



Member Spotlight: *Finger Lakes Fresh Food Hub & Challenge Workforce Solutions*

Consumers in search of local, artisan tortillas are in luck thanks to a partnership between the new Finger Lakes Fresh Food Hub and Stefan Senders of Wide Awake Bakery. The multi-grain tortillas, made at the 18,000 square foot Food Hub in Groton, NY, use a blend of whole grains grown and milled by Farmer Ground Flour in Trumansburg, NY and are available at a growing number of stores in the FaHN region and beyond.



Local tortillas are just one of the many ways that the Finger Lakes Fresh Food Hub, a division of Challenge Workforce Solutions, is improving access to local food year-round and connecting area farmers to consumers. Despite high demand, the aggregation, processing, and distribution of regional food remains a challenge for scaling up farm to consumer connections and creating viable regional food systems. The new Food Hub will play an important role in increasing the

efficiency of these connections by aggregating products from regional farms, adding value through washing, processing and packaging for pickup by stores, restaurants, schools, and food banks throughout New York. Through the Food Hub, the Food Bank of the Southern Tier hopes to increase their ability to distribute more locally grown, nutritious food to individuals in the Southern Tier. The hub expects to handle a range of products, including fresh vegetables, dehydrated fruits, sliced apples, shredded cabbage/coleslaw, and individually wrapped fruits.

Unlike many of the growing number of food hubs around the county that are directly involved in distribution, Finger Lakes Fresh is able to build on their agricultural experience producing high quality leafy greens and herbs in their hydroponics greenhouse and utilize a large existing network of distributors.

This collaboration makes it easier for consumers to purchase local products and supports farm stability and agricultural growth. Particularly for small to mid-sized farms in our region, this partnership helps to reduce barriers to accessing institutional and retail markets such as hospitals, food banks, schools and businesses. The Finger Lakes Fresh Food Hub is also projected to create over 35 new jobs for people with and without employment barriers over the next three years.

Founded in 1968, Challenge Workforce Solutions is a non-profit, vocational organization supporting people with disabilities and employment barriers in developing their skills and interests to meet the ever-changing needs of today's workplace and be productive and contributing members of their community. As part of Challenge's social enterprise model Finger Lakes Fresh provides integrated work opportunities while generating revenue to support the programs and services for clients.

To learn more visit www.fingerlakesfresh.com/FLF/