How Media Saved the Bronx

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By Ashley Goforth

The Bronx is home to many great things – a world class botanical garden and zoo, Arthur Avenue and the New York Yankees. But the Bronx is also home to some of the country's deepest poverty – according to Food Bank research, 50 percent of Bronx residents struggle to afford food.

So when the Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development (MWIRD), a flagship member of our Bronx network, found itself facing a loss of nearly 70 percent of their funding, the Food Bank knew something had to be done.

With their Benedict Avenue and Highbridge food pantries in the South Bronx, the Institute is a beacon of hope within the country's poorest Congressional district. Run by Executive Director Nurah Amat'ullah and four additional paid staff – MWIRD relies heavily on the support of volunteers and donors to keep their doors open and services running smooth. The organization was originally established 14 years ago to serve the Muslim population, but has since grown to serve a diverse population that was in great need of support.

In December, after voluntarily giving up their salaries for the previous six months, the Institute's staff found themselves facing more than $48,000 in debt. With few options left, they reached out to the Food Bank for help. Hoping to stop the closure of a central Bronx organization, the Food Bank helped MWIRD bring their appeal to our network of media contacts, generating stories theDaily News and other major outlets.

The results went beyond our wildest expectations when the Collegiate Church Corporation, inspired by the media stories, gave MWIRD a grant large enough to cover their debt, pay their staff and save for the future.

The Food Bank is heartened by many parts of this story – the power of media to inspire, the dedication of our network members, that MWIRD is safe and continues to serve the South Bronx. And there is one more part that I am personally heartened by: in addition to its great teams, attractions and food, more people now know about the great people who sacrifice in order to help the Bronx.