

A Passover Blessing

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By Peer Deutsch

Being on the frontlines of the war on poverty in New York City is tough. It's really hard to see the elderly, who should be enjoying their golden years, coming to a food pantry for something to eat. It's painful to watch a mother standing on line with her child to get food to take home. What goes through my mind as we serve so many people each week is how much I wish we had milk and eggs for the kids. How I wish we had more protein for the seniors. How I wish we had some chicken and fish for families to bring home. But we do what we can and hope that each effort we make and every service we offer, such as free tax assistance, help accessing SNAP, clothing drives and free school supplies, helps alleviate New Yorkers' burden a little more.

We accept only kosher food donations, which limits the food items we have available. It's sometimes a fraction of the donations other agencies may get. Yet, we do not limit our clientele to people who keep kosher. Everyone is welcome to receive assistance

from us--and we wouldn't have it any other way. But we struggle, improvise and do everything humanly possible to put together a respectable pantry box each week.

As we approached Passover we started worrying, as we do each year. How would we possibly help impoverished, kosher-eating families during the holiday season when they can't really substitute peanut butter for a chicken, or a can of tuna for eggs and fish? Food Bank For New York City provided the answer, and it was the single most moving experience I have had in 19 years of serving the public.

Food Bank helped our agency access kosher foods that would serve our clients best. Dr. Camesha Grant and her member services team were tireless and vigilant in getting us foods that have never been accessible to us before. And I mean tireless! I once called Dr. Grant in the evening to leave her a message and she picked up! Each hurdle they encountered was seen as a challenge, not a roadblock. I am so excited to be able to offer substantial food items to our clients for the holidays. But mostly I am excited to know that there is a wonderful current of goodwill and real concern at Food Bank. In every department, someone is always there to help. We have a very capable partner to back us up in this war on poverty.

So to President and CEO Margarett Purvis, Dr. Grant, Renee, Pat, Elizabeth, Angela, Carol, Alyssa, every staff member, every single person filling warehouse orders, every smiling, cheerful truck driver who shows up in freezing temperatures--to all of you, from the bottom of my heart, thank you

for your dedicated work. May God bless you and keep you safe.

Peer Deutsch is Food Program Coordinator at Oneg Shabbos, a member of Food Bank's network of charities.