Dignity in Choice

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Hour Children Food Pantry client Renee

By Abigael Burke

In my work as food pantry coordinator at Hour Children Food Pantry, I see the faces of hunger and poverty firsthand. Our clients here in Long Island City are struggling and we're doing everything we can to help them get through these hard times. But times are getting tougher.

Ever since the November 2013 SNAP cuts, the need in Queens has continued to increase. In one month alone we serve more than 3,000 people. Hour Children is one of only two emergency food providers within walking distance of Ravenswood Houses and Queensbridge North Housing Project, two of the largest low-income housing projects in the nation--home to nearly 8,000 people, including our client Renee.

Born in Queens, Renee lives in the Queensbridge housing project with her two granddaughters. In 2010 she suffered a back injury that rendered her unable to work. Without a paycheck to depend on, it wasn't long before she began experiencing food insecurity and skipping meals so that her grandchildren could eat. Then a neighbor told her about Hour Children Food Pantry. Renee was grateful to find someplace in the community where she could turn for help. Now she no longer has to sacrifice herself in order to feed her grandkids.

She says that her favorite part of Hour Children is the welcoming atmosphere. Our goal is to provide healthy and nutritious food in the most non-judgmental and respectful way possible. That's why our food pantry is client-choice, which enables people to select food in a supermarket-style setting. As

Renee puts it, "There is dignity in choice."

Abigael Burke is the Food Pantry Coordinator at Hour Children Food Pantry in Queens, a member of Food Bank For New York City's network of charities.