



Louise's Pantry NEWSLETTER

Council Member Torres Tours Bronx Pantry



Council Member Ritchie Torres (second from left) tours Louise's Pantry in the Bronx with Executive Director Michael Callaghan (center) and members of Nazareth Housing staff.

In December, Council Member Richie Torres visited both Nazareth Housing locations in the Bronx in order to learn more about our services and how members of City Council can better support nonprofit organizations. Council Member Torres spent several hours at Thorpe House Family Shelter and Park Avenue Thorpe supportive housing, speaking at length with staff, exploring the variety of services offered at each location, and learning about the unique ways that Nazareth Housing works with families to overcome barriers to housing, including food insecurity.

An important stop during Council Member Torres' visit was Louise's Pantry, where 1,730 individuals were served in the past seven months. Nazareth Housing staff presented the various successes of the pantry, as well as the challenges faced each week. The goal of the visit was to underscore the firsthand experience of how Nazareth Housing tackles the personal and

economic obstacles that homeless families face each day. The council member was also able to see the impact of city funding on both domestic violence, outreach, and emergency food pantry.

By serving as Chair of the Council's Committee on Public Housing, Council Member Torres has made clear the importance of providing stable housing and tackling causes of homelessness during his term. Nazareth Housing was able to show firsthand the opportunities and challenges facing nonprofits and low income families, and show examples of best practices and efficient delivery of services.

Site visits by elected officials are always welcome, and crucial to creating tangible ways that the City can help Nazareth Housing make a bigger impact.

Volunteer!

info@nazarethhousingnyc.org

Donate!

www.tiny.cc/LPDonate
(212) 982-7800

Start a Food Drive!

www.tiny.cc/LPFoodDonations



Bags deployed in the Bronx are made from recyclable woven polypropylene.

Reusable Pantry Bags Make Debut

Through funding by the United Way Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), Nazareth Housing launched reusable pantry bags for guests of Louise's Pantry at both Bronx and Lower East Side sites. Both canvas and recyclable woven polypropylene bags were distributed to test durability and long-term use. As we hear back from families which bag is most sturdy, helpful, and easier to use, Nazareth Housing will decide which bag to use in a full-scale deployment this summer.

Every family that comes to Louise's Pantry this winter has received their food in a reusable bag. Over 600 polypropylene bags were deployed at the high-volume pantry location in the Bronx, and 100 canvas bags were deployed in the Lower East Side. The sustainable bags are large enough to fit a weeks worth of food for an entire family and have straps that fit over the shoulder, making the bags easier to carry when filled.



A Lower East Side Louise's Pantry visitor shows off her canvas pantry bag.

3,511
bags of food
distributed since
July 2015

The reaction to the new bags has been overwhelmingly positive, with families using the bags if they return each week or if they return for intermittent help.

This is the first of many concrete steps that Nazareth Housing will be taking to move toward increasingly sustainable pantry practices.

Blizzard Readiness Keeps Families Safe

It's winter, which means it's blizzard season. We don't often know far in advance when a blizzard will hit or how severe it will be, but we do know that we can be prepared to provide food for our community.

Before each storm, Nazareth Housing prepares emergency food bags and delivers them to the families at each of our four locations in the Bronx and Lower East Side. These emergency food bags supply each family with enough food to last several days in the event that public transportation is suspended or food stores remain closed.

For many families, unplanned events like a blizzard can severely impact their food security. When food is a day-to-day issue, a setback like a blizzard can be an emergency situation. By providing emergency bags, families can focus on keeping their families safe and fed, knowing that they will not need to risk venturing outside in order to find food.

412
families assisted since July 2015



A Nazareth Housing staff member distributes food from Louise's Emergency Pantry Closet at the O'Toole Center for Outreach and Prevention.

MLK Day Delivery Sets Louise's Pantry Up For Success

On the same day the Nation celebrated the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and his life-long dedication to equality and civil rights, staff at Nazareth Housing's Park Avenue Thorpe in the Bronx were busy receiving a truckload of food items from Goya that would feed hundreds of Bronx families for over a month.

Goya delivered \$5,000 worth of food to Louise's Pantry at Park Avenue Thorpe in the Bronx. Volunteers and staff unloaded and organized the food onto the shelves, including low-sodium items such as black beans, golden corn, pastas, and dairy products. These items boosted pantry resources that included kosher food items, grains, and brown rice donations from Trader Joe's and weekly Food Bank For New York City deliveries.

A client-choice pantry, Louise's Pantry gives families the ability to hand-select specific items from the pantry that their families will enjoy. The

shelves at Louise's Pantry in the Bronx are organized into five categories outlined by the USDA MyPlate model: vegetables, fruits, grains, dairies, and proteins. Louise's Pantry has been using this model for over one full year, meaning families are experts in using the model to make healthier pantry selections for their families.

Weekly food from Louise's Pantry is not meant to be a permanent solution for families, but a step on the road to food security. Many families come for only a few weeks during temporary food insecurity, but they may remain connected to Nazareth Housing through workshops and case management.

We extend out thanks to the Food Bank of Westchester, Scarsdale Congregational Church, Church of the Magdalene, Food Bank For New York, Trader Joe's, and Goya for their generous donations of food this winter.



This single donation from Goya provided enough food to supply pantry visitors for one full month.

31,599 meals provided since July 2015

Visitors to Pantry Gain Access to Tax Help

Louise's Pantry is a key point of contact for many low-income families in the neighborhood. Each week, visitors to Louise's Pantry not only receive food items for their families, but also connect with supplementary services like the 2016 Tax Preparation Program at Nazareth Housing.

In partnership with the Financial Clinic, Wednesday through Saturday Nazareth Housing provides free VITA tax preparation for low-income families. Ensuring that a family files its taxes properly and gets the highest refund possible is all part of improving financial security and breaking the cycle of poverty.

Only five weeks into the 2016 tax season, Nazareth Housing has helped low-income families file 636 returns while bringing \$1,252,379 in tax refunds and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). That's an average of almost \$2,000 returned to each family. Through coaching by staff members and volunteers from the Financial Clinic, these tax returns are used to directly support the financial goals of each family.



Four weeks into the 2016 tax season, Nazareth Housing has returned an average of \$2,000 to over 500 families.

Holiday Celebrations Feed Hundreds at NH

The 2015 holiday season brought over 500 individuals together for four events centered around delicious food, arts and crafts, family, and holiday fun. Now an established tradition at Nazareth Housing, the holiday season brings the families in our community together for group meal at Thanksgiving and three separate group meals before Christmas—two in the Lower East Side and one in the Bronx.

At Thanksgiving, families dined on a feast of roasted turkeys, stuffing, mac and cheese, mashed potatoes, and green beans before polishing off the meal with apple pie. Around the room were areas where children and adults alike could draw what they were thankful for in 2015. The Nazareth Housing Junior Board and Fordham University interns designed and

arranged centerpieces for each table. Before leaving, each family received a turkey and food items to take home.

To accommodate our communities, two holiday parties were held in the Lower East Side ahead of Christmas. At each party families enjoyed rice and beans, sweet plantains, pork, salad, and pastries. Children swarmed the arts and crafts table creating themed cards and stockings. Santa Claus arrived just in time to give gifts to all children in attendance.

In the Bronx, 77 community members gathered at Park Avenue Thorpe to celebrate the holidays. This party provided a special twist as children were able to select gifts to give their parents, putting a smile on everyone's faces.

Special thanks to our volunteers from REBNY, Wall Street Rotary, Hearts of Gold, NYU Newman Club, Junior Board, Tara Chambers, Playhouse Creatures, and Russell Investments.

We are especially grateful for the donations of food from Russell Investments, St. Boniface Parishioners, S'MAC, Eleven B Express, NYC Basket Brigade, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of NY, Marc Hudak, Clinton Street Baking Co., Gramercy Block Association, Waldorf Astoria, and Veniero's Pasty Shop. In preparation for the winter, 13th Step donated warm coats in various sizes. Gramercy Block Association, REBNY, Family to Family, and the Newman Club at NYU donated toys that were distributed at the holiday parties in the Lower East Side and the Bronx.



1,730 individuals assisted since July 2015

LifeLab Crossover Makes Louise's Pantry "More Than Food"

For every family at Louise's Pantry, our goal is to permanently relieve the causes of food insecurity while meeting short term need. A large part of reaching this goal is through LifeLab workshops focusing on nutritional education and budgeting. These workshops help staff members pinpoint each family's unique cause of food insecurity, and develop a concrete plan to eliminate it.

For many families budgeting for food is a struggle. 88% of families at Nazareth Housing have a weekly food budget of

\$60 to feed a family of four. Budgeting workshops help families prioritize their budget to make every dollar they earn go as far as possible, even connecting families using SNAP benefits to local green markets where they can buy fresh produce for a fraction of what they would spend at the grocery store.

Nutrition workshops help families make healthy choices when buying food, plan healthy meals, and learn about food related health issues like diabetes and heart disease.