



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jen Metzger

## Senator Metzger Praises Food Security Innovators, Talks Food Access and Ongoing Community Initiatives amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

JEN METZGER June 12, 2020

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**Hudson Valley and Catskills, NY...**State Senator Jen Metzger yesterday led a [Facebook livestream discussion on food insecurity](#) and the different community-based initiatives working to enhance food access in the 42nd Senate district. Senator Metzger was joined by food security innovators, Amanda LaValle, director of [Ulster County Department of the Environment](#) and facilitator of [Project Resilience](#), and Sims Foster, co-founder of [Foster](#)

Supply Hospitality and the A Single Bite Project in what was the eleventh episode of her Community Conversations online series.

Project Resilience was initiated by Ulster County Executive Pat Ryan to address the twin needs of feeding the hungry and helping local restaurants survive during the pandemic. With funds raised by the County through private donations, local restaurants prepared meals that were then delivered by volunteers to food insecure households in their communities. Over 160 local restaurants prepared more than 200,000 meals in the first phase of the program. Senator Metzger spoke with LaValle about how the innovative local food distribution effort has now pivoted to grocery deliveries for residents most in need, using existing models from programs like SNAP, WIC, and various charity networks.

In Sullivan County, a different model was created by Sims Foster and Kirsten Harlow Foster, co-owners of Foster Supply and Hospitality, who shifted the focus of their non-profit organization during the pandemic from a school-based educational program for children about food and nutrition to a philanthropic food production operation that has, to date, prepared over 20,000 meals for food insecure families in the county. The Fosters have teamed up with local Rotary and Lions Clubs in this effort, known as Operation Feed Phase 2. Foster spoke with Senator Metzger about his efforts to source ingredients for the meals from local farms, and the importance of providing accompanying information about the meals in both Spanish and English to serve the diverse community members in need.

"We've seen incredibly innovative, home-grown initiatives developed at the county and community levels during this pandemic to put food on the tables of those in need, and both Ulster Resilience and A Single Bite exemplify the creative use of local resources and assets to respond to a real community need," **said Senator Metzger.**

**Amanda LaValle, director of Ulster County Department of the Environment and facilitator of Project Resilience said,** “I was happy to join Senator Metzger’s Community Conversation to share more about Ulster County’s Project Resilience community feeding effort during the COVID-19 crisis. We have served over 200,000 meals, none of which would be possible without our municipal partners, participating restaurants, local non-profits, hundreds of volunteers, and the thousands of people who have financially supported the effort. It is an amazing project and a true reflection of our community.”

**Sims Foster, co-founder of Foster Supply Hospitality and the A Single Bite Project said,** “Thank you to Senator Metzger for inviting me to participate in this forum to discuss what is a critical need in our County and our District. The Senator's commitment to community and service is core to her leadership and we appreciated greatly the opportunity to talk about our not for profit project that is feeding our neighbors most in need during the crisis and beyond, A Single Bite.”

As Chair of the Senate’s Agriculture Committee, Senator Metzger has been working closely with New York farms and the Department of Agriculture and Markets during the COVID-19 crisis to make sure that farm-fresh products in the region can be purchased by food banks to serve food-insecure communities in need. She recently introduced a bill (S8504) that would double funding for the state's farm to food bank program, Nourish NY, using \$25 million of unallocated funding from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020 or other future federal stimulus funding.

The Senator’s **Community Conversations** series streams live on Thursdays at 5:00 PM on [her Facebook page](#), engaging local experts in discussions on COVID-19 topics important to Hudson Valley and Catskill communities. **Next Thursday's episode** will host Chief of New Paltz Rescue Squad, Matt Goodnow, and President & CEO of Mobile Life Support Services, Scott Woebse, to discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our local EMS system and

first responders.

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