

Hungry Flock To Turkey Giveaway

By [Cristiana Oliveira](#) | November 26th, 2008 |



MANHATTAN -The Yorkville Common Pantry handed out 2,200 turkeys in the days before Thanksgiving – but that wasn’t enough to meet the demand of the 9,000 families the charity serves.

“Unfortunately, we’ve had to turn [people] away, that’s the sad reality,” said Daniel Reyes, director of the pantry, which raised \$35,000 to buy the turkeys.

Rising food costs, tough economic times and an increase in hungry people are proving a triple whammy for city food pantries and soup kitchens this holiday season.

Growing Hunger

There’s been a 28 percent hike in the number of people using food pantries and soup kitchens in the last year, bringing the number of New Yorkers served to 1.3 million, according to the New York City Coalition Against Hunger.

Meanwhile, the number of people across the country seeking help from food relief programs has risen 25 to 45 percent, while donations have gone up by 18 percent, according to Feeding America.

“Actually, during Thanksgiving people are less likely to go hungry because more people give out food,” said Joel Berg, director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger. “So if it’s this bad now, just imagine the rest of the year.”

Major Challenges

The tough economy and rising food prices are presenting food relief operations with major challenges. A gallon of milk costs nearly a dollar more than last year, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the prices of such Thanksgiving staples as turkey, cranberries, whipping cream and pumpkin pie mix are up.

“We’ve raised an unprecedented amount of money this year,” said Reyes, whose pantry gave away about 1,000 turkeys in 2006. “We’ve worked very hard, but at the same time the cost of Thanksgiving has also gone up a lot.”

“We are in a food crisis and it becomes glaringly clear at this time with the holidays when folks have to get turned away because we are unable to provide them with food,” he added.