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Survey Shows Hunger Crisis in Staten Island: No Bailout for the Hungry as Record Number of Agencies Don't Have Enough Food

As the economy continued its precipitous decline in 2008, more New Yorkers were forced to join the lines at food pantries and soup kitchens at the same time as more emergency food programs reported being hit by funding cuts.

In the New York City Coalition Against Hunger's (NYC CAH) Annual Hunger Survey, emergency food providers reported serving 28% more people in 2008 than they had in the previous year. In the 2007 Annual Hunger Survey, agencies reported serving 20% more people than they had in 2006.

As a result of the influx of people needing emergency food, 68.8% of emergency food agencies in 2008 – up from 59% in 2007 – reported that they did not have enough food to fulfill demand. The Coalition's full survey report, entitled: *No Bailout for the Hungry: Funding Slashed to Emergency Food Providers as Hunger in NYC Continues to Soar*, is available at www.nyccah.org.

In Staten Island, 85.7% of agencies reported an increased demand for food, 71.4% reported that they did not have enough food to meet growing demand, and 46.2% of agencies reported that they had to ration food by limiting portion size, reducing hours of operation, and/or turning people away.

For example, Richmond Senior Services on Staten Island, where the press conference was held, served 741 people (including 281 children) in September 2008, up from 481 people (including 117 children) in September 2007.

At the same time as agencies reported skyrocketing need for their programs, they experienced budget cuts on the federal, state, and city level. In 2008, 72.3% of responding agencies reported a decrease in government money and food in the past year – up from 51% in 2007 – and 70.8% of responding agencies reported an overall decrease in money and food from the past year.

As Beverly Neuhaus, Executive Director of Richmond Senior Services, stated about the situation on Staten Island: “The need is extraordinary and it continues to increase. As people have become unemployed, we have seen more senior citizens and people who used to be working. We are trying to meet the need and find new sources of funding as government funding has been cut. We certainly appreciate the help from the community but it is a very difficult time.”

Said Joel Berg, Executive Director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, “The bad news is that we have more agencies than ever running out of food. The hunger situation which was truly awful in 2007 has now reached crisis proportions. The good news is that the next President and Congress have a great opportunity to rapidly reverse these trends by strengthening the nutrition safety net and creating living wage jobs.”

Among Staten Island respondents to our survey:

- 85.7% of responding agencies reported feeding an increased number of people in the last 12 months. 64.3% said this number increased “greatly.”
- Of the populations that increased “greatly” at responding agencies, the fastest growth was seen among families with children, working people, senior citizens and immigrants.
- 100% of responding agencies believe that their need will continue to increase in the next six months. 76.9% of responding agencies believe it will increase “greatly.”
- 81.9% of responding agencies reported receiving less *government* food and money in the last 12 months (and 9.1% reported no change).
- 91% of responding agencies reported receiving less *overall* food and money in the last 12 months (and 9.1% reported no change).
- 71.4% of respondents reported being unable to distribute enough food to meet current demand.
- 46.2% of responding agencies reported having to turn away hungry New Yorkers, cut portion sizes and/or cut hours of operation in 2008.
- 42.8% of respondents reported using their own personal money “often” or “always” to support their feeding programs (71.4% do this “sometimes,” “often” or “always”).

2008 Borough Survey Results

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	88.1%	74.4%	71.8%
Brooklyn	85.9%	61.8%	50%
Manhattan	83.6%	52.2%	45.2%
Queens	84.2%	76.8%	64.2%
Staten Island	85.7%	71.4%	46.2%

