# AIO Food and Energy Assistance awarded \$10,000 through Make More Happen Awards

Thanks to the support of the community, Allen Insurance and Financial has officially awarded a \$10,000 donation to AIO Food & Energy Assistance (AIO), a nonprofit organization that provides low barrier access to food, energy, and diaper assistance with compassion and respect to households across Knox County, Maine.

AIO plays a vital role in the community, assisting over 10% of Knox County residents in Maine. Each week, more than 450 families rely on the AIO food market, while 750 students benefit from the weekend meals program. In 2024, AIO provided 526 energy assistance gifts, easing the burden for households so they don't need to decide between "heating or eating". The \$10,000 donation would provide food for 450 families coming to the AIO market, Weekend Meals for 750 students, diapers for 35 families, and energy payments for approximately 15 households.

"Helping to make our community a better place has always been important to our team, and AIO has given us a way to make a real difference," said Jill Lang, marketing director at Allen Insurance and Financial, in a news release. "We are grateful to Liberty Mutual and Safeco for providing much-needed funds to continue their impactful work and thrilled at the opportunity to double the donation just by calling on the community to show their support."

Allen Insurance and Financial has supported AIO for years through volunteer efforts, fundraising campaigns and community outreach. Since 2020, the Allen team has mobilized volunteers

and provided significant sponsorship each year. In 2025 alone, AIO, with the support of Allen Insurance and Financial and others in the community, has collected nearly 2,400 pounds of food and raised \$39,000 in donations—enough to sustain AIO's essential programs through the harsh winter months.

"Recognizing independent agents' dedication to their communities and nonprofit partners is what the Make More Happen Awards are all about," said Stephanie Davis, Safeco Insurance Senior Territory Manager. "Allen Insurance and Financial is an outstanding example of how agencies can make a real difference, and we hope sharing their story inspires others to give back as well."

Throughout 2025, Liberty Mutual and Safeco Insurance will select up to 36 independent agencies nationwide for a Make More Happen Award, donating up to \$360,000 to nonprofits they support. Agencies become eligible for the award by submitting applications showcasing their commitment to a specific cause.

For more information, visit <a href="www.agentgiving.com">www.agentgiving.com</a>.

# Allen Insurance and Financial Earns \$10,000 Make More Happen Award for AIO Food & Energy Assistance

Allen Insurance and Financial has earned the full \$10,000 Make More Happen Award from Liberty Mutual and Safeco Insurance in

recognition of the agency's ongoing support of AIO Food & Energy Assistance (AIO), a nonprofit providing low-barrier access to food, energy, and diaper assistance across Knox County.

The award initially included a \$5,000 donation, with the opportunity to double it through an online campaign. Thanks to overwhelming community support, the 500-vote threshold was met, unlocking the full \$10,000 for AIO's essential programs.

"We're incredibly grateful to our community for stepping up to help us reach this goal," said Jill Lang, marketing director at Allen Insurance and Financial. "This donation will go a long way in supporting AIO's work, especially during the most challenging times of the year."

Each week, more than 450 families rely on the AIO food market, and 750 students benefit from the weekend meals program. In 2024 alone, AIO provided over 500 energy assistance gifts to help local families stay warm without sacrificing meals.

Allen Insurance and Financial has long supported AIO through fundraising, volunteerism, and outreach. This year alone, nearly 2,400 pounds of food have been collected and \$39,000 raised to help sustain AIO's vital services.

The Make More Happen Awards recognize independent insurance agencies across the U.S. for their commitment to nonprofit partners. Allen Insurance and Financial is among 36 agencies selected in 2025, with Liberty Mutual and Safeco donating up to \$360,000 in total.

# Society of Certified Insurance Counselors Honors Martha Wentworth for 20 Years of Dedicated Leadership and Professional Development



<u>Martha Wentworth</u>, CIC, CRM, CPRM, was recently recognized for professional leadership and advanced knowledge by the Society of Certified Insurance Counselors.

Martha was awarded a certificate of achievement recognizing 20 consecutive years of successfully maintaining the Certified Insurance Counselor (CIC) designation. The CIC designation requires an annual continuing education update ensuring that her education is always up-to-date and relevant.

Martha is a business insurance producer who serves clients across Maine from the Allen's Waterville office.

In addition to her CIC designations, Wentworth maintains the Certified risk Manager (CRM) and Certified Personal Risk Manager (CPRM) designations. She recently celebrated her 25th work

anniversary with the company.

"The CIC program's unwavering dedication to fostering professional excellence has set a high standard in our industry," said Dan Bookham, senior vice president for business development at Allen. "Martha's consistent pursuit of growth and development is truly inspiring, serving as a model for her colleagues within our company and across the Maine insurance community."

ABOUT THE CIC PROGRAM: The CIC Program is nationally recognized as the premier continuing education program for insurance professionals, with programs offered in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. Headquartered in Austin, Texas, the Society of CIC is a not-for-profit organization and the founding program of The National Alliance for Insurance Education & Research.

# Food in every seat. Help for every family. Fill the Strand is Jan. 20, 2025

On Monday, January 20, 2025 AIO Food and Energy Assistance will host its fifth *Fill The Strand* food and funds drive to benefit AIO's Food Assistance, Energy Assistance, Weekend Meal, and Diaper Assistance Programs. This event challenges the community to fill every seat in the historic theater with bags of food and funds for AIO's programs. AIO has raised over \$125,000 in the first four *Fill the Strand* events. In celebration of AIO's 35th anniversary in 2025 the goal for the fifth Fill the Strand event

is to fill the theater seats 3 times and to raise \$35,000. The snow date is Monday, January 27.

"With long, cold nights, Fill the Strand is a well-timed, important opportunity for AIO to refill shelves with food following the holidays. I love it because it is a community-wide event that serves as a great opportunity to teach children about food insecurity and helping neighbors in need." says AIO Executive Director Alan Kearl. "Powered by Allen Insurance and Financial and hosted by the Strand Theatre, this event is a testament of a community that cares for one another. As many families face greater challenges making ends meet, AIO continues to keep pace with the need for food and energy assistance. In the past year, we have provided over 668,000 pounds of food through more than 14,000 visits to our pantry market. That is a 29% increase over last year's record-setting number of visits! Fill The Strand is vital to keeping food available for those who need it."

Monetary donations are welcome — and in fact your dollar goes further since AIO can purchase food through partners at a competitive price. Individuals can fill one theater seat with a bag of food or sponsor a seat at \$35. Your \$35 monetary donation can buy up to \$125 worth of food. Those interested in sponsoring a seat through a financial donation can donate online at <a href="https://www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand">www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand</a>.

Non-perishable food with a current expiration date is appreciated (no glass please). AIO would be grateful for donations of the most needed items including sauces and condiments, canned goods, toilet paper, personal care products, pasta, coffee & tea. Whether a monetary gift or food donation — your support will help the people in our community who need it the most.

Food collection sites have been established at area businesses, including Allen Insurance and Financial offices (Rockland and Camden), the Strand Theatre, First National Bank (Rockland branches), South End Grocery (Rockland), Camden National Bank (Rockland), The Grasshopper Shop (Rockland), Rock City Coffee (Rockland), Mid Coast Credit Union (Rockland) and AIO Food and Energy Assistance (Rockland). On Monday, January 20th volunteers will be at the Strand Theatre between 9:00-2:00pm to receive food and funds donations. Drive-up and drop-off service will be available or come in the Strand Theatre, located at 345 Main Street, Rockland, to deliver your food and funds donations.

AIO is proud to partner with two business leaders who are instrumental in making the *Fill the Strand* event possible — The Strand Theatre who hosts the event and Allen Insurance and Financial who helps power the event, through their financial support, as well as a team of employees who volunteer during the day of the event in greeting donors, collecting and organizing donations.

AIO is grateful to the generous support of its sponsors which include, at the <u>Leadership level</u> — First National Bank and First National Wealth Management, Rockland Plaza and Frantz Furniture Showroom. At the <u>Partner level</u> — Gartley & Dorsky, The Inn at Ocean's Edge, 250 Main Hotel, Knights of Columbus Limerock Council 136, Cates Real Estate, and South End Grocery. At the <u>Champion level</u> — Maine State Credit Union, Mercedes-Benz of Scarborough, Nebo Lodge Island Inn & Restaurant and The Landing, North Haven. And at the <u>Business level</u> — Page Gallery, Farnsworth Art Museum, Jess's Market, Nina June, Plants Unlimited and Zoot Coffee. A list of all sponsors can be found at <a href="https://www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand">www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand</a>.

"Here at Allen Insurance and Financial, supporting initiatives like AIO's Fill the Strand reflects our company's deep

commitment to community well-being," said company president Michael Pierce. "By contributing our time and energy to this effort, now for the fifth year, we not only foster a strong sense of shared responsibility among our co-owners but also make a lasting impact that enriches lives far beyond the workplace. We are proud to be part of this project."

"We're thrilled to be hosting this terrific event for the 5th year! Fill the Strand accomplishes so much in one powerful day — moving forward AIO's mission in such an impactful way," shares the Strand's Marketing Director, Jana Herbener. "At the Strand, we love to see so many community members coming through our doors with their donations and are so proud to be a part of it!"

For more information about the event and how you can participate please contact event coordinator Leila Murphy, <a href="mailto:murphy.leila@gmail.com">murphy.leila@gmail.com</a>.

About AIO Food and Energy Assistance In our 35th year, AIO has provided nutritious food and heating assistance to Knox County families without judgement, always with compassion. Funding and access to AIO's programs are more critical than ever as food insecurity in Knox County is projected to continue to increase. Knox County currently has the 4th highest food insecurity rate in the state. Child food insecurity is estimated at 17.6%. During the past year, AIO has supported nearly 1,900 unique households in the County, that's more than 4,200 of our neighbors, or more than 10.2% of the County. AIO has distributed more than 75,000 meals to students through our weekend meals program. AIO's Energy Assistance Program helps households with heating assistance or electrical disconnection prevention which is critical as winter begins. AIO has nearly doubled the number of energy assistance vouchers vs. last year in what has been a time of overwhelming need. AIO provides a direct path for donors to assist our community by putting your donation to work

### Food in every seat. Help for every family.

On Monday, January 15, 2024, AIO Food and Energy Assistance will host its fourth Fill The Strand food and funds drive to benefit AIO's Food Assistance, Energy Assistance, Weekend Meal, and Diaper Assistance Programs. This event challenges the community to fill every seat in the historic theater with bags of food and funds for AIO's programs. AIO has raised over \$85,000 in the first three Fill the Strand events. The goal for the fourth event is to raise \$30,000.

"Fill The Strand has become AIO's signature event of the year, providing food and money at the most critical time" says AIO Executive Director Joe Ryan. "Powered by Allen Insurance and Financial and hosted by The Strand, this event is a powerful testament of a community that cares for one another. As many families face greater challenges making ends meet, AIO continues to keep pace with the need for food and energy assistance. In the past year, we have provided over 975,000 pounds of food through more than 10,000 visits to our pantry market.

"That is a 40% increase over last year's record-setting number of visits! Fill The Strand is vital to keeping food available for those who need it."

Monetary donations are welcome — and in fact your dollar goes further since AIO can purchase food through partners at a

competitive price. Individuals can fill one theater seat with a bag of food or sponsor a bag at \$25. Your \$25 monetary donation can buy up to \$100 worth of food. Those interested in sponsoring a bag through a financial donation can make it online at www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand.

Non-perishable food with a current expiration date is appreciated (no glass please). AIO would be grateful for donations of the most needed items including: ready rice pouches, macaroni and cheese and pasta; cereal and oatmeal; poptop canned foods and Chef Boyardee meals; single serving lunch items; kid-friendly snacks; 100% juice boxes; shelf stable milk; snacks (granola bars, peanut butter crackers, 6-pack raisins). Whether a monetary gift or food donation — your support will help the people in our community who need it the most.

Food collection sites have been established at area businesses, including Allen Insurance and Financial offices (Rockland and Camden), The Strand Theater, First National Bank (Rockland branches), Main Street Market (Rockland) and AIO Food and Energy Assistance (Rockland).

On January 15th volunteers will be at the Strand Theatre between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. to receive food and funds donations. Drive-up and drop-off service will be available or come in the Strand Theatre to deliver your food and funds donations.

AIO is proud to partner with two business leaders who are instrumental in making the Fill The Strand event possible — The Strand Theater who hosts the event and Allen Insurance and Financial who helps power the event, through their financial support as well as team of employees who volunteer during the day of the event in greeting donors, collecting and organizing donations. .

AIO is grateful to the generous support of its sponsors.

Leadership level sponsors include First National Bank and First National Wealth Management, Maine Sport and Rockland Plaza. Partner level sponsors include Gartley & Dorsky, The Inn at Ocean's Edge, 250 Main Hotel, Lyman Morse and North Haven Inn & Market. Champion level sponsor is Journey's End Marina. Business level sponsors include Hundred Acres, Plants Unlimited, and Jess's Market. A list of all sponsors can be found at www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand.

"Supporting an organization like AIO is a part of our company's commitment to community well-being," said Michael Pierce, president of Allen Insurance and Financial. "Lending people-power to the Fill The Strand event fosters a sense of shared responsibility among our employee- owners and enriches lives beyond the workplace."

"We look forward to hosting this terrific event each winter! "Fill The Strand" brings our community together in a fun and exciting way as we do the important work of supporting Midcoast families in need. It's a thrill to watch those seats fill up, and the Strand is proud to be the place where the action happens," shares Jana Herbener, Communications Relations Manager at the Strand Theater.

For more information about the event and how you can participate please contact event coordinator Leila Murphy, murphy.leila@gmail.com.

### About AIO Food and Energy Assistance

AIO has provided nutritious food and heating assistance to Knox County families. Funding and access to AIO's programs are more critical than ever as food insecurity in Knox County is projected to continue to increase. Knox County currently has the 4th highest food insecurity rate in the state. Child food insecurity is estimated at 28%. During the past year, AIO has

supported 5,896 households, 15,672 individuals, and distributed 12,325 weekend meals packages for elementary school students throughout Knox County. AIO's Energy Assistance Program helps households with heating assistance or electrical disconnection prevention — which is critical as winter begins. Last winter AIO distributed 691 energy assistance vouchers, totaling \$208,000 in support. AIO provides a direct path for donors to assist our community by putting your donation to work immediately.

### Powering AIO's Third Annual FILL THE STRAND Event

On Monday, January 16, 2023 AIO Food and Energy Assistance will host its third Fill The Strand food and funds drive to benefit AIO's Food Assistance, Energy Assistance, Weekend Meal, and Diaper Assistance Programs. This event challenges the community to fill every seat in the historic theater with bags of food and funds for AIO's programs. AIO has raised nearly \$50,000 in the first two Fill the Strand events. The goal for the third event is to raise \$25,000.

"Fill The Strand has become our signature event of the year, providing food and money at the most critical time" says AIO Executive Director Joe Ryan. "Visits to our food pantry market have more than doubled in the past year. Fill The Strand is essential for AIO to keep pace with our growth. The more food and money we raise, the more assistance we can provide."

Coordinators encourage community organizations, businesses, and residents to do food and fund drives within their groups,

workplaces, and neighborhoods to help with the drive. The food and funds collected will go directly to AIO's programs that support Knox County families.

Monetary donations are welcome — and in fact your dollar goes further since AIO can purchase food through partners at a competitive price. Individuals can fill one theater seat with a bag of food or sponsor a bag at \$25. Your \$25 monetary donation can buy up to \$100 worth of food. Those interested in sponsoring a bag through a financial donation can make it online at aiofoodpantry.org/strand.

Non-perishable food with a current expiration date is appreciated (no glass please). AIO would be grateful for donations of the most needed items including: ready rice pouches, macaroni and cheese and pasta; cereal and oatmeal; poptop canned foods and Chef Boyardee meals; single serving lunch items; kid-friendly snacks; 100% juice boxes; shelf stable milk; snacks (granola bars, peanut butter crackers, 6-pack raisins). Whether a monetary gift or food donation — your support will help the people in our community who need it the most.

Food collection sites have been established at area businesses, including Allen Insurance & Financial offices (Rockland and Camden), The Strand Theater, First National Bank (Rockland branches), Main Street Market (Rockland) and AIO Food and Energy Assistance (Rockland). On January 16th volunteers will be at the Strand Theatre between 9:00-2:00pm to receive food and funds donations.

Drive-up and drop-off service, powered by volunteers from Allen Insurance and Financial, will be available or come in the Strand Theatre to deliver your food and funds donations.

AIO is grateful to the generous support of its sponsors. Leadership level sponsors include First National Bank and First National Wealth Management, Fisher Engineering, Rockland Plaza, and The Rope Company. Partner level sponsors include Camden Real Estate, Gartley & Dorsky, Knights of Columbus Council 136, and Lyman Morse. Champion level sponsors include The Inn at Ocean's Edge, 250 Main, Journey's End, Allen Insurance and Financial. A list of all sponsors can be found at <a href="mailto:aiofoodpantry.org/strand">aiofoodpantry.org/strand</a>.

For more information about the event and how you can participate please contact event coordinator Leila Murphy, murphy.leila@gmail.com.

### About AIO Food and Energy Assistance

AIO has provided nutritious food and heating assistance to Knox County families. Funding and

access to AIO's programs are more critical than ever as food insecurity in Knox County is projected to continue to increase. Knox County currently has the 4th highest food insecurity rate in the state. Child food insecurity is estimated at 28%. During the past year, AIO has supported

5,896 households, 15,672 individuals, and distributed 12,325 weekend meals packages for elementary school students throughout Knox County. AIO's Energy Assistance Program helps households with heating assistance or electrical disconnection prevention — which is critical as winter begins. Last winter AIO distributed 691 energy assistance vouchers, totaling \$208,000 in support. AIO provides a direct path for donors for assist our community by putting your donation to work immediately.

### A Guide to Benefits When Changing Jobs

If you're changing jobs, you probably have a lot on your mind. As you wrap up work with your previous employer and prepare for your new role, it can be easy to let important benefits-related decisions fall by the wayside. If that happens, you could miss a limited opportunity to sign up for new benefits or miss out on making wise changes to your plans. To stay on track financially during a career transition, be sure to review the status of your retirement accounts and other valuable employee benefits.

### **Qualified Retirement Plans**

Many employers offer qualified retirement plans, such as 401(k) and 403(b) accounts. ("Qualified" means that these plans qualify for tax advantages per IRS rules.) When transitioning to a new job, you're entitled to keep the vested balance in your qualified retirement plan, including contributions and earnings. You're also entitled to keep any employer contributions that have vested according to your employer's schedule.

What can you do with the money? You have several options:

- Leave the funds in your current employer's plan if your vested balance exceeds \$5,000. If the balance is less than \$5,000, the plan could require that you roll over or distribute your assets.
- Roll over the funds to an individual IRA or, if allowed, to your new employer's plan.
- Withdraw the funds and pay any taxes due along with any applicable penalties. (It's wise to carefully consider any decision to withdraw and spend your retirement savings.)

Accumulation rights. If you wish to roll over the funds, consider the accumulation rights you may be giving up by switching to a different plan. Accumulation rights offer shareholders the potential for reduced commissions when purchasing additional fund shares. If you have such rights with your current plan, they could become important if you plan to purchase a sizable amount of shares.

**Potential penalties and fees.** It's also important to consider the possibility of premature distribution penalties, as well as any fees and expenses a new plan may impose. If you've separated from service in the year you turn 55, or at any later age, any assets distributed from your old employer's plan aren't subject to the standard 10 percent penalty. Once funds are rolled into an IRA or a new plan, however, the 10 percent penalty may apply to subsequent distributions if you're younger than  $59\frac{1}{2}$  at the time, unless you can claim an exception.

**Rolling funds over to an IRA.** Factors to consider before taking this action include:

### Advantages

- IRAs may provide more investment choices than employer plans.
- IRA assets can be allocated to different IRAs. There is no limit on how many direct transfers you can make from one of your IRAs to another IRA in a year. This means you can easily move money between IRAs if you're dissatisfied with an account's performance or administration.
- Although 401(k) distribution options depend on the plan terms, IRAs offer more flexibility.
- IRAs have more premature penalty exceptions than 401(k) plans.

### **Disadvantages**

- When you turn 72, you must start taking required minimum distributions (RMDs) from pretax IRAs, whereas you may be able to defer them in a 401(k) until the year you retire if your employer allows for it. (There are no RMDs from Roth IRAs during the account owner's lifetime.)
- IRA account expenses, such as trading charges or annual fees, may be higher than qualified retirement plans.
- When you roll funds over from a 401(k) to a Roth IRA, taxes will need to be paid on the pretax contributions; however, any future distributions from the Roth IRA may be tax free if IRS requirements are met.

**Rolling funds over to your new employer's plan.** Employer plans offer the following advantages:

- If you intend to work beyond age 72, participation in the employer's qualified plan means you can typically delay the first RMD until the year you retire if the plan allows. (An exception applies if you own 5 percent or more of the business offering the plan.)
- Employer 401(k) plans may receive greater creditor protection than IRAs. Typically, employer plan funds cannot be used to satisfy most creditors, while the federal protection for IRA funds is more limited.

### Stock Options and Nonqualified Deferred Compensation Plans

Prepare a list of any stock options you've received from your employer. Often, vested options expire within a specified time frame when you leave a job. Deciding whether to exercise your options depends on your financial situation and whether your options are "in the money" (i.e., the exercise price is lower than the market value).

Nonqualified deferred compensation plans allow executives to defer a portion of their compensation and the associated taxes

until the deferred income is paid. With these plans, leaving your employment may trigger the need to take distributions in lump-sum or installment payments. You should be aware that any distributions will affect your taxable income.

### **Life Insurance and Disability Insurance**

Employer-provided life insurance remains active only while you are employed. Ask if you have the option to convert the policy to an individual policy offered by the same insurance provider. If you do switch to an individual policy, however, the premium will likely increase. In some cases, it may be time to evaluate policy options from other companies. If you're in between jobs, for instance, you may want to consider an individual policy that won't be affected by employment changes.

### Health Insurance

Your health insurance will expire once you leave an employer. COBRA may be a good option if you need interim health insurance coverage. Keep in mind, however, that your premium payments will increase when you opt for COBRA coverage. Shopping for an individual health insurance policy that meets your needs could reduce your premiums.

### **New Benefits Review**

Once you start your new job, take time to understand the new benefit options, including health insurance, disability insurance, and employer savings plans. It's important to review how the new employer retirement plan options fit into your overall savings plan, including any employer matches. Remember to fill out beneficiary designations for insurance policies and saving plans—and review those designations periodically. Finally, if your salary has changed, it's a good time to determine whether you should adjust your tax withholding and

investment elections.

This material has been provided for general informational purposes only and does not constitute either tax or legal advice. Although we go to great lengths to make sure our information is accurate and useful, we recommend you consult a tax preparer, professional tax advisor, or lawyer.

If you are considering rolling over money from an employersponsored plan, such as a 401(k) or 403(b), you may have the option of leaving the money in your current employer-sponsored plan or moving it into a new employer-sponsored plan. Benefits of leaving money in an employer-sponsored plan may include access to lower-cost institutional class shares; access to investment planning tools and other educational materials; the potential for penalty-free withdrawals starting at age 55; broader protection from creditors and legal judgments; and the ability to postpone required minimum distributions beyond age 72, under certain circumstances. If your employer-sponsored plan account holds significantly appreciated employer stock, you should carefully consider the negative tax implications of transferring the stock to an IRA against the risk of being overly concentrated in employer stock. Your financial advisor may earn commissions or advisory fees as a result of a rollover that may not otherwise be earned if you leave your plan assets in your old or a new employer-sponsored plan and there may be account transfer, opening, and/or closing fees associated with a rollover. This list of considerations is not exhaustive. Your decision whether or not to roll over your assets from an employer-sponsored plan into an IRA should be discussed with your financial advisor and your tax professional.

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### To Our Customers and Community

### Updated July 29, 2024

Masks are no longer required to visit our offices.

The safety and good health of our clients, employee-owners and our community continue to be our top priority.

We know that comfort levels will vary and regardless of our individual vaccination status we are happy to wear a mask when meeting with you if you prefer.

We are happy to meet with you in person, talk by phone or set up a video call. Our office hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Fridays through Aug. 30, our offices closed at 3:30 p.m. We look forward to seeing you soon!

### Additional information:

AllenIF.com/contact

AllenIF.com/claims

AllenIF.com/locations

AllenIF.com/team

We will update this page as needed.

# AIO's Second Annual FILL THE STRAND Event, Keeping Neighbors Fed and Warm

On Monday, January 17, 2022 AIO Food and Energy Assistance will host its second FILL THE STRAND food and funds drive to benefit AIO's Food Assistance, Energy Assistance, Weekend Meal, and Diaper Assistance Programs. This event challenges the community to fill every seat in the historic theater with bags of food and funds for AIO's programs.

The 2021 Fill the Strand event raised more than \$27,000 in support for AIO, filling the theater seats nearly 3 times. The goal for the second event is to raise \$30,000. AIO is grateful to its partners and sponsors the Strand Theatre, Allen Insurance and Financial, First National Bank and First National Wealth Management, Rockport Steel and Fletcher and Michael McNaboe of City + Harbor Real Estate Group for their support of the event.

Coordinators would like to encourage community organizations, businesses, and residents to do food and fund drives within their groups, workplaces, and neighborhoods to help with the drive. The food and funds collected will go directly to AIO's programs that support Knox County families. Any individuals or groups interested in holding a food drive within their group is asked to contact one of the coordinators listed below for details.

Monetary donations are welcome — and in fact your dollar goes further since AIO can purchase food through partners at a competitive price. Individuals can sponsor a bag at \$25, which will fill one seat in the theater. Those interested in sponsoring a bag through a financial donation can make it online

Non-perishable food with a current expiration date is appreciated (no glass please). AIO would be grateful for donations of the most needed items including: ready rice pouches, macaroni and cheese and pasta; cereal & oatmeal; poptop canned foods and Chef Boyardee meals; single serving lunch items; kid-friendly snacks; 100% juice boxes; shelf stable milk; snacks (granola bars, peanut butter crackers, 6-pack raisins). Whether a monetary gift or food donation — your support will help the people in our community who need it the most.

"At the Strand, we're thrilled to partner with AIO again in this creative effort! We believe in supporting the good work of other organizations throughout our community, and nothing is more important than helping to make services available to anyone in Knox County with a need for food and heat — especially in these extra-challenging times," shares Jessie Davis, Executive Director of Friends of the Strand Theatre.

"We are thrilled to continue our partnership with AIO and the Strand Theatre on this unique project. Together, we can make a real difference in the lives of our friends and neighbors," said Mike Pierce, president of Allen Insurance and Financial.

"First National Bank is proud to support AIO's Fill The Strand Event," said Tony McKim, president and CEO. "We are grateful for the critical services AIO provides our neighbors in need in Knox County."

The impact of this event is significant. "Last year's event provided a tremendous amount of food when we needed it the most" said AIO executive director Joe Ryan. "Facing an even more challenging winter this year, we expect the needs within the community to be even greater. The Fill The Strand Event will provide much needed relief at exactly the right time."

Food collection sites have been established at area businesses, including Allen Insurance & Financial offices (Rockland and Camden), The Strand Theater, First National Bank (Rockland branches), and AIO Food and Energy Assistance (Rockland). On January 17th volunteers will be at the Strand Theatre between 9:00-2:00pm to receive food and funds donations. For more information about the event and how you can participate please contact event coordinator Leila Murphy, leilamurph@yahoo.com. Event information can be found at www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand.

About AIO Food and Energy Assistance: For over 30 years AIO has provided critical food and heating assistance to Knox County families. Funding for AIO's programs is needed more than ever as food insecurity in Knox County is projected to increase 46% overall. Knox County ranks among the highest food insecurity rate in the state. Child food insecurity is projected to reach 28% (a 52% increase). In 2021, AIO has supported 1547 individual households and has distributes nearly 400 meal kits each week during the school year. AIO's Energy Assistance Program helps households with heating assistance or electrical disconnection prevention — which is critical as winter begins. Last winter AIO distributed 450 energy assistance vouchers, totaling \$108,000 in support. The need for assistance is real and is not going away anytime soon given the ongoing pandemic.

### Donation to Pacific Engine Company

Allen Insurance and Financial recently delivered a donation to the <u>Rockport</u>, <u>Camden</u> and <u>Rockland</u> fire departments for their

home inspection and smoke detector program.

"We're in the business of helping people in our community protect their homes and their families — and so support for a program such as this, with its emphasis on health and safety, is very important to all of us at Allen," said <a href="Dan Bookham">Dan Bookham</a>, vice president at Allen Insurance and Financial. "This threedepartment cooperative effort is a project with an immediate impact and can continue to make a real difference."

The donation is the result of a partnership between Allen Insurance and Financial and the community outreach program at <a href="MMG Insurance">MMG Insurance</a>, the Presque Isle-based insurance carrier.

Chief Jason Peasley of the Rockport Fire Department says the program is ongoing, and donations will be accepted by any of the three departments at any time. He said that since the spring, 22 homes in the area have been inspected and fitted with smoke detectors — but that the need for this work continues.