

CLICK  
HERE

# NYNP New York Nonprofit Press

serving people who serve people

irwin siegel  
agency inc.

1-800-622-8272

Search

Long

Island



Cares

Thursday, 29 January 2009 19:53



Harry Chapin founded Long Island Cares in 1980. Hunger and poverty was a passion for Long Island's own enormously popular folk singer and activist who had co-founded World Hunger Year in 1975.

Tragically, Chapin died a year later on his way to perform at a free concert in Eisenhower Park. Yet, today Long Island Cares carries on both his name – The Harry Chapin Food Bank – and his mission, serving 570 soup kitchens, food pantries and other programs in Nassau and Suffolk counties.



"I don't know how Harry would feel about having his name on the Food Bank," says Paule T. Pachter, ACSW, LMSW, who joined the organization as Executive Director last year. "I know he wouldn't be too happy about the increase in the number of people who are hungry on Long Island. He would be outraged."

Despite Long Island's reputation for housing some of the wealthiest communities in the nation,

nearly 300,000 of its residents – an estimated one in ten – rely on food pantries, soup kitchens and other emergency food programs for their nutritional needs.

It is a number that is growing rapidly as the nation's economic crisis devastates once middle class families through layoffs and house foreclosures.

"We are seeing 35-40% increases in demand across the board," says Pachter. "We are seeing it in the lines at the food programs we serve. And, we are seeing it in the increasing numbers of telephone calls and emails we are getting from people asking for help.

"That's right," he emphasizes, "people are sending emails. 'My husband lost his job.' 'I lost my job.' 'We are about to lose our home.' That's the middle class."

Like other local food banks across the nation, Long Island Cares acquires food from a variety of sources and channels it to its network of emergency food programs – soup kitchens, food pantries, homeless shelters, veterans programs, child care centers, etc. In 2008, the agency will have distributed an estimated six million pounds of food to hungry Long Islanders through this network – up one million pounds, or 20%, from a year earlier.

### Finding the Food

Long Island Cares's largest source



left to right: Paule Pachter, Executive Director; NYS Senator John Flanagan, and Robin Amato, CFRE Director of Development

NYU Wagner

Graduate  
School of  
Public Service



Home

### Employment & Advertising

- Find A Job
- Post A Job
- Post A Resume
- Advertise

### Community

- Subscribe
- Resources
- Community Forums
- Calendar of Events

### This Month's Issue



Download Pdf  
Read Individual  
Stories

### NYNP Departments

- Features
- Agencies of the month
- Breaking News
- Nonprofits in the News
- People

- [Grants](#)
- [Points of View](#)
- [Strengthening Nonprofits](#)
- [Nonprofit Events](#)
- [Voice of the Consumer](#)
- [Fundraising](#)
- [Research](#)
- [NYNP Books](#)
- [NYNP-TV](#)

- [About Us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

### Calendar

02/04  
**FREE JOB TRAINING PROGRAM FOR WOMEN WOMEN AND WORK (W&W)**

02/05  
**"Major Gifts: Finding the Perfect Donors"**

02/05  
**GENERAL SUPPORT + GROUP DISCUSSION**

02/05  
**The Neighborhood Technical Assistance Clinic presents 7th Annual Community Capacity Building Awards**

02/05  
**Developing Major Gift Donors Who Deliver**

of food – 41% in 2007 – comes through its membership in Feeding America, the national network of food banks. Formerly known as America’s Second Harvest, Feeding America receives donations of food and grocery products from large, national corporations. In turn, it passes those on to local food banks in the form of allocations based on relative poverty levels and other indicators of need.

“We have the opportunity to bid on national lines of products as long as we pay for the trucking,” says Pachter. “We recently took a donation of 40,000 pounds of Kellogg’s Bran Flakes. It came in 1,000-pound bags. We found a repackaging company in the Bronx that repackaged it into one-pound bags and we distributed it in 12-bag cartons.”

Sometimes, Long Island Cares will join with other food banks on these national purchases. “A couple of months ago we shared a truckload of Progresso chicken noodle soup with the Food Bank of Jacksonville,” says Pachter. “We took 15 pallets.”

Long Island Cares also receives donations from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) which is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Under this program, Long Island Cares receives surplus commodities such as peanut butter and canned vegetables. In 2007, TEFAP accounted for 890,000 pounds, or 18%, of Long Island Care’s food supplies.

New York State’s Hunger Prevention Assistance Program (HPNAP) provided 470,000 pounds of food in 2007, or 9% of the agency’s total. HPNAP offers two-pronged support for the state’s emergency food program network, including both allocations of cash for the purchase of food and funding for administration and operations. Individual food pantries and soup kitchens are given a HPNAP allocation of \$2,000 annually to purchase food for distribution.

Additionally, programs are allocated \$6,000 to purchase supplies and equipment, pay staff or cover other operational expenses. Long Island Cares administers the HPNAP allocations for programs in Nassau and Suffolk County.

Pachter and others in New York State’s emergency food sector have been heartened in recent months by gestures of support from Governor David Paterson. In October and December, the Governor twice allocated an additional \$1 million to provide emergency relief to the State’s food banks. And, in his Executive Budget for FY 2009-10, Paterson proposed increasing HPNAP by \$4.4 million. Both



NYS Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (top) and NYS Assemblyman David McDonough (L) assist Pachter in sorting food at Long Island Care’s 27,000 square foot warehouse. “Our focus on government relations goes way beyond any request for a legislative grant,” says Pachter. “It’s very important to Long Island Cares that we meet with our legislative representatives on an ongoing basis to discuss policy, funding and to keep them informed about the increase in hunger in our region.



Students and faculty members on Long Island’s east end receive more than 100 packs of weekend food as part of Long Island Care’s “Pack It Up For Kids” program, funded by a grant from the American Idol “Idol Gives Back” televised event.

allocations flow through the State's network of regional food banks.

"The Governor understands," says Pachter. "He understands that people need help and he understands that food banks can purchase effectively and efficiently. He is letting us do what we do best... feed the hungry."

### **Food Drives**

Long Island Cares receives more than a quarter of its supply through a combination of food drives run by schools, community groups and businesses, and food donations from local supermarket chains and distributors.

"We do hundreds of food drives," says Pachter. "We partner with all types of organizations – schools, scout groups, fitness centers, the Knights of Columbus, Kiwanis, major corporations, State agencies.

"The Hauppauge Industrial Association did a summer food drive and donated 64,000 pounds of food," he continues.

"Radio station Party 105 FM just did a food drive called 'Stuff the Truck' for 72 hours straight, starting on Friday and ending on Sunday," says Director of Operations Ken Zone. "We had a truck in the parking lot, they did PR for us on the radio and people came out. It was freezing, bitter cold, but we collected 5,000 pounds."

Local supermarket chains are another important source of donations. Sometimes these come through cooperation on food and fundraising drives like the recently completed 15th Annual Check-Out Hunger Campaign in which customers are encouraged to buy donation coupons of \$1.00, \$3.00, or \$5.00. Participating chains include King Kullen, ShopRite, Pathmark, Wild by Nature, Waldbaums, Food Emporium, Food Town, Fairway and Kings.

These and other corporations like Wal-Mart, Target, RiteAid, Stop and Shop and Goya Foods are also major sources of product donations. "They're great," says Pachter. "They continuously send stuff. We don't even have to ask. They just send it."

Food donations, it seems come in from almost everywhere. Long Island Cares even receives 14,000 pounds of venison. "We have a relationship with the Venison Council of New York State through Suffolk County," says Pachter. "These are hunters that are given licenses to thin out the deer population. We take it because it is something that is sanctioned by New York State." On the other hand, the agency has discontinued taking food contributions from the annual shark fishing tournament out of Montauk. "The Humane Society approached us and asked if we would stop," says Pachter.

### **The Hub**

Food from all these sources comes to Long Island Cares' headquarters at 10 Davids Lane in Hauppauge which houses both its administrative offices and a 27,000 square foot warehouse.

"Come here at 7:00 in the morning and tractor trailers are lined up unloading," says Pachter.

Long Island Cares has a staff of 32 who perform the myriad tasks necessary to bring in six million pounds of food each year and then distribute it to a network of small, community-based programs. Purchasing staff place orders with Feeding America and private distributors to fill out and balance the Food Bank's inventory. Agency Relations staff take orders from the 570 emergency food programs and other eligible organizations.

"We have nine people working in the warehouse," says Pachter. "We have three large trucks, one small truck and a refrigerated van. Unlike many food banks around the county, we deliver door to door."

Organizing millions of pounds of food donations – including hundreds of thousands of pounds in the form of individual cans, jars and packages – into nutritionally balanced shipments to individual food programs is a highly labor

intensive process.

“We have over 4,000 volunteers,” says Ken Zone. “That’s up about 850 from last year. We see more and more people putting their time into helping out. I think it is the growing awareness of the hunger problem here on Long Island.”

Volunteers do food sorting and packaging at the warehouse as well as working at food drives and other events. “We also have volunteers who work here in the office,” says Kristine Lehn, Manager of Agency Relations.

Lehn’s staff provides a variety of services to network programs. Long Island Cares monitors HPNAP allocations to individual EFPs which come in the form of a “line of credit”. EFPs use these credits to pay for the “shared maintenance” cost of food from the food bank. These expenses -- \$0.12 to \$0.18 per pound – cover a portion of Long Island Cares’ costs for shipping and handling on food obtained through Feeding America or purchased on the open market.

Any food donated directly to Long Island Cares through food drives or direct corporate contributions are provided to community programs free of charge. “If it is donated to us, it is donated to you,” says Pachter. “You don’t pay for it. If an agency wants to come to the warehouse to pick up donated food. They are welcome to it. Five days a week, they can just come and pick it up.”

In addition to food, Long Island Cares provides a range of technical assistance to its member agencies. Lehn’s staff does trainings on the operation of food pantry programs. “We have requirements that all agencies take a food handler safety course,” she explains. “We ask soup kitchens to go through the Counties for their managers’ certification. We do site visits at our agencies to make sure standards are being met.”

### **Beyond Food**

“One thing people don’t understand about the food bank is the number of different items we have available to distribute for people in need,” says Pachter. “It is not only food. We have household products like bleach and detergents, and personal care items, like soap, shampoo and deodorant which are not covered by food stamps. We have school supplies and toys. And, we have coats. Right now we are working with Burlington Coat Factory through their Warm Hearts, Warm Coats program. I have 2,000 coats in the warehouse ready to be distributed.”

“Someone just called and asked if we would consider a food drive just for pet food,” adds Pachter. “Absolutely! People who are having trouble with the economy are having to put their pets up for adoption.”

### **Community Services**

Long Island Cares also offers a range of services designed to meet the underlying economic needs of people relying on food pantries and soup kitchens. Its New Paths to Achievement Program focuses on assisting low-income women in gaining self-esteem, job skills and employment experience as they transition from public assistance to the world of work. The Job Training Program offers experience and skills training in clerical, computer and warehousing through assignments at Long Island Cares.

“It all goes back to Harry’s philosophy,” says Pachter. “He believed that if we don’t help people get out of the situation they are in; if we don’t help them get out of poverty, then we are not effectively addressing their hunger.”

### **New Initiatives**

In response to the evolving needs of Long Island’s battered middle class, Pachter will be launching two new programmatic initiatives – both departures for Long Island Cares.

“There is still so much stigma with asking for help,” he explains. “People are telling us that they know their church has a food pantry but they don’t want to go there. They don’t want their neighbors to know their problems.”

As a result, Long Island Cares will be opening an emergency food pantry at the

food bank itself. “They are willing to come here,” says Pachter. “We will give them food and tell them about other local programs. Our community outreach staff will help them with applications for Food Stamps and Child Health Plus. We hope to launch that in early March.”

For the same reasons, Long Island Cares is also developing a Mobile Outreach and Resource Unit. “We will send our staff in a van to places like public libraries, supermarket parking lots and train stations to talk with people about their needs,” says Pachter. “The vehicle will also be equipped with about 800 pounds of food in case they need food on the spot.”

Pachter emphasizes that Long Island Cares will supply both projects solely through donated food so as not to cut into HPNAP allocations at existing member programs.

### **Fundraising**

All these services cost money to provide. Long Island Cares has a budget that is currently approaching \$9 million. Half is donated food and half is cash, with approximately \$1 million in the form of individual contributions.

Like many human service nonprofits, the agency has seen both troubling signs and some surprisingly good news in terms of its recent fundraising efforts. In November, Long Island Cares chose to cancel its 17th Annual Harry Chapin Humanitarian Awards Dinner. “Because of the economy, it is hard to get the honorees you need to do it,” says Pachter. “Most nonprofits on Long Island tap bankers and people from Wall Street. That was hard this year.” Instead, the agency chose to announce a “Non-Gala Gala”, noting that “sometimes even Harry had to cancel a gig.”

On the flip side, contributions from the Thanksgiving Appeal are actually up – substantially. “It is a good 65% over last year,” says Robin Amato Lanci, Director of Development.

“We are seeing more people who are giving more,” says Pachter. “When it comes to hunger, Long Island gets it. People know that their neighbors are suffering. Everyone knows someone who has lost a job.”

One very pleasant surprise came during a severe holiday snow storm. “A woman walked in off the street and said she wanted to make a donation,” says Pachter. “It was a \$100,000 check.”

### **Policy and Advocacy**

Looking ahead, Pachter sees Long Island Cares playing a greater role in policy and advocacy with respect to issues of hunger and poverty. The food bank already offers a range of programs to educate groups and individuals about the realities of hunger on Long Island. “Our ‘Hunger 101’ program allows people to role play the life of a low income family who needs to take advantage of a soup kitchen or food pantry,” says Pachter. “It is a very moving experience.”

Long Island plays an active role with the New York State Food Bank Association, the group which Pachter credits for increased HPNAP budget allocations. It also partners on a range of projects with its network programs and Island Harvest, the food rescue organization serving Nassau and Suffolk.

“At the end of the month, Randi Shubin Dresner (President and CEO at Island Harvest) and I are bringing together 18 other leaders in the hunger action field on Long Island to a breakfast summit,” says Pachter. “We want to talk about who is doing what out there, what needs to be done and who can do it.”

Despite soaring demand and a struggling economy, Pachter is optimistic about the Food Bank’s ability to meet the food needs of hungry Long Islanders mainly because of Long Islanders themselves. “They are unbelievably generous,” he says. “When it comes to hunger, Long Island gets it.”

In other words, Long Island cares.

## Harry! Keep the Change!

It has been 27 years since Harry Chapin died. Yet, Chapin's vision and legacy continue to guide and nurture Long Island Cares, the food bank he founded and which now bears his name. Chapin's wife, Sandy, serves as Board Chair. She and other family members actively support the organization through concerts and other special events.



While Chapin's memory and mission have always been integral to Long Island Cares, the organization began a major rebranding effort during the past year to strengthen the connection to its famous founder in the public mind.

"I think people had begun to forget that Long Island Cares was founded by someone whom Newsday calls 'one of the most important Long Islanders of the 20th century,'" says Pachter. "We want people to remember what this organization is all about."

Chapin's image is now a part of all of the agency's marketing and fundraising materials. His photos and memorabilia are displayed throughout Long Island Care's headquarters offices and warehouses. The agency's delivery trucks even carry a checkered yellow and black taxi stripe, reminiscent of Harry's breakthrough hit single.

At the same time, Long Island Cares is reintroducing itself to major corporate and public donor groups. "We implemented a program here called Breakfast with Champions to inform local business about what we do," says Pachter. "We recently had a Legislative Breakfast with 11 State legislators from the Island. We believe this is really paying off."

Over the years, Harry Chapin's memory has always brought in donations from fans both on Long Island and across the nation. "We get designated United Way contributions from all over the country," says Pachter.

Will this connection continue to resonate for new generations of potential donors? Pachter is confident that Chapin's music and the mission he embodied is timeless. "When you play the songs, kids know them," he says. Now he wants them to echo the singer's own words and say: "Harry! Keep the change... to fight hunger on Long Island."

Add this page to your favorite Social Bookmarking websites



## Comments