



# FOOD SECURITY STORIES

LIVE UNITED®

## Getting Healthy Food to People Who Work Hard But Struggle to Pay Their Bills

While some have returned to work after losing their jobs in 2020, many families in our region are still getting back on their feet after another difficult year. Food pantries are still seeing an overwhelming demand. Because food is the most flexible part of a household budget, struggling people find themselves unable to cover the full cost of groceries or resorting to cheap, unhealthy food after paying rent, utilities, and transportation.

To put more healthy food on the tables of struggling families—with your help—we have:

- Expanded the innovative **Healthy Savings** program. More than **680** people can receive \$10 of free, fresh produce and other grocery discounts each week, just by swiping a card or using the app. More than **\$122,000** in free, fresh produce has been provided through this program, which allows shoppers to choose the healthy foods they like at the grocery store. *With your help, we would like to expand the program to **1,200** families this year.*
- Provided mini-grants totaling \$60,000 to our partners in the **Stamford and Danbury Food Collaboratives**, as well as **New Milford Food Bank**, enabling them to purchase more healthy food.
- Collected more than **7,000** pounds of food at our Days of Action in Northern Fairfield/Southern Litchfield and Stamford.
- Distributed up to 1,200 boxes of fresh food at Danbury High School on Saturdays in August and September 2021, working with partners at Connecticut Food Bank/Foodshare and Walnut Hill Community Pantry.

**687** families are able to receive free, fresh produce at the grocery store through our innovative Healthy Savings program. With your help, we would like to expand the program to **1,200** families

For more information on how United Way of Western Connecticut helps struggling families obtain healthy food, go to [www.uwwesternct.org/health](http://www.uwwesternct.org/health)



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# Latesha Struggles to Provide Healthy Food, Despite Working Hard

Latesha and her husband have two children in elementary school. They both work—Latesha works full time as a client manager at an accounting management company, and her husband works in the grocery industry. His hours vary and are unpredictable, but he typically works 20 to 30 hours per week.

Despite working hard, Latesha often depends on food pantries to feed their children. She said she has learned to make paying rent the number one priority in her budget, sometimes leaving her a little short on money for food. This was especially true when her husband was laid off of work for a period of time.

“I filled penny rolls and pawned jewelry to come up with the rent,” she says. Last year, her husband had to make a visit to the hospital emergency room, and they are still paying off the bill.

When COVID-19 closed her children’s school and her offices, Latesha found herself trying to juggle the demands of her job—conference calls, deadlines, communicating with clients—while also helping her children with their daily coursework, and assisting her kids when they had a meltdown or conflicts with each other.

“It was so stressful,” she said. “I often broke down and cried. I explained to the teachers and my boss that we had to take two days off for our mental health.”

She uses United Way of Western Connecticut’s Healthy Savings program to help her receive discounts on groceries, providing her with \$10 in free produce each week, in addition to discounts on other healthy foods. She also uses United Way’s ALICE Enrichment Fund to pay for out-of-school activities for her children.

Latesha and her husband count on United Way of Western Connecticut’s programs to make their lives just a little easier during a very stressful time. For more information on how we help struggling families obtain healthy food, go to [www.uwwesternct.org/health](http://www.uwwesternct.org/health)

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