One Billion Pounds of Need

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By Dr. Lucy Cabrera

Dear Friends,

When the Food Bank For New York City's Bronx warehouse and distribution center first opened in 1983, the Food Bank distributed 500,000 pounds of food in its inaugural year. This year, 27 years later, 74 million pounds of food moved through our 90,000-square-foot warehouse — the heart and soul of our organization. The juxtapostion between then and now is astounding. In 1983, organizers of soup kitchens and food pantries would carry bags of food from our then 30,0000-square-foot warehouse back to the communities they served; we had a network of 93 programs. Today, we're delivering **350,000 pounds of food a day** to our network of approximately 1,000 community-based programs throughout the five boroughs.

In 2011, our food distribution efforts have reached a milestone that deserves a great amount of attention: the Food Bank has now distributed one billion pound of food to our neighbors in need. ONE BILLION POUNDS OF FOOD!!

If we learn anything from this number, we learn that **the need for support continues to grow**. It's simply not enough to collect and distribute food. The key is to go after the root causes of hunger. At the Food Bank, we are bullish on our ability to fuel programs that address the underlying problems that lead to hunger. We focus not only on food distribution, but income support and nutrition education as well.

We have also learned that the face of hunger might not look the way you expect. I have been with the Food Bank for more than 23 years and in this, my retirement year, I have been very reflective on those individuals and families we serve and the postive change we have been able to effect on their lives.

I think of Rosalind, a single-mother that was recently featured in *Serving & Empowering New York*, our 2011 video. Rosalind was a self-reliant music teacher before the recession stripped her of her career and the ability to provide for herself and her son. She relies on our income support programs to help pay her rent. I cherish the story of a visitor to our food pantry in West Harlem who didn't know how to cook a zucchini until we taught her. She relies on us. I am warmed by stories of school children, some whom used to think a pepper was a pear and grew in bodegas. Now they understand the concept of farms, and healthful foods, thanks to ourCookShop nutrition education program — we are the largest provider of nutrition education to NYC public schools for children and their families.

Through my reflections I have learned that we can all make a difference in the lives of so many. I urge you, stay committed and keep your resolve for this cause, you can make a difference no matter how big or how small, and we will continue to fight hunger together, one billion pounds at a time.