is something we create together. As we look ahead, we are modernizing our work, energizing our mission, and building momentum toward a hunger-free future. I am grateful to walk this path with you.

We remain Hungry for Change, and together we are building a future where hunger has no home on Long Island.



Katherine M. Fritz

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



Welcoming Katherine Fritz

Since October 2025, Katherine Fritz has been leading Long Island Cares as President and CEO, and we are thrilled to introduce her to our broader community. Katherine brings a thoughtful, hands-on approach to leadership, asking: *What will help people today? How can we do better?* She begins by listening, learning, and connecting, ensuring the voices of the communities we serve shape every decision.

Katherine's dedication to community and resilience comes from her upbringing close to the land. A photo of her father in traditional Native American regalia, proudly displayed in her office, is a daily reminder of those roots. "If my brothers and father didn't know how to hunt, fish, and grow, we might have been food insecure," she recalled. These lessons in hard work, preparation, and caring for others guide her vision for a Long Island where no one has to wonder where their next meal will come from.

Her career reflects these values. From leading a small environmental center to senior roles at a hospital and the American Cancer Society, Katherine has built programs and teams that deliver real results. She later oversaw national fundraising for the Guide Dog Foundation and America's VetDogs, managing budgets over \$18 million and sustaining programs that make a tangible difference.

Katherine joined Long Island Cares just before the pandemic as Vice President for Development and Communications, connecting donors to our mission and raising awareness for a hunger-free Long Island. Now, as CEO, she draws on insights from our First Stop Food Pantries and Member Agencies to strengthen partnerships and advocate for solutions that address the root causes of hunger.

Katherine's leadership combines vision, experience, and compassion—qualities that make her an ideal fit to guide Long Island Cares into the future.

We are grateful for your support as we continue this important work together, under Katherine's thoughtful leadership.

—The Long Island Cares Team



From Pantry to Garden (continued from cover)

“It’s incredible how they let you take what you need, and there’s so much vegetarian food available,” she shared. “Many food banks hand out whatever they have, without thinking about individual needs. I think about seniors who can’t drive—and how easily food can go to waste.”

—Sharada Venkatachalam

Turning to Long Island Cares, Sharada discovered a network of support waiting for her. She was especially relieved to find a wide selection of vegetarian food that met her family’s needs.

During her visits, Sharada met **Idalia Boczek, Director of Satellite Operations**, and the two quickly connected. When Sharada expressed her desire to give back, Idalia suggested she help at the garden at 75 Davids Drive.

Today, Sharada rarely visits Long Island Cares for assistance. Instead, she finds joy in giving back—**nurturing the garden that helps nourish so many others**. She will still be a familiar face at Long Island Cares, but now, instead of picking up food from the pantry, she’ll be harvesting fresh produce to help fill it. 🌱



Just \$10 provides 6 healthy meals for neighbors like Sharada. Donate today!



Exciting News

Freeport Pantry is Moving

The Nassau Center for Collaborative Assistance, our First Stop Food Pantry in Freeport, will move to a larger location in January 2026. As our busiest pantry, Freeport sees a high volume of families every day. This move will help us better accommodate that demand and ensure we continue meeting the growing needs of our community.

Visit us at our new location: 23 East Sunrise Highway, Freeport



Helping Others & Finding Independence

Three years ago, **Paul Mazzota** began volunteering with Long Island Cares. Since then, he has become a familiar face, known for his dedication, thoughtfulness, and genuine love of helping others.

Outside of volunteering, Paul enjoys friendly competition through bowling, pool, and bocce, games that reflect the same determination and focus he brings to helping others.

Paul keeps a full schedule of volunteer work along with a paid position at the Long Island Center in Levittown. He fondly calls all of them “jobs.” As he explains, “I like jobs. Most people just care about jobs because they like making money. But I actually like jobs because I like the fact that I’m helping other people. Which is more important than money.”

At the **Long Island Center**, Paul does clerical work and helps others build independence. He also volunteers at the **Thomas Gullotta Farm in Brookville**, where he gardens, cares for animals, and assists indoors with organizing, sorting, and paperwork. And every Thursday, Paul travels by bus from his assisted living home to Long Island Cares, where he carefully sorts and packs food donations.

Paul credits his father for introducing him to Long Island Cares.

“My dad knew I would do a good job. There is a lot of consistency and organizing, and I’m good at that.”

For Paul and his family, volunteering has meant more than giving back. It has helped

him grow more independent, something his father says has been supported by the Long Island Cares community.

“You have helped him gain independence—being able to get there and back on his own to do his job.”

That independence has led to another milestone: **Paul is moving into a supported apartment in East Meadow. With this exciting new chapter, he will also be volunteering at the Long Island Cares First Stop Food Pantry in Bethpage.**

Paul’s story is one of growth, consistency, and community. His journey shows the lasting impact of meaningful opportunities, and how the right support can empower someone to thrive. 🌱



“I like jobs. Most people just care about jobs because they like making money. But I actually like jobs because I like the fact that I’m helping other people. Which is more important than money.”

—Paul Mazzota

**Interested in becoming a volunteer?
Learn more today.**





From Plate to Purpose Chefs Against Hunger Feeds Long Island

At Tellers Next Door in Islip, 30 guests gathered in an intimate dining room, each taking their seat with anticipation. Before them was a five-course meal, thoughtfully crafted by one of Long Island's top chefs and perfectly paired with wines from local wineries. Guests from across Long Island had secured tickets not only for an incredible culinary experience but also to support Long Island Cares. Yet every plate told a story far bigger than the flavors on their forks. This was **Chefs Against Hunger**, a series brought to life by the **Bohlsen Restaurant Group (BRG)**, co-owned by brothers **Michael and Kurt Bohlsen**.

Launched in 2019, the series was inspired by a reality in the restaurant community: many people working in the industry live paycheck to paycheck. The team knew they could use their love of food and the platform of their restaurants to make a meaningful difference. What began as an idea quickly turned into a series, bringing chefs together to create evenings of fine dining that not only delighted guests but also supported Long Islanders facing food insecurity.

The first series raised over **\$25,000—an incredible amount for a brand-new initiative—but momentum**

paused when COVID-19 halted in-person dinners. Even then, BRG's commitment didn't waver. The team checked in regularly with managers across all their restaurants to ensure employees were supported. When they learned that an employee "hadn't eaten in two days," BRG began assembling food boxes. **What started as aid for 10 families expanded to 175, each box tailored to dietary needs and cultural preferences.**

By 2025, Chefs Against Hunger returned with renewed energy. Nine chefs from across Long Island joined the BRG team to host intimate evenings of five-course meals and wine pairings, with every ticket sold translating into meals for neighbors in need. **While the ambiance and cuisine were unforgettable, it was the sense of community and shared purpose that left the deepest impression.**

The 2025 series alone raised nearly \$50,000, enough to provide 31,500 meals for Long Islanders in need. Chefs Against Hunger has become more than a fundraiser; it's a reminder that even a series of dinners can nourish far beyond the dining room. 🌱

Find events near you!



2026 Legislative Priorities

The Government Relations and Advocacy Department at Long Island Cares works alongside policymakers, advocacy coalitions, and government agencies to establish long-term solutions that address the root causes of hunger. These are our top 2026 legislative priorities within New York.

1 Strengthening the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP)

Long Island Cares administers HPNAP on behalf of the New York State Department of Health for the Long Island Region. Through this program, we procure and distribute millions of pounds of emergency food annually across our network of 338 member agencies. This program is vital for providing food to the 300,000+ Long Islanders who are food insecure. To ensure that food banks can meet rising need, we are advocating for \$75 million in state funding for HPNAP. This investment is crucial for sustaining emergency food operations and guaranteeing reliable access to nutritious food for our communities.

2 Strengthening Nourish New York

Nourish New York is another statewide hunger-relief program that food banks rely on to purchase locally sourced produce, proteins, and dairy products directly from New York State. While increasing the nutritious options we provide for families facing hunger, the program provides economic stimulus to over 4,000 local farmers. As we advocate for \$75M in funding for Nourish New York, we are fighting to provide families across Long Island with local, nutritious food while supporting farmers, fishermen, and food processors across the state.

3 Sustaining the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

After the passage of HR.1, more commonly known as the "One Big Beautiful Bill", in July we are preparing for the largest SNAP cuts in history. This federal nutrition program has been regarded as one of the most effective anti-hunger and anti-poverty programs. 168,000 Long Islanders rely on SNAP to put food on the table, a majority of whom are children, seniors, or individuals with disabilities. With the federal changes underway, states will now have a greater financial and administrative burden to carry. We are advocating for the state budget to include sufficient funding to ensure that we can sustain this critical federal nutrition program.

Long Island Cares remains committed to advocating for Long Islanders and protecting the vital programs that relieve hunger and strengthen our communities. 🌱



Learn more about our advocacy program.





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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!



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A **Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA)** lets you give back to Long Island Cares while receiving fixed income for life. When you establish a CGA with us:

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Gain tax advantages

Take a partial income-tax deduction and enjoy a portion of each payment tax-free.

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After your lifetime, your gift helps feed families and individuals across Long Island.

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Thank you to all of our Corporate Heroes!

