



Hunger Stats Resonate At Annual Turkey Giveaway

By: Amanda Farinacci



A new report released by the New York City Coalition Against Hunger shows that food pantries and soup kitchens have seen a 21 percent increase in visitors over last year -- a number that many on Staten Island say reflects a dire need for action as the holidays and winter months approach. NY1's Amanda Farinacci filed the following report.

It's become something of a Staten Island Thanksgiving tradition. For the last 20 years, the Borough President's office, in conjunction with the Korean American Association, has hosted an annual turkey giveaway.

On Tuesday, representatives from 42 organizations that run food pantries on the Island showed up, but so did residents like Donald Lewis, who hoped to walk away with a free bird as well.

"I think more and more people are reaching out to where food is being handed out, where maybe in the past, people have shunned upon it, but now people take more advantage of it," Lewis said.

"We give to the turkey for the holiday every year for the 10 years," said Jhung Uhk Kim of the Korean American Association.

A truckload of food was also donated by ShopRite.



Coincidentally, the turkey giveaway came on the same day as the so-called annual hunger report by the New York City Coalition Against Hunger where the lines at Borough Hall backed up its findings.

According to the report, food pantries and soup kitchens across the city have seen a 21 percent increase in visitors over the last year.

Eleven food pantries were surveyed on Staten Island and all of them said they have experienced an increase in the last year. They also say they expect the problem to get worse.

"Forty percent of emergency food providers were not able to meet the demand of people coming, and we attribute that to the economy and the lack of jobs available right now," said Kerry Birnbach of the Coalition Against Hunger.

According to the report, the populations whose needs increased greatly were families with children and immigrants.

"Clearly what we are seeing is more and more families, who are low income families, making minimum wage, under \$10 an hour, who are being forced out of their apartments, because of rising rents," said Terry Troia of Project Hospitality.

Still, Troia says her organization and others like hers have been going into their own pockets to support their feeding programs. She also says even if they have to cut portions in half, they will never turn away someone who is hungry.