

# Giving thanks for people who do the thankless work

BY PATRICK J. BRADLEY

Recently, my wife, Linda, asked if I would be writing something for Thanksgiving. I told her no.

Although it's my favorite holiday, Thanksgiving has already been written to death. The president "pardoning" a turkey on the White House lawn. The homeless being served Thanksgiving dinner at the local soup kitchen. People having to work while their families celebrate. The first winter storm. The rising prices of Christmas trees and cranberry sauce. All those travelers heading home to see their loved ones.

I'd already written my share of those stories. Sorry Linda. Not interested this year.

Then I started reading a book manuscript that was written by a friend, the late Jim DeVaney. Jim was a career crisis intervention specialist who responded to hostage/barricade situations, convinced emotionally distraught people not to shoot their loved ones, talked jumpers out of going over the falls, convinced others that their lives were too valuable to end by suicide. He did all that and so much more for people with mental illness.

Reading that manuscript reminded me that many don't appreciate the importance of that work, nor are they properly thankful for those who do it. And I realized there was a Thanksgiv-

ing story that still needed to be written – an ode to those unheralded people whose important work we should be grateful for every day, not just on Thanksgiving.

For example, we all appreciate the work of police officers and firefighters, and we're aware of the dangers they face. But what of their radio dispatchers? Working under tremendous pressure, they calm frantic callers and deftly direct emergency responders whenever there's a crisis.

Hospital doctors and nurses? Everybody loves and respects them. But when's the last time you gave thanks for X-ray technicians or the hardworking kitchen

employees or the environmental services staff – the people who clean and sanitize patient rooms and surgical suites? How about pharmacists? They're the most important but least appreciated members of the health care team.

Here's some breaking news! Erin Burnett, Wolf Blitzer, Judy Woodruff, Lester Holt and Norah O'Donnell are high-profile, handsomely paid news readers. But who really does all their work? I'll tell you who: their producers – the people behind the scenes who work the phones, chase down stories and sources, schedule interviews and, in many cases, write the stories.

Without producers, "60 Minutes" wouldn't last 60 seconds, and "48 Hours" would take 48 days to complete an investigation. Thank you producers!

Are you an animal lover? Be thankful for the men and women who clean the cages and kennels at the SPCA. Do you do your grocery shopping at Tops? Wegmans? Be thankful for the hardy souls who work midnight shifts to stock the shelves.

Don't stop now. There are hundreds of other examples. Feel free to add yours to the list.

And as you say grace before you pass the mashed potatoes, pause for a moment or two and give thanks for them all.

## KeyBank, First Niagara Foundation & General Motors provide over \$50,000 in funding to Field & Fork Network

### Investment funds 'Food Pathways,' a professional development program for Niagara Falls High School students

Niagara Falls High School students will have an opportunity to enhance their education and receive professional development thanks to an investment from two foundations focused on strengthening Niagara County.

Food Pathways, a program developed by Field & Fork Network, received a \$32,375 grant from First Niagara Foundation and a \$25,000 grant from General Motors. The funding will prepare 20 students to take on important careers that help improve and sustain the local food system.

"This innovative collaboration is connecting young people to the community in a unique way by providing career development



opportunities while enhancing access to a fresh, affordable and sustainable food system," said Elizabeth Gurney, executive director of the KeyBank and First Niagara foundations. "Our in-

vestment in their future will help strengthen our regional economy and create plans and pathways to help students reach their full potential."

A press release explained, "Food Pathways was developed and piloted last year to address gaps that exist between the workforce and food system employers in Niagara County. A partnership with Niagara Falls High School quickly formed, and a collaboration with the Niagara Global Tourism Institute helped create a comprehensive curriculum to engage seniors in exploring new career paths and learning tangible professional skills from leading professionals to better prepare them for the futures."

Field & Fork Network Project Director Tom Lowe said, "We are thankful for the continued support from GM, who also funded the pilot, and to First Niagara Foundation for stepping up to fill the gap, enabling us to continue this program. This is a unique opportunity for many of these students, and one that has the power to transform their lives; I feel lucky I get to be a part of it."

NFHS Superintendent Mark Laurie said, "For the second year, NFHS students will benefit from this partnership. It's a chance to learn in a practical setting about new career paths and life skills that will stay with them as they transition to college or a career."

Food Pathways will launch in January 2023, offering 20 Niagara Falls High School seniors a \$500 stipend to participate in the 14-week program that explores



Pictured, front row: student Francesca DiCamillo and FeedMore WNY CEO Tara Ellis; back row: former executive director of F-BITES Meghan Boarts, and John Osberg of POWER of Ozmosis. (Submitted)

career paths in the food system. The curriculum combines in-class professional development activities such as personal branding, social intelligence, team building, with food system experiences both in the classroom and out in the field at local businesses within the food system.

The press release said, "Field & Fork Network is a New York state

nonprofit organization that connects communities to innovative solutions that foster a sustainable food system. Whether we're connecting farmers to new economic opportunities or connecting consumers to affordable fresh food, our work is designed to link communities together to make them stronger." Learn more at [www.fieldandforknetwork.com](http://www.fieldandforknetwork.com).

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