Viola Davis speaks candidly on her vital mission to end childhood hunger.

LEARN how Rachael Ray is getting involved to reduce food waste in America.

BROWSE more stories online, including how technology is aiding the fight against hunger.

I DARE YOU TO LOOK HUNGER IN THE EYE
How Hunger Solutions Can Bring Generations Together

Hunger doesn’t discriminate by age. Despite being among our most vulnerable populations, young and old are also the answer to eliminating hunger across the country.

Efforts to address hunger, food insecurity and poor nutrition are often segmented by age. School lunch programs for children, Meals on Wheels for older adults and WIC for babies are a few of the programs designed to combat hunger and provide nutritious meals to age-specific groups. This trend has caused few providers think of an intergenerational lens when carrying out this critical work.

Mind the gap
That needs to change. By the year 2040, children, youth and older adults will make up 40 percent of the population in the U.S. Given our country’s changing demographics, age-segregated approaches to tackling serious issues need a fresh look.

Some creative, resourceful community leaders are experimenting with “age-advantaged” approaches that warrant a deeper look and wider replication. These programs and services engage the skills, time and passions of children, youth and older adults who together address the hunger and nutrition challenges in their communities.

Building bridges
These include intergenerational community gardens such as the one planted by young and old at Mount Kisco Child Care Center and My Second Home Senior Daycare Center in New York. Together they maintain the garden that provides fresh vegetables for their meals.

In Michigan, Driving Away Hunger provided another version of this by combining student driver education with Meals on Wheels so students and their parents could deliver meals while getting needed hours behind the wheel and learning about community service.

The Intergenerational Urban Institute at Worcester State University engages college students who provide information and application assistance to older adults, helping them to sign up for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

There are many other examples of intergenerational solutions designed to combat hunger and encourage good nutrition across age groups. They save dollars while making change and prove that we are, indeed, stronger together.

By Donna M. Butts, Executive Director, Generations United