

GardenShare is a locally led nonprofit organization seeking to end hunger and strengthen food security in the North Country.

Our Mission

GardenShare works to build a North Country where all of us have enough to eat and enough to share—where our food choices are healthy for us, for our communities, and for the environment.

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GardenShare is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, so your donations are tax deductible.

For more information or to donate online visit
www.GardenShare.org.

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Dear GardenShare Friends,

At this time of year, we often pause to count our blessings, to look back on the year just ending and to think ahead to the year to come. As I do that this year, I'm overwhelmed with gratitude for all that has been and excitement for all that is to come.

I'm grateful that the efforts of so many of you have built an organization that is **making a difference for people at risk of hunger in St. Lawrence County and for our local farmers.** I'm grateful for all who made it possible for me to build an amazing career in anti-hunger work in Connecticut. And I'm grateful that all of this work in both places has given me this opportunity to return to my beloved North Country as the new Director of GardenShare when the time was just right for me!

Working in the anti-hunger movement through a food bank for the last 30 years has made it very clear to me how the industrialization of our food system has led us down the wrong path. It has affected our economy and employment and it has affected our health, especially in remote and rural places like St. Lawrence County.

We are **growing less and less of our own food** and importing more and more of our food from across the country or even from other countries. And at the same time, **more and more people line up at our local food pantries and community kitchens** because they cannot afford to feed their own families. **Small local farms are struggling** and diet-related diseases are on the rise.

Here are some stories I have heard and things I have learned as I have begun my work for GardenShare:

My sister-in-law volunteers at a food pantry in Gouverneur and told me this incredible story. One recent week, she met an elderly woman who had walked all the way from Fine to Gouverneur. I checked and it's 28 miles! The woman was preparing to walk back when my sister-in-law heard her story. The church's pastor found a ride to get the woman home with her three bags of groceries.

Only 42% of the children in St. Lawrence County who are eligible for a free breakfast at school actually receive that breakfast. Often, it's as simple as the buses getting kids to school too late so there's no time for breakfast. If we could reach the goal of 70% of the children who are eligible for that free breakfast at school actually getting it, an additional 652 children would get a healthy breakfast every day of the school year. And it would bring an additional \$168,565 in federal funds into our county.

(over, please)

While GardenShare has made it possible for people receiving SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly called Food Stamps) to use those benefits at the farmers markets in the county, and even provides bonuses to those who do, too few people know this option is there for them, which means fewer sales for the farmer and less local, healthy food for low-income people.

These problems are all interconnected - food, hunger, health, farming, transportation, access to information, etc. - and require policy solutions as well as volunteer-driven efforts. **The food pantries and the free will dinners are all good, but they are not going to solve these problems.**

We need to find **new ways to think about these issues, to change the conversation about food and hunger** in our communities. GardenShare is right at the center of these conversations.

As we look to the future, I'm excited to be working on the development of a county food policy council, which would help our county and local governments, as well as our churches and nonprofit organizations, start to think and talk about food and hunger issues in new ways. Do we transport the woman from Fine to the food pantry or do we bring the food to her? Do we adjust the school bus schedules just a little or offer "brown bag" breakfasts so those school children can get a healthy start to their day? How do we help people using SNAP benefits get healthier food with those benefits and how do we help our local farmers make a living?

I am truly grateful for the many dedicated people who founded and have sustained GardenShare over the years - people like you - donors, volunteers, farmers, and supporters of our mission in all sorts of ways. With your generous support, we have accomplished much. But there is much still to do, and I am excited to be here to do that important work with you.

I hope we can continue to count on your continued support. *Please join me in our efforts to make a real difference in the North Country by using the enclosed reply card and envelope to make a year-end gift to GardenShare today!*



Gloria J. McAdam
Executive Director

P.S. I look forward to joining the GardenShare team full time after the first of the year!