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**New York City Department of Probation Partners With Local Community Organizations To Expand NeON Nutrition Kitchen Free Grocery Initiative Citywide As COVID-19 Related Need For Food Assistance Increases**

*As Demand for Food Has Increased By 600%, City Opens*

*New NeON Food Distribution Center In Harlem*

NEW YORK - The **New York City Department of Probation** has tripled the number of free pre-packaged groceries it provides for people on probation and other community members to meet increased demand related to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) crisis, city officials announced today.

In partnership with the **Food Bank for New York City** and the **NYC Young Men's Initiative (YMI)**, the **New York City Department of Probation** will help feed thousands of more people by providing one week of pre-packaged groceries through its Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON) Nutrition Kitchens Initiative, city officials said.

As part of its response to the COVID-19 crisis, the New York City Department of Probation opened a new location in Harlem with several hundreds of individuals served in the first week, city officials said. Also, the hours at existing sites in the five boroughs have expanded to meet the increased demand.

The NeON Nutrition Kitchen program serves all New Yorkers in need Probation officials said, not only people on probation.

Last week, NeON served 6,054 families citywide, compared to the previous year's weekly average of 2,192 families. **Commissioner Ana M. Bermúdez** said that the NeON food distribution volume has recently risen by more than 600 percent to meet the increased demand of children and families impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

"We have tripled our capacity in the face of increased local unemployment and an estimated one-third of other food pantry programs temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic," **Bermúdez** said. "Working together, we will get through this."

The NeON program expansion follows a recently released survey (March 2020) from the **City University of New York (CUNY) Urban Food Policy**, reporting that COVID-19 is changing the ability of New Yorkers to get food, particularly in communities of color. Households in communities of color experienced higher levels of significant reductions in food availability compared to white households, although COVID-19 caused some disruption in the food resources of all communities.

**Jordan Stockdale, Executive Director, Young Men's Initiative**, said, "Now more than ever, our communities need access to free, healthy food, and that's exactly what this initiative provides. The Young Men's Initiative is proud to partner with the NeON Nutrition Kitchens."

The **Reverend Maurice D. Winley**, the founder of the **Living Redemption Youth Opportunity Hub**, lauded the efforts of **Commissioner Bermúdez** and the staff of The New York City Department of Probation's NeON Nutrition Kitchens.

"Opening a new center in Harlem, expanding the hours, and service to all members of the community comes at a time when our Harlem community is facing a great moment of need," **Winley** said. "We are grateful and committed to not only helping those on probation and in need of food assistance but all New Yorkers who also have a need."

**Bermúdez** said the newly expanded NeON initiative would last until the current public health crisis ends.

"We expect the need for increased food assistance to continue throughout the economic recovery period," **Bermúdez** said. "As we support more people than ever as the coronavirus outbreak continues, we believe there is no more fundamentally human act than feeding those who may be hungry."

**Bermúdez** said that the current citywide crisis dictated the need to expand the NeON Nutrition Kitchen for all our neighbors.

"My colleagues, the men and women of the New York City Department of Probation, and I are committed to helping our friends and neighbors get through this crisis and will remain vigilant in doing our part to ensure every city resident has access to food."

**NeON Nutrition Kitchen Expanded Hours and New Location:**

**Bronx: 198 E 161 Street, 718.537.5395**

Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday 9am - Noon

**Brooklyn: 345 Adams Street, 718.488.3618**

Monday / Wednesday / Friday 9am - Noon

**Manhattan: 302 West 124th Street, 917.809.8990**

@Living Redemption Youth Opportunity Hub

Wednesday/Friday 1pm-4pm

**Queens: 162-24 Jamaica Avenue, 718.520.2142**

Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday 10am - 1pm

**Staten Island: 340 Bay Street, 718.876.8660**

Monday / Wednesday / Thursday 9 am-Noon

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### **About the New York City Department of Probation**

The New York City Department of Probation (DOP) helps build stronger and safer communities by working with and supervising people on probation, fostering positive change in their decision-making and behavior. DOP expands opportunities for them to move out of the criminal and juvenile justice systems through meaningful education, employment, health services, family engagement, and civic participation.

## **About the Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON)**

At the heart of the NeON is a network of partners – individuals and organizations, public and private – working together to improve public safety and promote the success of people on probation by working with them in community-based settings. NeON staff supervises and works with people on probation and their families to develop pro-social life choices, educational achievement, career advancement, civic engagement, and more. The NeON involves communities working collaboratively to remove barriers to progress, reduce the stigma of justice-involvement, and create solutions to local challenges. Programming available through NeON, free and open to the public, includes NeON Arts, NeON Sports, NeON Photography, Made in NY Animation Project, Clothing Closets, high-school equivalency classes, and more.