

Rural Matters April 2023

Leadership Message



Welcome to this month's edition of Rural Matters. I hope you are enjoying the wonderful spring weather we have been having. This month's Rural Matters, is filled with lots of great updates on what the team has been working on.

I want to highlight our advocacy efforts on Healthy School Meals for All students in New York State. We have been working really hard to educate our policy makers on the positive impact that offering free meals to all students in school has on our kids and community. We want to thank the New York State Assembly and New York State Senate for including funding for Healthy School Meals for All in their one house budgets. As of the writing of this newsletter, the 2023-2024 state budget has not been finalized and approved yet. You can read more about Healthy School Meals for All below.

April is National Stress Awareness Month. Stress, along with poor mental health, is one of the biggest health challenges we face. Too much stress can lead to mental health disorders like anxiety and depression. It can also lead to physical health problems such as heart disease, digestive issues, and insomnia, to list just a few. The National Institutes of Health Office of Research on Women's Health shares 7 Steps to Manage Stress and Build Resilience. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Please be on the look out for our 2022 Impact Report within the next few weeks. In this report, we will be highlighting how we advanced the health and well being of rural people and communities in 2022. We will also be featuring our 2023-2025 Strategic Plan, which will include our newly stated values of Service, Belonging, High Standards, and Integrity.

-Mark Bordeau
Executive Director

Advocacy Alert

Funding Healthy School Meals for All will reduce food insecurity in New York and help families struggling to make ends meet, but did you know it will also help NY farmers across the state?

The New York Farm Bureau knows providing free school meals for all students enables schools to build out Farm to School programs that partner with local farmers to provide fresh, local produce to students. [Read the Op-Ed](#) written by Bob Nolan, New York Farm Bureau state director.

[Learn more](#) about the broad benefits of Healthy School Meals for All. The one-house budget bills included support for universal school meals. For a deeper look at the NYS 2023-2024 budget and how it intersects with priorities impacting children and families, visit the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy's [Next Look](#).



April is National Garden Month, which was adopted 21 years ago by the National Gardening Association. Every April, communities, organizations, and individuals nationwide celebrate gardening during the month.

How can you celebrate?

Do some 'digging' to find out what plants grow best in your area.

Find out if you can be involved in a community or school garden.

Attend classes or programming to learn more about gardening.

[VINES](#) and [Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County](#) both offer gardening education.

Visit <https://garden.org/> for more information and resources to help you get started in your gardening journey!

Food and Health Network is currently reviewing the 2023 School Garden Grant applications. Keep an eye out for our award announcement to meet new and returning program recipients.

If you missed the 4/17 deadline, but are still interested in starting your own school garden, check out our [school garden resource guide](#) for other funding sources, tips on getting started, and lesson plans!

Volunteer Opportunity!

The team at the Food and Health Network needs your help! We use PRxID numbers to track data within our Produce Prescription Program and need your assistance getting the ID numbers on the vouchers.

Each of the booklets provides \$120 in fruits and veggies for patients living with or at risk of diet-related chronic disease who are also facing food insecurity. We'll be able to reach approximately 575 participants between Delaware, Broome, Tompkins and Tioga Counties through the program this year.

We will work on the voucher stickers throughout April and May. [Please visit this link](#) for

dates, times, and to register.

Volunteers Needed!

Light Snacks & Drinks Provided

BRING A FRIEND!

Voucher Preparation for Produce Rx Program:
Attach sticker labels to vouchers for tracking

Registration & Times:
tinyurl.com/2023voucherprep

Help Our Community!
Spend a couple hours of your time so our neighbors can receive affordable access to local produce!

RURAL HEALTH NETWORK
Serving South Central New York

455 Court Street
Binghamton, NY 13904



AmeriCorps

May							2023
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
28	29	30	31				

April dates available, too!

Getthere



Devin Bialy has joined Getthere and the Rural Health Network as a Public Health AmeriCorps member serving from April until November. Devin will enable people to access food, medical care, employment, and other services throughout the Broome County area by helping develop the Getthere Van Program. In addition to being the van's driver, Devin will be aiding Getthere's efforts to turn the van into a true community asset, developing partnerships and collaboration opportunities with local organizations around its ability to solve local challenges.

Devin said, "I just started my service term driving the Getthere van. I look forward to meeting the transportation needs of the people in our community and forging connections with like-minded individuals and organizations. I recently graduated from SUNY

Cortland. In my time there I learned from professors, as well as organizers of Cortland County Mutual Aid, the importance of solidarity in public service."

Hailing from Vestal in Broome County, Devin is an Eagle Scout. He said, "In my free time I enjoy longboarding along the Rail Trail or down the hills near my home. I also play

ultimate frisbee with a local pickup group when I am able. I have a pet bird named Danny Dove-ito. He and I enjoy listening to a variety of music including grunge, folk, and punk artists. I am looking forward to serving my community and meeting all of you!"



"Your decision to walk creates the path ahead." -Paulo Coelho

Program Coordinator Megan Arenas-Cardoso has been leading a small, informal walking group with 3-4 participants twice a week at Dorchester Park in Whitney Point. Participants are encouraged to go at their own pace, for as short or long of a distance as they are able to. Not only is this a great opportunity for seniors to be active, but it gives them an opportunity to be social and make new friends.



One participant says, *"It's a beautiful park trail. I'm never pushed to go further than I'm comfortable with any given day. The experience has been very enjoyable."* The walking group meets Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 1-2 PM, weather permitting. If you are interested in joining, please call Megan at 607-352-4681 for more information.

Northern Broome CARES serves adults 60+ who live in the towns of Barker, Lisle, Nanticoke, or Triangle including the village of Whitney Point. The program works to find tailored solutions that meet each individual's needs to support their continued independence.

If you can't join Megan and friends at Dorchester Park, use the tips from the American Heart Association to [Fit in Walking Morning, Noon, or Night](#).



We have a variety of Public Health AmeriCorps and VISTA positions available. This short video highlights the benefits of AmeriCorps service. Please share it with anyone considering a service opportunity. [Choose your Future. Choose AmeriCorps](#)

For information about positions in the region, please visit our [website](#) or contact [Haley Desilet](#) or [Mitchell Brooks](#).

Wellness At Work

In the spring of 2022, we were excited to reinvigorate our internal wellness committee,

and we would love to share with our partners all that we've been working on over the past year!

First, we revamped our quarterly "staff only" wellness e-newsletter. The newsletters are only circulated internally, and each issue has a seasonal theme focused on recipe ideas, book reviews, and astronomical happenings. We also include tips, tricks and ideas for indoor and outdoor activities.

Next, we restarted our monthly wellness updates. At each staff meeting, we take 10 minutes to either lead a relaxation exercise, teach a new self-care or workplace wellness tool, or provide an educational wellness resource to our coworkers.

This year, we will reinstate "staff work days," working together to spruce up our indoor and outdoor space. We have also brought back shared meals for the first time since before the COVID pandemic. Every few months, we host an opportunity for staff members to bring their favorite dishes to share, and we eat lunch and socialize together.

Because most of our wellness initiatives are low or no-cost, we have been able to integrate wellness into many facets of our work lives in meaningful ways. The wellness activities we include are all driven by an employee feedback survey, ensuring that activities are relevant and wanted. It can feel overwhelming to consider all the steps to implementing effective workplace wellness, but small steps can make a big impact. [Teambuilding.com](https://www.teambuilding.com) provides a great guide for completing your own workplace wellness "culture audit," to help you identify where to begin.

At the beginning of this year, we contracted with a new Employee Assistance Program (EAP). An EAP provides a confidential source that employees can use to find support and resources for certain challenges they face. Our EAP company also provides a list of training opportunities that we are able to offer as a part of our contract with them. To learn more about how an EAP can be beneficial to your employees, [check out this article](#).

Adult Mental Health First Aid Course

Rural Health Network is hosting an upcoming Adult Mental Health First Aid course. These courses are an opportunity for community members to learn the skills to recognize and respond to mental health challenges. Learners who complete the full course will earn a 3 year certification in Adult Mental Health First Aid.

**Thursday and Friday, May 4th and 5th
9AM-1:30PM
Rural Health Network, 455 Court Street, Binghamton, NY 13904**

We will schedule breaks throughout the day. Please feel free to pack a snack or lunch if you need!

Please note: This course session requires learners to use an online portal prior to and after the course to access the 3-year certification. If you would like to wait for a course session that does not require use of the portal, please see the note below for instructions on how to be added to the contact list:

To register for this course, or to be added to our contact list for future courses, please email [Julianne Lee](#) or call (607)788-6896 to be added to our contact list.



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

LEARN HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY AND NEIGHBORS

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among adults.

You'll build skills and confidence you need to reach out and provide initial support to those who are struggling. You'll also learn how to help connect them to appropriate support.

AFTER THE COURSE, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO:

- Recognize common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges.
- Recognize common signs and symptoms of substance use challenges.
- Understand how to interact with a person in crisis.
- Know how to connect a person with help.
- Use self-care tools and techniques.

Join the more than
2.6 MILLION
First Aiders who have chosen to be the difference in their community.

Join us for Adult Mental Health First Aid

Thursday & Friday May 4th and 5th
9:00am - 1:30pm

MUST PARTICIPATE IN BOTH DAYS TO COMPLETE COURSE REQUIREMENTS!

Location: Rural Health Network SCNY
455 Court Street, Binghamton NY 13904

FREE to Community Members

REGISTER TODAY!

Pre-registration required by Thursday, April 27th

To register, or to inquire about future courses, contact
Julianne Lee: jlee@rhnscny.org, (607)788-6896

Learn how to respond with the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (**ALGEE**):

- A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm.
- L**isten nonjudgmentally.
- G**ive reassurance and information.
- E**ncourage appropriate professional help.
- E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies.



This program is made possible with funding support from the Community Foundation for South Central NY

For more information, visit MHFA.org

News, Articles of Interest, and Resources

Healthy Delaware IRT (Innovative Readiness Training) Seeking Volunteers

Coming in July, the military will be in Walton to serve, at no cost, Delaware County (and beyond) residents by providing medical, dental, optometry and veterinary care as part of an Incident Readiness Training. Delaware Opportunities (in collaboration with the county) is looking for volunteers for the event. [Please sign up](#) and/or pass this along to those you know who may be interested in participating.

Promoting Healthy Aging to Reduce the Risk of Dementia

[This article](#) published by Generations - American Society on Aging explores the risk factors for dementia, implications for public health, and action steps.

Food Insufficiency During the COVID-19 Pandemic: New York State Trends 2020-2022

A new [NYHealth data brief](#) examines household trends in food insufficiency in New York State from 2020 through 2022. It highlights differences between households with and without children; explores disparities by age, income, race, and ethnicity; and offers recommendations for State and federal policies that could alleviate hunger.

Rural Mental Health's Stressors, Barriers and Protective Factors

Published by the The Rural Monitor, [this article](#) is a Q&A with Dawn Morales, PhD, who is the Program Chief of the Office of Rural Mental Health Research at the National Institutes of Health.

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