



Home > Restaurants

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## Northeast Ohio, Allison Rose Foundation team up to protect diners with food allergies

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A speaker at a recent Allison Rose Foundation food allergy training session.

In the heart of Northeast Ohio, a foundation is taking giant strides in transforming the landscape of food allergy education and anaphylaxis awareness.

The Allison Rose Foundation (ARF), established in 2018, offers hope for families affected by food allergies and works to be a catalyst for change in how we approach food safety, especially in restaurants.

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The foundation, founded by executive director Rebecca Suhy and Michael Suhy, who is chief of the Cuyahoga Heights Fire Department, works to change the lives of food allergy families through education, awareness, research and advocacy. Its goal: to decrease and eliminate untimely deaths of children and young adults due to food allergies.

A high-profile reminder of the importance of the effort came over the weekend, when Michael Chiarello, the acclaimed restaurateur, celebrity chef and former Food Network star, [died at age 61](#) after an acute allergic reaction that led to anaphylactic shock.

The foundation's origin is rooted in a tragedy.

Allison "Ally" Rose, the inspiration behind the Allison Rose Foundation, lived with a severe nut allergy from a young age. Her family and tight-knit community understood the importance of eliminating nuts from her environment, creating a cocoon of safety around her. But when she went to college at Ohio University, an anaphylactic reaction took her life. The loss was the catalyst for the foundation's inception, and it serves as a constant reminder of the urgency of its mission.

From its inception, ARF focused on education and training in schools, initially targeting high school seniors. However, foundation officials quickly realized the transition to independence occurred earlier than expected. Young adults need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to manage their food allergies when they leave home. The foundation expanded its reach beyond schools to include non-school entities such as restaurants.

One of ARF's most significant contributions is its physician-driven, evidence-based food allergy and anaphylaxis education and training developed in collaboration with a medical advisory board. Trained firefighters and paramedics serve as instructors, offering lessons to students, faculty, staff and restaurant personnel.

The curriculum covers a wide range of topics, such as recognizing anaphylaxis, understanding the difference between allergies and intolerances, and learning the proper use of epinephrine injectors. The training raises awareness and equips individuals with the skills needed to respond effectively in emergency situations. The training and potentially life-saving equipment is free of charge and funded solely by ARF.

One of ARF's initiatives involves providing trained entities, including restaurants, with a stock of epinephrine. The initiative is crucial because time is of the essence during an allergic reaction. Having epinephrine readily available can be life-saving no matter how diligent a restaurant is about food safety.

Northeast Ohio restaurants and venues that work with ARF display a "food allergy trained sticker" with the foundation's logo, indicating their commitment to food allergy safety. Reports of lives saved and heartfelt letters from grateful patrons are a testament to the foundation's success.

Current restaurant and venue partners in the region that are trained and equipped with stock epinephrine, or in progress, include the following: Fahrenheit, Cordelia, The Last Page, Marble Room, Lockkeepers, Il Venetian, Zhug, Amba, Rocket Mortgage FieldGouse, Landerhaven, Boom's Pizza, Spice Field Kitchen, Collison Bend Brewing Co., Blue Heron Brewery/Events Center, Dairy King and Lorain Lighthouse.

"This just checked so many boxes for me and my wife that it was a no-brainer," said Rocco Whalen of Fahrenheit. "This could save a life."

Rebecca Suhy said ARF's long-term vision is to integrate its curriculum into health classes nationwide, becoming as mainstream as CPR and Heimlich maneuver training. With 1 in 13 children and 1 in 10 adults living with food allergies, widespread education is vital.

ARF also envisions making epinephrine emergency kits as common as fire extinguishers in public places, she said, ensuring that those with severe allergies can access life-saving medication when needed.

The foundation also hosts an annual Yellow Brick Road celebration, emphasizing the importance of food allergy awareness and education as the organization aims to expand its reach.

*Bev Shaffer is a freelance reporter for Crain's. Her focus is on the restaurant scene, as well as food and restaurant trends. She can be reached at [bev.foodwithattitude@gmail.com](mailto:bev.foodwithattitude@gmail.com).*