

USDA CUTS MEAN CANCELED FOOD, FUNDS

Island's two food banks affected; less to go around

BY OLIVIA WINSLOW
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A shipment of just over 250,000 pounds of food that Long Island Cares — The Harry Chapin Regional Food Bank was expecting this week from the U.S. Department of Agriculture was canceled “with no explanation,” the food bank’s president says.

And the Island’s other food bank, Island Harvest, reported that \$1.7 million in funds for a senior meal program was “frozen,” and the organization is unsure it will get that money amid the cutbacks to emergency food programs announced by the USDA earlier this month.

While local food bank officials said they knew about the Trump administration’s planned cuts to several food emergency assistance programs, confusion remained about when the cuts would take effect, and whether other food assistance programs were affected.

A USDA spokesman wrote in an email that the department’s decision “sunsetting” the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement and the Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program “at the end of the performance period” marks “a return to long-term fiscally responsible initiatives.”

Newsday previously reported that those two federal programs provided Long Island’s two food banks with a total of \$2.6 million.



“It’s less food for our pantries and everyone else,” said Long Island Cares president and CEO Paule Pachter, who is seen last year.

USDA: Not ‘abrupt shift’

The USDA spokesman added “this isn’t an abrupt shift,” saying the agency had released more than “half a billion in previously obligated funds for LFPA and LFS to fulfill existing commitments and support ongoing local food purchases,” and that the department “remains focused on its core mission: strengthening food security, supporting agricul-

tural markets, and ensuring access to nutritious food.”

Island food bank officials said any cuts meant that there would be less food to distribute to hundreds of food pantries and agencies that help those in need. According to local estimates more than 221,000 Long Islanders are food insecure, Newsday has reported.

“It’s less food for our pantries

and everyone else,” said Paule Pachter, president and CEO of Hauppauge-based Long Island Cares. “What’s going to happen to the farmers? I don’t know,” Pachter added. “This is food the government would normally buy from the farmers.”

In a separate interview, Gregory May, director of government and community relations for Melville-based Island Harvest, said, “There’s an emergency food ecosystem on Long Island. A cut to one is a cut to all.”

Pachter said in an interview that he got notice on Monday that the USDA was canceling a shipment of 250,057 pounds of food, including turkey and chicken breasts, fresh milk, eggs and cheese. He said it would cost the food bank \$360,000 to replace the items. “I can do part of it, but not all,” he said.

Pachter said the canceled food shipment was a federal Commodity Credit Corporation-funded program. “We thought they would allow the food to flow until the end of the contract period [in August], but apparently that’s not happening.” He added in an email: “What Long Island Cares and other food banks didn’t know was that the foods that we were approved to receive,” such as the 250,057 pounds in “bonus foods” that were to come to his agency from the USDA, “were going to be canceled because they were being paid for through CCC dollars.”

135 truckloads canceled

A spokesman for the New York State Office of General Services said the USDA canceled food shipments to all eight of the state’s regional food banks.

“OGS and regional food banks in NYS were notified simultaneously by the USDA that the federal agency canceled the delivery of 135 truckloads (tractor-trailers) of bonus food valued at \$7.5 million,” Joseph Brill, a spokesman for the agency, wrote in an email to Newsday. In addition to Long Island Cares, he said the canceled shipments affected food banks in Latham, the Bronx, Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, Elmira and Elmsford.

He added, “OGS has not received any additional information from the USDA about the reason for the cancellation of the 135 truckloads.”

Island Harvest is contending with a different problem.

“We were going to receive \$1.7 million to support the Commodity Supplemental Food Program” for low-income seniors that is funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation, May said. “That funding is frozen and we don’t know if we’re going to receive it or not.” That \$1.7 million was to be added to the \$1.2 million in Commodity Supplemental Food Program funding the food bank already receives, he said. “We’re talking to the state and federal officials. There’s no clarity on what’s happening with the funds.”

The USDA spokesman’s email said of CCC funding: “Unlike the Biden Administration, which funneled billions in CCC funds into short-term programs with no plan for longevity, USDA is prioritizing stable, proven solutions that deliver lasting impact. The COVID-era is over — USDA’s approach to nutrition programs will reflect that reality moving forward.”

Baldwin Coach Diner to close after 61 years

BY MELISSA AZOFEIFA
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The Baldwin Coach Diner, which has fed multiple generations of Long Islanders, is set to close on April 10 after 61 years.

The shuttering of the family-run business comes after the death of co-owner John Kanaris earlier this month, said Trissy Kanaris-Navas, his sister and business partner.

“It was time, 61 years,” Ka-

naris-Navas said in an interview at the diner on Sunrise Highway Thursday afternoon.

The eatery was opened in 1964 by Kanaris-Navas’ father, Peter Kanaris, and his business partners, George Tsotsos and Tommy Matthews. The trio worked hard learning to grow the business as well as bake and cook, Kanaris-Navas said.

“It actually was like a school,” she said. “A lot of people left here and opened their

own place.”

By 2000, the diner was fully run by the Kanaris family, with Kanaris-Navas and John Kanaris managing the restaurant with their father. After his cancer diagnosis in 2016, Peter Kanaris stepped down and Kanaris-Navas and John Kanaris managed the eatery together. It has always been a family affair with Kanaris-Navas’ sister-in-law, stepmother and two sons all working at the diner.

Several Long Island diners have closed in recent years, including the South Bay Diner and Lindencrest Diner, both in Lindenhurst; the Mediterranean Diner in Bellmore; and The Lantern Diner in West Hempstead. Meanwhile, Syosset’s former Celebrity Diner was reborn as Neptune Diner.

Baldwin Coach Diner has 150 seats for patrons in the homey space with three dining rooms, offering both cozy booths and

tables for diners to order dishes like steak quesadillas with french fries (\$17.95) and the popular chicken cutlet parmigiana (\$16.95).

Kanaris-Navas said she’s grateful for the loyal customers and employees who have supported the family business through the years.

“I’ve had a wonderful staff, many have been here for decades,” Kanaris-Navas said. “We’ve been blessed.”