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The City of New York
Manhattan Community Board 8

Health, Seniors, and Social Services Committee Meeting

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House
331 East 70th Street
Auditorium
June 14, 2012

Community Board members in attendance: Molly Blayney, Jacqueline Ludorf, Mary Pike, Ellen Polivy, Hattie Quarnstrom, Barbara Rudder
Public member in attendance: Jeffrey Ascherman

The meeting was called to order at 6:42pm.

Rebecca Darugar, a benefits outreach worker with the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, addressed the meeting. She discussed the work of the NYC Hunger Free Communities Consortium and, in particular, the intensive outreach effort it has been engaged in throughout the past year.

The NYC Hunger Free Communities Consortium (NYCHFCC) is a collaborative effort of AARP Foundation, City Harvest, Council of Senior Centers and Services, Food Bank for NYC, Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, the NYC Coalition Against Hunger, NYC Department for the Aging, Public Health Solutions, and United Way of NYC. A major focus of the consortium's efforts is increasing the number of people that participate in anti-poverty and other government and private nutrition and food-based programs, including food stamps, WIC (Women, Infants, and Children), school meals and summer meals for children, and emergency food through food pantries, soup kitchens, and other like sources.

Her presentation was part of the consortium's ongoing outreach effort to help all the member groups reach out to the community and generate greater awareness about existing food-linked programs, including food benefits programs. The coalition aims to make all the member organizations more efficient in reaching their mutual goals of getting needy and hungry people connected to food programs, food stamps and other entitlements. Questions were asked and answered throughout the presentation. Nicole Doniger, who was also present, supplemented it at various points throughout. Ms. Doniger is the director of benefits access for the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty.

Ms. Darugar provided packets that were distributed to all in attendance. Each packet contained informational pieces about the NYC Hunger Free Communities Consortium and about various food benefit programs and how to access them.

She emphasized that information about food benefit programs and help in accessing them is available over the phone by contacting the consortium's toll free number for food resource guidance. The number is 1-855-692-4322 (1-855-NYC-HFCC). A prompt at the outset of the connection will enable the caller to obtain information in English, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, French, or Creole.

The consortium's website contains much valuable information. A translation feature on the upper right hand corner of the home page makes it possible immediately to access the site's information in any one of 65 languages. The website address is: <http://nychungerfree.com/>.

To raise public awareness about the availability of food benefits programs, consortium representatives try to be a consistent presence at a wide variety of events and welcome suggestions as to possible venues. Outreach efforts have also been made through the social media, including Facebook and Twitter, and mass press releases. There have also been numerous meetings in churches.

The consortium welcomes help in its outreach efforts.

During the presentation, concern was voiced about the importance of helping potential food program participants overcome embarrassment about needing help, a condition that often prevents older individuals from getting food they need. The discussion that followed focused on concern about the difficulties and confusion many people experience in applying or trying to apply for benefits programs. The consensus was that the applications process is in serious need of being streamlined. Several of the comments indicated that various elected officials have already recognized the importance of such an effort.

A motion was made proposing that the committee prepare, for the approval of the board chair, a letter from him to the appropriate elected officials stressing the importance of integrating and streamlining the application process for various benefits programs. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30pm.

**Ellen Polivy and Mary Pike
Co-Chairs
Health, Seniors, and Social Services Committee**