

Taking the Farm Bill to the Street

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By Beau G. Heyen

With drastic cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) looming, Food Bank For New York City has been diligently working to engage and inspire New Yorkers to speak out against this threat. We created and launched HungerCliff.org, a national online resource, to help people take action. We packed a bus full of supporters and headed to Washington, DC for our second annual Anti-Hunger Advocacy Day.

While these and many other activities have helped to get the word out, we realized that we were still missing an important opportunity to reach everyday people right here on the streets of New York City.

When the idea of street teams first came up, I have to admit, I wasn't completely sold. New York City is a fast-paced place. Who has the time to stop and listen to a stranger on a street corner? However, after several conversations with my fellow Food Bankers, it became clear to me that advocacy really does need local attention.

So one of my colleagues and I took our message to the streets at the Brooklyn Borough Hall [GrowNYC Green Market](#). Unlike those pesky campaigners who use a hard sell, we opted for a more subtle approach. With smiles on our faces we simply held up signs that read, Ask me how the Farm Bill impacts New Yorkers and Ask me how SNAP cuts impact New Yorkers. Dozens of people stopped to read the signs and speak with us.

Much to my surprise, it was easy to get people engaged and fired up. Hearing that SNAP recipients across the country will see a decrease in benefits come November 1st was just a starting point. Sharing the devastating impact of SNAP cuts in the Farm Bill moved people to take fliers, visit HungerCliff.org on their smart phones, and even join our [Thunderclap](#), a social media tool that allows people to post a united message on Facebook and Twitter, right then and there. If you'd like to volunteer at an upcoming GrowNYC Green Market, click [here](#).

Beau G. Heyen is a community mobilization consultant at Food Bank For New York City.