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John Boccacino:

Hello and welcome back to the 'Ca Conversations' podcast. I'm John Boccacino, senior internal communications specialist at Syracuse University.

Colleen Heflin:

Locally, this week we are going to have some food drives where people can donate food that will go both to the Hendrick Chapel and also to the community food bank. I think these are great ways of dealing with the bottom need in our community. Those emergency food assistance providers are great ways to deal with the food insecurity if it's coming in a cyclical way. Providing a small amount of food can really be meaningful and help support a community.

John Boccacino:

Yesterday on this week's episode of the 'Ca Conversations' podcast, I am honored to welcome on both Colleen Heflin, who is the associate dean, chair and professor in the Maxwell School's Public Administration and International Affairs Department, and Leonard Lopoo, a professor in the Maxwell School's Public Administration and International Affairs Department, who also serves as the director of the Maxwell X Lab and as the Paul Volcker Chair and Behavioral Economics.

John Boccacino:

This week's topic is going to be focusing on food justice, food insecurity, and the amazing research being done by the Maxwell X Lab, partnering with folks like Colleen and Leonard through their leadership here at Syracuse University. They were kind enough to join for this week's episode, which again, we'll talk about food justice and food insecurity and about the Syracuse and central New York areas and so much more. Colleen and Leonard, thank you for making the time to join today.

Colleen Heflin:

Happy to be here.

Len Lopoo:

Yeah, it's great to be here. Thanks for the invitation.

John Boccacino:

The Office of Community Engagement is hosting Food Insecurity Awareness Week, a week-long program designed to raise awareness about food insecurity both on the Syracuse University campus and in the city of Syracuse. And Colleen, I am so excited to be featuring a real expert in this area of food insecurity. How exactly did you get started in this line of work, and what does your work in food insecurity look like?

Colleen Heflin:

different than people add a lot to the discussion. And so I've spent a lot of my career since 1996 out of trying to unpack the causes and consequences and local programs, food security, but also sometimes the problems with implementation may actually create problems with food security.

John Boccacino:

That's interesting to talk about the designation, the differentiation between the poverty, which of course the SDC has one of the highest poverty rates in the country at over 30%, one of the highest child poverty rates in the country, a real issue, food insecurity in the central New York and the SDC area. How do we get to this point where we go from high poverty to high food insecurity and we go from children who are struggling to get their education?

Colleen Heflin:

I invite Len to join me this afternoon. He knows a lot about the SDC area and has done a lot of work. I think this has to do with us again at the local, state, and federal level. This doesn't happen overnight. This has been a longstanding problem having to do with the economic situation. Partly I would say having to do with the educational system and training of workers that the jobs available is bifurcated. As well as thinking there's some issues with healthcare and access to education that can support healthy families.

Colleen Heflin:

And then I think it's often a lot about what's lived in many parts of the county and SDC. Citywide we've got small local designations here. And so what's the ability to have geographic areas



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Colleen Heflin:

So let me start. So I've been researching the SNAP, commonly known as the food stamp program, for some time. And one of the findings that have helped illuminate is that there's a problem called





Locally I think to address food insecurity would really be thinking about strengthening our  
generally I think locally we're going to have some food deserts where people can  
donate food. That will go both ways. I think Hendricks Chapel as well as the community food  
bank. I think these are great ways of dealing with the basic need in our community. Those  
emergency food assistance programs are great ways to deal with food insecurity if it's occurring in  
a cyclical or providing several days worth of food can really be meaningful and help support a  
community.

John Boccacino:

And when it comes to the activities that are planned here on the day camps for Food Insecurity  
Awareness Week, what are some of the biggest ways you feel that staff, students and our  
faculty and alumni can get involved and to combat this food insecurity problem?

Colleen Heflin:

Well, I think them to be involved in the food deserts that are going to be occurring across campus.  
There's also going to be some opportunities to donate to Hendricks Chapel and support local  
community food bank as well as many of the other food bank and food kitchens around Syracuse  
University.

John Boccacino:

When it comes to the X Lab, Len, I want to tell our audience a little bit more about you and your  
background. How did you become so interested in this line of work? Because it seems like it's  
fascinating taking something like this, which is a real world problem and how to tackle it and address  
it. You're a problem solver. You and the X Lab folks are working on and tackle these problems. How did  
you get involved in that? It seems like it's many causal factors. (He e (n an) d f. a (C) M31 6)1 (e) (1) (1) (o) (g) (1) (1) (1) 5DC 0 -2.93 TD's





To be more granular though it really is about how we are supporting families the child accelerated learning programs improving the education, school meals I think there's a whole program here that we really need to fine tune and make sure that we're doing does it feel good and sound good, but is it effective. And so I think we need to take this sort of micro approach that the X Lab is using and apply this teach level of policy but in the bottom, I think just give people food. We know that's in the bottom. Ultimately this shouldn't be what we should continue to support broader change, but we should make sure that change is actually going to be effective, it does it sound right

John Boccacino:

It gives me great confidence, and it's solid the campus community, knowing that we've got such talented and passionate leaders like Colleen Heflin and Len Lopoo coming in here and really trying to attack these problems and working on partnerships to make sure that we can address these issues and to thank you both for making the time to join on the podcast Len, keep up the great work in the X Lab, and thank you for reports today

Len Lopoo:

Oh please.

Colleen Heflin:

Thanks Len.

Len Lopoo:

Thank you

Colleen Heflin:

Thank you Thank you John.

John Boccacino:

Thanks for checking out the latest installment of the 'Conversations' podcast My name is John Boccacino, signing off for the 'Conversations' podcast