

Dear Friend(s),

We offer a special “shout out” to Grand Union and Price Chopper in this newsletter because their contributions increase the quantity and variety that we are able to offer to our pantry patrons. We, at TCRM, highly value variety and choice. For us, it is one of the ways in which we manifest dignity to those who visit our pantry. One patron recently remarked, “I’ve never been to a food pantry like this before.” Food recovery personnel at the Food Bank of the Southern Tier have facilitated these partnerships, and we owe all a debt of thanks.

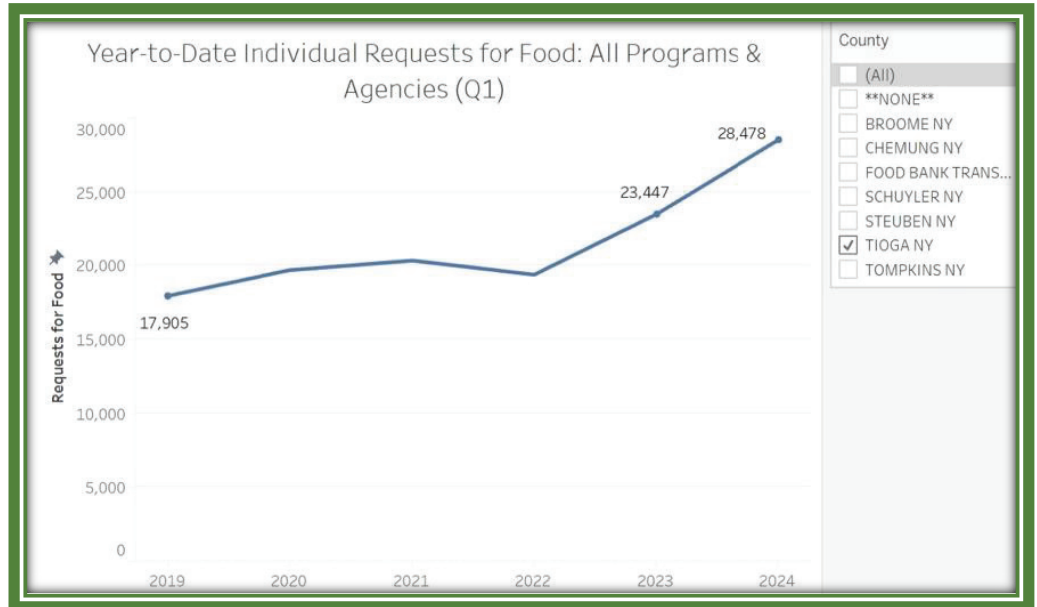
The graph below, disappointingly, points to the stark reality that continues to haunt not only Tioga County, but our friends and neighbors across our state and country.



SR. MARY O'BRIEN, CSJ
Executive Director

Looking at all of the Food Bank of the Southern Tier programs and agencies in Tioga County, the number of individual requests for Q1 2024 (January – March) is up 21 % compared to 2023 and up 59 percent compared to 2019.

Source:
Food Bank of the Southern Tier



Years ago, we would have thought that \$15 an hour, the current per-hour pay in New York state for workers at McDonald’s, was a more than decent wage. Perhaps the only silver lining to the aftermath of COVID was that it helped to increase hourly pay levels. Still, the reality that we daily see from people who come to us seeking assistance is that we are far from offering a basic living wage.

Our neighbors in Pennsylvania provide a \$7.25 minimum wage. That low base pay affects all, too, who work in higher-echelon jobs. For example, a recent Tioga County pantry visitor, a full-time employed RN working in Pennsylvania, mentioned that she had eagerly been awaiting the merger of Guthrie and Lourdes so she could apply for a \$50-an-hour position. But here in New York state, while our minimum wage has increased, the following are some of the disturbing statistics we are seeing in the lives of those who come to us seeking financial assistance.

Month	No. Assisted	New	Seniors	P/T Employed	F/T Employed	Disabled
May	42	31	20	7	14	16
April	32	11	12	1	15	13
March	38	23	4	1	16	1
February	35	16	10	7	20	2

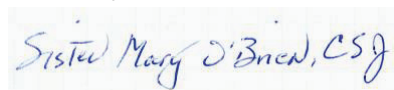
Upon seeing these monthly statistics, one of our Board members asked if there was a common denominator to the huge increase we are seeing in new and full-time employed people asking for help. Galen Morehead, TCRM’s Outreach Services Coordinator, after viewing his financial aid request paperwork, noted that, across the board, the results showed low wages.

While this issue is far more complex than a brief article can expose, I mention these statistics to highlight the need but also to give great thanks to our volunteers and donors who support our ministry, enabling TCRM to be a haven of hope for many.

I am daily humbled by my co-workers and volunteers who reach out with care and compassion to those who walk through our doors. I am awed by the diverse ways in which we offer hope to those affected by one emergency, one car repair, one medical surgery, one victim of a scam, one surprisingly high energy bill. Two weeks ago we helped a single dad with two young children, freshly out of prison after a 1½ year stay, obtain an “out of the box” request for an e-bike, critical for helping him find meaningful employment. He was living in a rural area and unable to drive because of previous alcohol abuse. We were able to provide a hand up to start him on a new path.

Such stories are too numerous to mention. How can we do this? You who offer time, talent and treasure are the lynchpin to our success stories. Thank you immensely for supporting TCRM and the ministry we provide to our neighbors across Tioga. As we look forward in July to celebrating our 46th anniversary, we count on your continued support. You have a daily place in my heart and in my prayer.

Gratefully,



Sister Mary O’Brien, CSJ
Executive Director



Quilt donations help keep our clients warm in winter.



‘Souper Bowl’ Food Drive at Apalachin Elementary School.



Croton Hose Team at their annual Food Drive.