Learning that Hunger Looks Like My Neighbors Too

Posted At : April 25, 2009 10:58 AM | Posted By : Food Bank Staff
Related Categories: The People We Help

by John Walsh

In New York you see people waiting in lines for lots of things — book signings, giveaways, ladies' (but never men's) rooms, and concerts. And since I started working here at the Food Bank For New York City this past winter, I can now add another reason to line up outside, even in 15 degree weather: hunger.

Since starting here I have learned plenty — my affinity for the **color orange**, that members of the Food Bank's culinary council can ham it up with the best of them — but mostly about the startling realities of hunger in our city. My eyes were first opened to the seriousness of the situation when I read the statistics highlighted in our research materials and on our website. For example, in New York City alone, approximately **3 million people** have difficulty affording food for themselves and their families. In the past, when the topic of hunger was mentioned, the images that came to mind were of developing countries like Sudan and Ethiopia. But now I know that hunger looks like my neighbors too.

The experience that really brought home the severity of food poverty in our city was my first visit to the Food Bank's Community Kitchen & Food Pantry in West Harlem last December. When we arrived I was surprised to see the number of people waiting outside in the freezing cold for food pantry service to start.

It was seeing these dozens of people standing in the freezing cold on an otherwise unremarkable weekday afternoon that truly made the statistic I mentioned above more than a number. Of the New Yorkers I met that day, some were elderly, some were there with their children, many were coming from work, and I would not have been surprised to see any of them at my subway stop or down the hall in my apartment building.