

BAXTER'S PET PANTRY

FEEDING HUNGRY PETS

BY ALLISON MATOS

Financial difficulties may compel pet parents to make a heartbreaking decision: surrender their pet when they are unable to meet its basic needs. To ensure that no pet goes hungry due to economic hardship, pet pantries have become a critical resource for those in need.

Baxter's Pet Pantry was established in 2010 at the height of the

Baxter's pet pantry helps feed hungry animals



last recession when so many pet owners found it difficult to provide necessities for their animals. After hearing countless stories about families in need of assistance, President and CEO of Long Island Cares Paule Pachter gathered his staff and began brainstorming ways to

best help the community. "We began by notifying about 350 of our member agencies, advising we would be adding pet food to our offerings. The timing of this project was unique because simultaneously, we received a call from another organization,

the Animal Relief Fund, which was offering donations of pet food by the

truckload, previously turned down by a New York City food bank. Long Island Cares graciously accepted the donation and lo and behold, that's how Baxter's Pantry got its start." The pantry was named after Pachter's late dog, a pug who died in 2010.

Thereafter, Pachter and his team aligned with several pet food manufacturers and distributors, and before they knew it, trucks began showing up with food, leashes, clothing, bowls, toys – anything and everything pet owners would need to help keep their pets thriving. Today, Baxter's Pet Pantry is a freestanding pet pantry located on North Wellwood Avenue in Lindenhurst with five satellite locations, collectively serving approximately 200 families per month throughout Nassau and Suffolk counties.

In addition to contributions from member agencies, Long Island Cares generates donations from the public and through organizing local events. "About six years ago we conducted a

direct mail campaign to our donors to see if we could drum up public interest. The responses were overwhelming, as we raised \$200,000 just from the community who wanted to support this endeavor. There's an annual Paws Walk each fall, and a legislative pet food drive that many of our state legislators participate in which has raised upwards of 20,000 pounds of pet food in the past," says Pachter. Baxter's also partners with several animal rescues and shelters, ensuring that food and supplies are distributed as needed across Long Island. "For us, this was a natural progression because if you have hungry families, their pet is hungry too. That's why we established Baxter's Pet Pantry, and we couldn't be prouder of what we've accomplished here."

For more information about utilizing Baxter's Pet Pantry, how to volunteer, or donate new, unopened/unused items, visit their website at <https://www.licares.org/what-we-do/feed-long-island/baxters-pet-pantry/>.