

Listening to Our Network

Posted At : December 17, 2009 11:40 AM | Posted By : Food Bank Staff
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By Phillip Cooke

Working on the Adopt a Food Program initiative, a partnership between the Food Bank For New York City and NYC Service, I have had significant contact with many of the food assistance programs in our citywide network. This is a diverse group of people serving a wide variety of needs, but I have noticed one constant: in the difficult economic times we are currently going through, food programs are struggling with a rising demand for their services.

Food pantries and soup kitchens are seeing an influx of working poor: people who work part-time, full-time and often multiple jobs, but still need a little extra help to feed themselves and their families. At the same time, available funding is decreasing as individual and institutional funders are coping with diminishing resources — leading many food programs to cut back on services.

This all might sound rather alarming, but there is hope. In a time of great need, volunteers have the opportunity to make a truly lasting impact. Working with many of these programs, I have seen firsthand how volunteers are providing organizations with the support they need not only to maintain, but to improve services. Volunteers also bring skills and ideas from their own life, such as grantwriting or marketing, that can contribute a fresh perspective to their adopted food program, enhancing collaboration and innovation.

In the past, I have seen so much accomplished by people working only for the knowledge that they are contributing to something much bigger than themselves. I love the enthusiasm and dedication volunteers bring to their work. So far I have seen that passion in the many groups and individuals involved with Adopt a Food Program, and I am excited to see the results of their hard work.

To adopt a food program in New York, please [click here](#).