

NATIONAL ANTI-HUNGER & OPPORTUNITY CORPS

A Project of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger

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National Anti-Hunger and Opportunity Corps Begins Locally

AmeriCorps VISTA Team to Work in 18 States, Including Sites in Buffalo, Rochester, and Long Island; Senators Schumer, Gillibrand Praise Project

Four full-time national service participants have just started work in New York State as part of a new nationwide AmeriCorps VISTA project to fight hunger called the National Anti-Hunger and Opportunity Corps.

The nonprofit organization Island Harvest in Nassau County, Foodlink in Rochester, and Food For All in Buffalo have received Anti-Hunger Corps members at their sites.

Their service began a few days after top federal and local officials joined with nonprofit groups at Philadelphia's City Hall to swear-in 44 members of the new program, which will not only help nonprofit organizations in 18 states, at nearly 30 sites, fight hunger, but will also help to empower more low-income individuals and families to achieve long-term financial security.

The program is being led by the New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCAH), a nonprofit organization, and funded jointly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), with additional support from non-governmental sources such as the Walmart Foundation.

“Building strong communities means making sure families have the food and nutrition they need to start their children on the right path,” said Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY). “By partnering with New York City Coalition Against Hunger, the Anti-Hunger and Opportunity Corps will go a long way towards helping New Yorkers, and families across the country, gain access to the food they need.”

“Thousands of New York families are struggling just to put food on their tables during this difficult economy, said Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY).” The National Anti-Hunger and Opportunity Corps will make critically important contributions to organizations around the state that are on the frontline working to help families during their time of great need. As a member of the Agriculture Committee, I am working to support their efforts, combat hunger and improve nutrition.”

“In this nation of plenty, it is unacceptable that millions of children still go to bed not knowing if there will be food for their next meal,” said Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee that funds AmeriCorps and a senior member of the subcommittee that funds the USDA. “The Anti-Hunger and Opportunity Corps is a win-win - it will play an important role in the fight against hunger, while helping young people build leadership skills and pay off school debt.”

“The New York State Commission on National and Community Service is proud to support this public-private initiative that will deliver valuable resources to promote healthy futures in cities across New York State and the nation at a time when it is needed most” said Susan Stern, Chair of the New York State Commission. “This program is another example of the powerful impact AmeriCorps and national service members have on critical issues that challenge our communities every day. I want to thank the NYC Coalition Against Hunger, the AmeriCorps members, and all the partners that are leveraging service as a strategic solution to fight hunger and improve the health of New Yorkers”

“Forging meaningful partnerships between the private sector, government and local hunger relief organizations is a critical step in addressing the insidious effects hunger has on those who know it firsthand — especially America’s at-risk children,” said Randi Shubin Dresner, president and CEO of Island Harvest, Long Island’s largest hunger relief organization. “We look forward to working with the Anti-Hunger Opportunity Corps in helping stem the advancing, yet often unrecognized problem of hunger in our local communities.”

"Foodlink is incredibly fortunate to be a beneficiary of the VISTA program as host to two service members who will engage in vital community outreach work aimed at providing hunger relief and nutrition services in our region," said Tom Ferraro, Executive Director of Foodlink. "As a food bank, we rely on more than 20,000 hours of volunteer work each year – but the position of an AmeriCorps VISTA service member goes above and beyond the average volunteer. Our partnership with the VISTA program significantly expands our capacity to connect both public and private assistance with families who need it the most. We are grateful to both NYCCAH and the AmeriCorps VISTA for making the Anti-Hunger and Opportunity Corps program possible.”

“We are thrilled to have such a great opportunity to have a VISTA member from the Anti-Hunger Opportunity Corps to help expand our federal nutrition programs, community gardens and utilization of farmers market’s”, said Kelly Ann Kowalski the Director Food For All.

"Walmart has committed \$2 billion through 2015 to fight hunger, but we know that this serious issue will only be solved if we work together - government, nonprofits and the private sector," said Margaret McKenna, president of the Walmart Foundation.

Michael A. Nutter, the Mayor of Philadelphia, Kevin Concannon, the USDA Undersecretary who is the chief anti-hunger official in the Obama Administration, Paul Davis, the acting Director of AmeriCorps VISTA, and Joel Berg, NYCCAH's Executive Director swore in the new VISTAs at Philadelphia's City Hall on February 10th, as part of a national training conducted by NYCCAH and the federal Corporation for National and Community Service.

"Increasing access to nutrition assistance for our most vulnerable populations is a top priority of the Obama Administration," said USDA Undersecretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Concannon. "We are committed to working with our partners at the federal, state and local level, as together we help millions of families in need."

"For more than 45 years, VISTA has been in communities working to improve the lives of millions of the most vulnerable Americans," said Paul Davis, Acting Director of AmeriCorps VISTA. "This cross-agency collaboration with USDA will prove instrumental in helping individuals and families get on the path to economic stability and build stronger communities."

"The AmeriCorps VISTA program is a perfect tool to fight hunger and improve nutrition," said NYCCAH's Joel Berg. "We are grateful that this new public-private partnership will cost-effectively aid the ability of grassroots nonprofit groups in 18 states to increase their capacity to enable eligible families to access the federal nutrition assistance benefits that they need to avoid hunger and improve their diets. We are extraordinarily grateful to the Obama Administration and to local officials around the country for this tremendous federal and local support, as well as to the Walmart Foundation and our nonprofit partners for their support," said Berg.

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