

# NY Daily News

## Bronxites takes long rides to stock up at upper West Side food pantry

BY [Erin Mccarthy](#) SPECIAL TO THE NEWS Sunday, March 28th 2010, 4:00 AM



Lombard for News

Needy families at the Community Food Resource Center. A recent Gallup survey found that the south and lower western portions of the Bronx had the highest rates of hunger in the nation.

[Laudelina Velasquez](#) likes to be prepared for her grandchildren's weekend visits.

"I like to have food to give them," she said in Spanish.

To get the corn flakes and other foods her grandchildren enjoy, Velasquez, 64, travels from the [Bronx](#) to a food pantry on the upper West Side once a month.

On a typically busy Wednesday at the West Side Campaign Against Hunger, which is open to all city residents, she waits inside for her turn to choose food.

She isn't too picky.

"I take everything they give me," said Velasquez, who is unemployed and lives in [Marble Hill](#).

When she goes to a pantry near her Bronx apartment, she has to wait outside in the cold. It often runs out of food before her turn comes up, she said.

Velasquez isn't the only Bronx resident making the trip to [Manhattan](#) for emergency food services. Of the 9,047 households the West Side Campaign Against Hunger served last year, 29% were from the Bronx.

"There are emergency food programs [in the Bronx], but they are frequently without food," said [Doreen Wohl](#), the pantry's executive director. "The Bronx is hurting more than anywhere else, practically. It's one of the areas that feels the recession more than anywhere else."

The number of emergency meals served in [Bronx County](#) increased by 110% from 2006 to 2009, the office of [Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand \(D-N.Y.\)](#) reported.

A recent Gallup survey found that the Bronx's 16th Congressional District covering the south and lower western portions of the borough had the highest rates of hunger in the nation.

"People will go to pantries wherever they are able," said [Heather Hargraves](#), who works at the Part of the Solution pantry that serves nine Bronx zip codes. "If people are going to Manhattan, there is definite need."

There are about 265 food pantries and soup kitchens in the Bronx, and many have faced a drop in funding and an increase in clients since the recession.

In 2009, two out of three Bronx pantries reported having to ration food, cutting back hours or turning people away, according to the [New York City](#) Coalition Against Hunger's annual hunger survey.

"The vast majority of food pantries are small congregation-run pantries that don't have a lot of resources," said [Daniel Reyes](#), director of programs at the Yorkville Common Pantry in East [Harlem](#). "There is such economic distress, you know that the supply that food pantries have is outnumbered by the demand."

The Yorkville Common Pantry, which serves up to 1,800 families a week, has also seen more visitors from the Bronx. Ninety percent of the families coming from outside of its service area for emergency accommodations are from the Bronx, Reyes said.

[Jose Pozo](#), 40, waited in line for three hours outside a Bronx food pantry several months ago. He never went back. Now he travels an hour by train once a month to the West Side Campaign Against Hunger on W. 86th St., where he picks up items like rice and cereal, and fresh foods like yucca and plantains.

"It's more comfortable here," said Pozo.

Some Bronx residents at the pantry said they still go to Bronx pantries. [Jesus Caro](#), a 65-year-old retired auto mechanic from [Morris Heights](#), goes to one on the Grand Concourse every month, but the lines there are too long, he said in Spanish. Caro also goes to the Manhattan pantry, where he receives more food than in the Bronx, he said.

Food is expensive, money doesn't go far," he said. "Because of this, you have to look for help."