



New York City Human Resources Administration

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CONTACT: Lourdes Centeno

centenolo@hra.nyc.gov/929-221-5131

LA PUERTA ESTRECHA'S WASHINGTON HEIGHTS FOOD PANTRY IS PART OF CITYWIDE EFFORT TO PROVIDE 10 MILLION MORE POUNDS OF FOOD IN 12 CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

The new Washington Heights/Inwood food pantry created by the joint efforts of La Puerta Estrecha church, the CHALK Program of NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital's Ambulatory Care Network and Columbia University Medical Center's Community Pediatrics program, and the New York City Food Assistance Collaborative, is part of a broad effort by the Collaborative and the City to identify and supply more food to City neighborhoods with the greatest need. The Collaborative's work has already resulted in adding 10 million pounds of food per year to 12 New York City neighborhoods, almost doubling the emergency food supplied to those areas.

Open Arms, La Puerta Estrecha's new pantry located at 161 Sherman Avenue, is already helping more than 2,000 Inwood/Washington Heights residents each month and continuing to grow rapidly. It will distribute an impressive 150,000 pounds of food in its first year, but that is expected to increase as more residents participate. The Food Assistance Collaborative supplied funds for structure enhancements, technical assistance for developing and operating the pantry, and all of the food being distributed.

"As a doctor and a mother, I know that when children are hungry they can't learn, grow, or live the healthy life they deserve," said **Deputy Mayor Dr. Herminia Palacio**. "The de Blasio administration came into office determined to help every New Yorker in every neighborhood have access to the food resources they need. This food pantry is a critical tool in our fight to provide nourishment to families and individuals who are living with hunger, and we are proud to help the Food Assistance Collaborative prosper and aid underserved neighborhoods across the city."

"We are a Pentecostal Church founded in 1962. From our inception, our founders had a heart for serving this community. In our evolution, and thanks to the joint effort with CHALK and the NYC Food Assistance Collaborative, we continue to bring this vision of helping the families of Inwood and Washington Heights community to life," said Pastor **Pedro Olivieri of La Puerta Estrecha**.

Open Arms food pantry located in the Inwood-Washington Heights community is open to everyone every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Most of the people currently taking advantage of the food offered by the pantry are from the Dominican, Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban communities, so the pantry makes sure to stock foods that appeal to those communities, while providing a balanced diet. The pantry is operated by 40 volunteers from the neighborhood, led by people from La Puerta Estrecha church.

La Puerta Estrecha had been distributing food on Thanksgiving for many years, which demonstrated the need for more food in the community, and led them to think about opening a food pantry. The church connected with the CHALK program to provide health-related services to the community. CHALK connected the church to the New York City Food Assistance Collaborative, which was seeking to expand food assistance in the Inwood/Washington Heights area. With funding from The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, the Collaborative provided a \$35,000 grant to upgrade the space and provide storage equipment, including refrigerators. Food is provided through members of the Collaborative, including City Harvest, United Way of New York City and the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) operated by the NYC Department of Social Services/Human Resources Administration.

The New York City Food Assistance Collaborative, with major support from the Helmsley Charitable Trust, brought together the City, United Way of New York City and City Harvest and others for the first such effort to identify where emergency food is available and where additional food is needed and then build the capacity in those areas to deliver more food assistance, such as through food pantries. The Collaborative identified 12 priority neighborhoods and has since opened 16 new food pantries, renovated or expanded 40 other pantries and started three mobile vehicles to deliver food to 45 new sites each month. As a result, 10 million new pounds of food per year (8.3 million meals) are being delivered to 12 neighborhoods that were underserved: Washington Heights/Inwood; Borough Park-Sunset Park East; North Bronx; Jackson Heights-Elmhurst; Grand Concourse; Central Harlem-Polo Grounds; Flatbush; Mid-Staten Island; Sheepshead Bay; Lower East Side; Flushing; and East New York. This effort has almost doubled the amount of free supplemental food being supplied to these neighborhoods.

Barbara Turk, Director of the Mayor's Office on Food Policy said, "I am so grateful for and proud of the work of the Food Assistance Collaborative. For the first time, we have the ways and means to plan and implement a truly citywide strategy to get food where it is needed most. This strategy is premised on our understanding that food alone cannot solve the problem, that we need more efficient and effective means to distribute that food. Helmsley has given us the strategic and financial support the members of Collaborative need to address these long-time systemic issues they know so well, by providing technology and grants funds that the FAC has directed to 60 pantries and counting that allow them to serve their clients with more days, with more fresh food, and especially with more dignity."

Department of Social Services Commissioner Steven Banks said, “We thank the people of La Puerta Estrecha for showing how quickly a food pantry can get up and running successfully. As the managers of the City’s Emergency Food Assistance Program, we couldn’t do our job without local partners to operate food pantries, such as La Puerta Estrecha. And this new pantry is an excellent example of the work of the Food Assistance Collaborative identifying where more food assistance is needed and then working with local partners to create the capacity to actually deliver more food.

“Thanks to the collective efforts of the New York City Food Assistance Collaborative, La Puerta Estrecha, and CHALK, thousands of residents in Inwood and Washington Heights will now have reliable access to nutritious food,” said **Jennifer McLean, City Harvest’s Chief Operating Officer**. “This is an important step in our goal to ensure that New Yorkers in neighborhoods across our city who are struggling to put meals on their tables have enough food for themselves and their families.”

“Increasing the number of families and individuals who are nourished and thriving that’s what’s at the heart of the Food Assistance Collaborative,” said **Sheena Wright, President and CEO, United Way of New York City**. “United Way of New York City, alongside our Collaborative partners, is proud to see how our innovation is already helping Open Arms feed more than 2,000 Inwood residents and bring this community 150,000 pounds of foods that meet its needs.”

“At NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center, we are working to counter the negative physical, emotional and behavioral effects that food insecure households have on children,” **Dodi Meyer, MD, medical director of CHALK and associate professor of pediatrics, Columbia University Medical Center**. In addition to accessible medical care, we are addressing root causes of disease through the interlinking context of community, family and biology via our population health programs, which are embedded within a community-academic partnership framework. It’s within this context that CHALK worked with La Puerta Estrecha to create a much needed food pantry for the community of Washington Heights-Inwood.”

“Our investment to launch the Collaborative brought together the major charitable food players to combine their expertise, share information, and implement lasting improvements to the emergency food system,” said **Tracy Perrizo, Program Officer of the Helmsley Charitable Trust’s New York City Program**. “Now, thanks to the hard work of so many partners working closely together across the city, including City Harvest, United Way, the Mayor’s Office on Food Policy, and La Puerta Estrecha, we are delighted to see a level of collaboration that is making a meaningful difference in the health and well-being of neighborhoods like this one.”

About the New York City Food Assistance Collaborative

The New York City Food Assistance Collaborative (FAC) is a coalition of large charitable food distributors and funders in New York City, including City Harvest, United Way of NYC, NYC Mayor’s Office of Food Policy, NYC Human Resources Administration’s Emergency Food

Assistance Program (EFAP), and the New York State Department of Health's Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP). Barbara Turk of the Mayor's Office of Food Policy convenes the FAC.

About City Harvest

City Harvest pioneered food rescue in 1982 and, this year, will collect 59 million pounds of excess food to help feed the nearly 1.3 million New Yorkers struggling to put meals on their tables. Through relationships with farms, grocers, restaurants, and manufacturers, City Harvest collects nutritious food that would otherwise go to waste and delivers it free of charge to 500 soup kitchens, food pantries and other community food programs across the five boroughs. In addition, our *Healthy Neighborhoods* initiative addresses long term food insecurity through community partnerships that work to increase access to affordable and wholesome food. To learn more about food rescue, *Healthy Neighborhoods* and fighting hunger in New York City, visit cityharvest.org.

About United Way of New York City

United Way of New York City (UWNYC) has been a trusted partner to government, corporations, and community-based organizations for nearly 80 years. Serving low-income New Yorkers, UWNYC's collective impact approach enables the diagnosis of neighborhood challenges and the design of solutions to expand education, financial stability, and health opportunities. UWNYC then deploys resources and volunteers while also driving policy change that is guided by measured results. UWNYC envisions caring communities where all individuals and families have access to quality education and the opportunity to lead healthy and financially secure lives. Learn more at unitedwaynyc.org.

About Choosing Healthy & Active Lifestyles for Kids™

Choosing Healthy & Active Lifestyles for Kids™ (CHALK) is a collaboration among NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital's Ambulatory Care Network, Columbia University Medical Center's Community Pediatrics program, and the community of Northern Manhattan. The goal of CHALK is to reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity in Northern Manhattan and to create an environment in which healthy lifestyles are integral to the lives of all children and their families. The three areas of focus are schools, the community and our medical center.

In June 2016, CHALK initiated its first faith-based partnership with La Puerta Estrecha, a long-standing, Spanish-speaking church in Inwood. Through the partnership, they assembled a wellness ministry that started wellness programming for the church congregants as well as the surrounding community, including cooking classes, training Sunday school teachers to lead physical activity programming for children attending Sunday school, farmers' market tours, and the construction of an edible garden. The church wanted to hone in on food insecurity as Washington Heights and Inwood have both a high need and lack of reliable sources of emergency food assistance. CHALK connected La Puerta Estrecha to the NYC Food Assistance Collaborative. The pantry was a long-standing goal of La Puerta Estrecha, and through the collaboration with CHALK the pantry became a reality.

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