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New Report Shows that While 40 Percent of Staten Island Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens Do Not Have Enough Food to Meet Demand, Federal Funding Surge Prevented the Problem from Becoming Catastrophic

Every emergency food agency on Staten Island that responded to the New York City Coalition Against Hunger Annual Survey said they demand increased “Greatly” over the past year. With the economy in a downturn, food pantries and soup kitchens are seeing an overwhelming demand for their services. Sixty-six percent of staff and volunteers at Staten Island feeding programs “often” or “always” spend their own money on food and supplies.

Throughout the whole city, the amount New Yorkers forced to use the city’s soup kitchens and food pantries soared by 21 percent in the last year, because federal anti-hunger spending through the economic recovery bill and the Food Stamp Program increased in New York City by more than \$500 million during the same period, fewer agencies ran out of food than the year before, according to the annual survey of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger.

This Coalition’s report not only graphically demonstrates the negative impact of the recession, it is also one of the first concrete indicators anywhere in the country as to the success of the federal economic recovery bill in battling hunger. Although the report showed that 55 percent of emergency food programs lacked enough food to meet the growing demand, that was a significant improvement over 2008, when fully 69 percent of the pantries and kitchens lacked sufficient food.

“As the economy worsens, people are seeking emergency food that never before have in order to make ends meet. On the bright side, we found that fewer pantries and kitchens were turning people away than this time last year. We attribute this to the increase in funding provided by the stimulus program,” said Kerry Birnbach, Interfaith Voices Against Hunger Program Coordinator with the Coalition. “In addition, the President and Congress increased funding for the SNAP/Food Stamp Program under the stimulus, which was crucial in helping people afford food.”

The annual survey, titled, *“NYC Hunger Catastrophe Avoided (For Now): Soaring Demand at Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens Counter-Balanced by Food Stamps Surge and Extra Recovery Bill Funding”* is available at http://nyccah.org/files/AnnualHungerSurveyReport_Nov09.pdf.

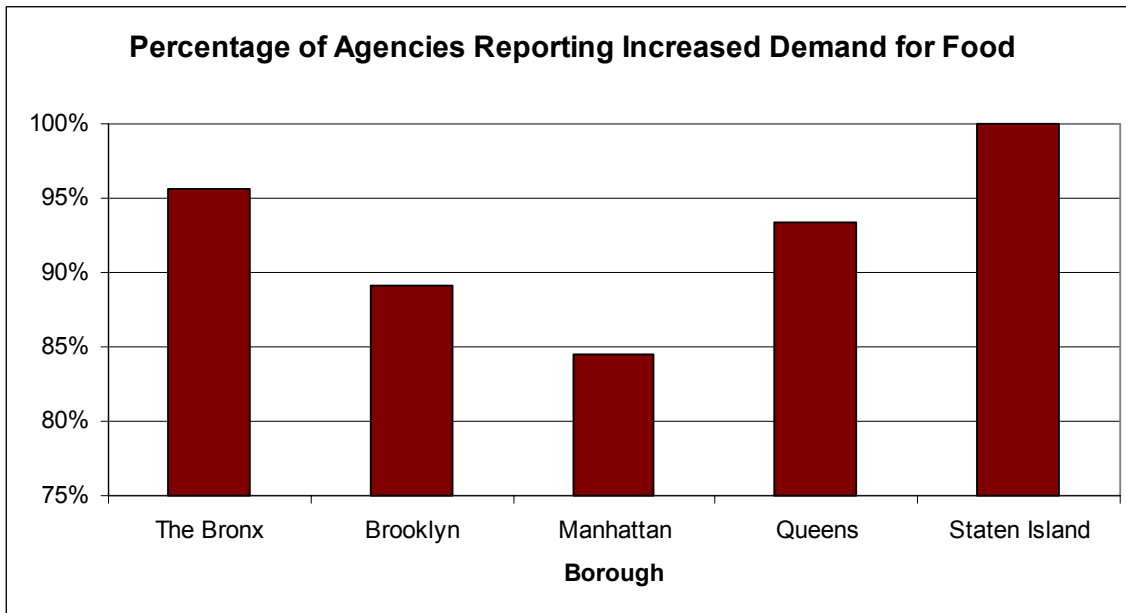
Fully 91 percent of agencies responding to the Coalition’s survey reported feeding an increased number of people in the last months. 58.4 percent said this number increased “greatly.” However, the percentage of agencies forced to ration food and turn people away dropped from 59 to 48 percent, and the percentage of agencies able to meet the growing demand increased from 31 to 45 percent. Additionally, the percentage of agencies reporting decreased overall government funding dropped from 72 percent last year to 52 percent this year.

Funding for New York City in the Federal FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), distributed through the United Way of New York City, rose from \$4,581,417 last year to \$7,492,125 this year, of which

\$2,340,980 was from the recovery bill. This equals a 64 percent increase in one year. Survey respondents also noted this increase in EFSP funding: 59.4 percent reported an increase in that funding. Fifty one percent of survey respondents reported an increase in federal The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) through the USDA.

State funding stayed relatively stable, and, because the New York City Council rejected the proposals of Mayor Bloomberg to decrease City funding for pantries and kitchens, City funding stayed stable too. Thus, although City and State funding didn't increase, because federal funding increased so dramatically, overall government food and support to emergency food providers increased significantly.

Said Reverend Terry Troia, Executive Director of Project Hospitality, which hosted the event, "In 2007-2008 we provided food for 12,000 Staten Islanders in 2008 - 2009, we served more than double that amount: 26, 000 Staten Islanders providing over 1,028,000 meals! That's the highest number of meals ever distributed on Staten Island by an emergency food program. We are grateful for the all donations that make this possible but more than food the impoverished families we serve need living wage jobs, affordable rents, and more direct access to programs like SNAP/food stamps to make ends meet. That is our holiday wish for them this season."



Borough	% of agencies at which demand for food increased	% of agencies at which the amount of food was not enough to meet growing demand	% of agencies forced to ration food by limiting portion size, reducing hours of operation, and/or turning people away
The Bronx	95.6%	66.7%	58.1%
Brooklyn	89.1%	59.2%	49.3%
Manhattan	84.5%	39.7%	35.8%
Queens	93.4%	60.4%	57.1%
Staten Island	100.0%	40.0%	12.5%

Some Key Findings From Staten Island Respondents to the Coalition's survey:

- 100% of responding agencies reported feeding an increased number of people in the last 12 months. 100% said this number increased “greatly.”
- Of the populations that increased “greatly” at responding agencies, the fastest growth was seen among families with children (62.5%) and immigrants (50.0%).
- 100% of responding agencies believe that their need will continue to increase in the next six months. 62.5% of responding agencies believe it will increase “greatly.”
- 62.5% of responding agencies reported receiving less *government* food and money in the last 12 months (and 0% reported no change).
- 50.0% of responding agencies reported receiving less *overall* food and money in the last 12 months (and 0% reported no change).
- 40% of respondents reported being unable to distribute enough food to meet current demand.
- 12.5% of responding agencies reported having to turn away hungry New Yorkers, cut portion sizes and/or cut hours of operation in 2008.
- 66.6% of respondents reported using their own personal money “often” or “always” to support their feeding programs.