

# Brooklyn Daily Eagle

## Community Supported Agriculture Site Started in Crown Heights

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CROWN HEIGHTS — Nonprofit anti-hunger leaders, community leaders and farmers gathered recently at Hebron SDA Church in Crown Heights to celebrate the kickoff of the new Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) site that brings fresh produce directly to low- and middle-income residents of Central Brooklyn.

This CSA is one of only a few citywide to accept food stamps/SNAP benefits as a form of payment. Increasing access to healthy food is essential to reducing hunger and obesity.

The Central Brooklyn site is the fourth CSA organized by the NYC Coalition Against Hunger (NYC CAH). The CSA model is an effective way to provide fresh, affordable food to low-income communities with little or no access to healthy food.

Over 90 percent of low-income members in NYC CAH's 2009 Flatbush CSA reported eating more vegetables as a result of their membership. With over 70 members this year receiving shares consisting of fruits, vegetables, and eggs each week, this CSA will continue to improve access to healthy food.

The Central Brooklyn CSA is located in the 10th Congressional District in Central Brooklyn, where 30.8 percent of residents faced food hardship in 2008-2009; the district has the sixth highest rate of food hardship out of all the country's 436 congressional districts.

CSAs offer community members a unique link to the farm through a direct buying relationship. Traditionally, CSAs ask members to pay for the entire season up front, which gives farmers the financial security to invest in seeds and supplies for the season. In turn, members receive a portion of the weekly harvest, called a "share."

Recognizing the difficulty that up-front, full-price payment can cause for many families, this CSA allows members to purchase shares with food stamps and other payment options.

In addition to providing access to healthy food, the Central Brooklyn CSA supports both local agriculture and Grow NYC's New Farmer Development Project which helps immigrants with agriculture experience establish small farms in the region. The Central

Brooklyn CSA produce comes from farmer Martin Rodriguez of MimoMex Farms in Orange County, N.Y. Rodriguez is the first farmer out of the New Farmer Development Project to own a farm.

Said Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, “I applaud the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, its Community Supported Agriculture Project and farmers like Martin Rodriguez for helping residents in Central Brooklyn and throughout Brooklyn — regardless of their socio-economic status — get access to healthy produce and a wide variety of foods.”

Said Joel Berg, executive director of the NYC Coalition Against Hunger, “At a time when emergency food providers are seeing a 21 percent increase in demand for their services, we are happy to expand our CSA model of affordable, healthy food to the Central Brooklyn neighborhood.”

Rep. Edolphus Towns (D-Brooklyn) said, “I can’t think of a better way to promote healthy eating, support our local economy, and fight hunger than by starting a Community Supported Agriculture site right here in Central Brooklyn.”