



**New York Common Pantry**  
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[www.nycommonpantry.org](http://www.nycommonpantry.org)



# The Pantry Press

Spring 2016

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## NY Common Pantry Opens in the Bronx

### NYCP's Junior Board Kicks Off the Fundraising Season



Some of our Junior Board members at the Fill the Bag Benefit  
Photo Credit: Levi Stolove

NYCP's Junior Board has hit the ground running since convening in October 2015. With 14 members and many more candidates we are thrilled to have early to mid-level professionals donating their resources, lending their networks, and volunteering their time to help NYCP's guests. The group participated in the Larry Morales Toy Drive in December, hosted a comedy night fundraiser in February and filled a table at the Fill the Bag Benefit in March. Next up is a fundraiser with SoulCycle in May. If you are interested in the Junior Board, or know of a good candidate, please contact Sarah Moran at (917) 970-9732.

### A Lasting Legacy: Planned Giving



Vicky Kess preparing to volunteer in the Pantry on a Thursday morning

On any given Thursday you will likely find Vicky Kess in the Pantry setting up produce bags for incoming volunteers. She has been lending a hand at NYCP for many years. Now in her 70's, Vicky has thought of other ways she can help the guests of NYCP. "I'm 72, and periodically I review my will. I've always wanted to give to organizations like the Pantry, Search and Care, and Fordham University." With this desire in mind, Vicky added NYCP to her list of beneficiaries and is now a participant in our Planned Giving program. "A lot of it also has to do with you wanting to make sure that your estate isn't taxed at a maximum amount and charitable giving does help a great deal with that." If you would like to learn more about estate planning or other Planned Giving options, please contact Sarah Moran at (917) 970-9732.



Daniel Reyes, NYCP's Deputy Executive Director and Brad Beckstrom, NYCP Board Member and Director of Community Affairs for Mt. Sinai Hospital help distribute food to Jose Martell at Bonifacio Cara Texidor Senior Center, a Nourish partner mobile site - Photo Credit: Jack Miller



Stephen Grimaldi, Executive Director is joined by Melissa Mark-Viverito, Speaker of the New York City Council; Aurelia Greene, Deputy Bronx Borough President; and Dr. Donna Corrado, Commissioner of the NYC Department for the Aging to cut the ribbon at the Nourish opening - Photo Credit: Phillip Van Nostrand

So far this fiscal year has been a year of growth and increase. We've seen a rise in the number of hot meals provided and an increase in the number of seniors using our services as compared to the year prior. In December 2015 we grew in another substantial way—we opened two new sites and launched a new program in the Bronx. Our additional locations are a concrete example of our dedication to continuing to meet the city-wide need for food provision, nutrition education, and access to services. Thanks to support from the New York State Department of Health, we began Nourish, a Commodity Supplementary food program dedicated to distributing food, provided by the United States Department of Agriculture, and providing nutrition education to SNAP-eligible seniors in four of the city's boroughs. In February we held a ribbon cutting to open the new sites and introduce the program to our neighbors in the Bronx. Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and Deputy Bronx Borough President Aurelia Greene were among the VIP's in attendance. Now, more than three months into the new program, we are happy to report that Nourish is flourishing! When fully operational, the program will reach over 13,500 seniors a month, at over 80 off-site partners in the Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. Thanks to the Nourish program, we are on pace to serve more than 3 million meals for the first time in our history.

**Thank you for your support... please make a gift this Spring!**

To make a donation please visit [www.nycommonpantry.org](http://www.nycommonpantry.org) or use the mailer inside

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# Nourish Member Highlight: Dianne Spears

Ms. Dianne Spears is a new face in the NYCP community. A resident of the Bronx and a senior citizen, she found us through our new Nourish program. Dianne has a zest for life and can often be found chatting with other seniors from her community. Lately, she's been telling them about the Nourish program and encouraging them to participate. At our most recent Fill the Bag Benefit, Dianne recognized the Nourish program that has helped her to add good, quality food to her cabinet, which she considered a blessing. She highlighted the difficulty that seniors can face trying to afford food on a limited budget. According to Dianne, "I can tell you first hand that having the new Nourish program in the Bronx is making a real difference in our community." Stories like Dianne's show the importance of our work and programs, especially Nourish, in communities throughout New York City.



Dianne sharing her story during the Community Parade at the Fill the Bag Benefit 2016 - Photo Credit: Levi Stolove

# Fill the Bag Benefit: A Smashing Success

This year's Fill the Bag Benefit, held on March 8th, honored Sherrell Andrews with The Estée Lauder Companies Distinguished Volunteer Award and White & Case with the Corporate Partner Award. Over 300 friends of the Pantry filled Gotham Hall to celebrate the community of the Pantry. The night's themes were expansion and excellence, which were highlighted through the speeches of the honorees as well as in the remarks of Stephen Grimaldi, Executive Director. Stephen spoke about our opening in the Bronx and our Gold Prize award from the Nonprofit Excellence Awards. The themes were further explored in our Community Parade, which included staff, pantry members, donors, and supporters to both show and tell the importance of the Pantry in the community. One such participant was Dianne Spears (see story on this page). We are happy to share that the evening rose over \$720,000 to support the Pantry's city-wide mission. **We would like to thank Bloomberg Philanthropies for covering the printing costs of the event.**



Left: Sara Moss, NYCP Board Member, Executive Vice President and General Counsel for The Estée Lauder Companies presents honoree and Board Member Sherrell Andrews with The Estée Lauder Companies Distinguished Volunteer Award



Middle: Scott Zemser, Partner with White & Case, accepts the Corporate Partner Award from NYCP Board Chair Michael Fitzsimons



Right: Guests enjoying the Fill the Bag Benefit - Photo Credit: Levi Stolove

# Executive Director's Corner: Life May be a Struggle but Struggle Should Not be a Life



Stephen Grimaldi, Executive Director of New York Common Pantry

The reduction of hunger and the promotion of self-sufficiency and dignity are more than just admirable aims. In the wealthiest country in the world, in the richest city in our nation, 1.4 million New Yorkers struggle to halt hunger. They may suffer from poor nutrition, have insufficient food and wages, and are a few, or perhaps one, paycheck away from eviction. I know something about this struggle. When I was 15 years old my father's income was greatly reduced. We were forced to move and my mother took a part time job, my father three, including one as a security guard on the overnight shift. This schedule greatly taxed him and meant we all had to make sacrifices. For the first time in my life I met eligibility guidelines and received discounted lunch at school. So began my journey that led me to New York Common Pantry. Between ages 16 and 27, I worked doggedly to make ends meet and made choices based on economics: which college I attended, which jobs I could fit in between or after classes, and how I could leverage both my student loan and the small grant I received from the state to minimize debt. And for a period, I received food stamps. When my father died unexpectedly and my mom was forced to move again, my trauma of losing a parent was magnified by the cost of living. I moved in with friends and worked two jobs for more than 65 hours a week, both below \$8 an hour. I struggled to see a path other than the one I was on—but in time a path opened that led me to a career in service, and then to NYCP. My experiences are not all that define me, but they do provide motivation, understanding, and context. Others have had it far worse than I but I know the fear of having no 'fall back' option and nothing to cushion your fall. I know that people need support during difficult times and want a 'hand up,' not a handout. Thanks to places like NYCP, solutions are available. NYCP's approach—to assertively and quickly address problems before they grow—helps people access comprehensive services that move them forward with their lives. This year this means over \$6 million in resources other than food, over 3 million meals, and hundreds of thousands of people served. It will also mean that almost 70% of pantry families will reduce the frequency of visits because they now have the resources in place to move forward and think about ways to thrive instead of merely survive. That is an important difference. In the past few years we have transitioned from a pre-packaged 'food only' approach to a poverty fighting organization that affirms the dignity of those we serve. We join food provision with case management to access benefits and tax assistance and a public health approach to nutrition and wellness—while continuing to provide hygiene services and hot meals. We've diversified procurement by adding food recovery vehicles that pick up food throughout New York City, by purchasing directly from farmers while continuing to receive donated food from traditional sources, and by increasing the efforts and hours of our volunteers. This combination allows us to serve more people each year, and to do so at a cost of 80 cents per Choice Pantry meal. We have taken our programs all over New York City. We added two new satellite sites in the Bronx as part of Nourish, our senior citizen's nutrition program that will visit 80 mobile sites throughout four boroughs. Finally, another Choice Pantry, a third satellite site, is slated to open in 2017. We continue to mentor other emergency food programs. As long as there are food insecurity, poverty and public health disparities in our city, we will find ways to address them and not allow circumstances to determine people's fate. Thank you for your support in doing so.