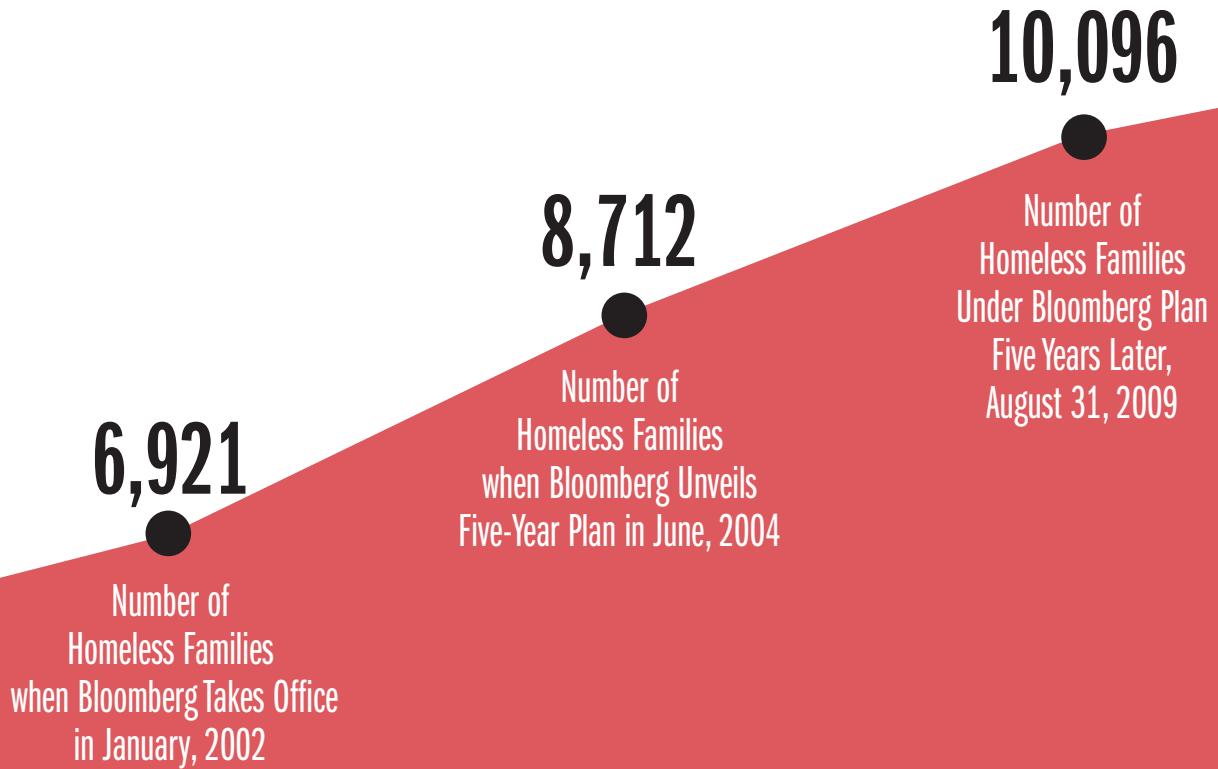


Safety Net

The newsletter of Coalition for the Homeless

Autumn 2009



Lost Decade: The Legacy of Mayor Bloomberg's Homeless Policies

Letter from Mary

Brianna stopped by my office this afternoon. Nine years old, just starting fourth grade – all smiles and giggles. She nibbled on cookies and sipped apple juice, but looked a bit uncomfortable in the chair in my office. I asked her if she'd like to take off her backpack, so she could sit back and relax. "No way," she answered quickly. "I don't ever want to take this off!"

Along with many other children from the LIFE shelter in Lower Manhattan, Brianna came to pick up her new backpack, chocked full of school supplies. She was thrilled it was pink ("My favorite color!") with purple stripes which happen to match her sneakers. "This thing is beautiful! Do you think you have another with Hulk, or Spiderman for my brother? He's seven."

Brianna is only nine, but she's already been to three different schools. At the beginning of September, she attended the latest, PS 1, "because it's right across the street from my shelter." Before becoming homeless, she lived in the Bronx and when she leaves the shelter in Manhattan, her family is slated to go to Staten Island.

"I really miss PS 130," she sighed. I asked her if she would go back there if



there were some way for her to get transportation from the shelter back to her old school on Baxter Street. "Well, they don't allow that. Only fifth graders are allowed to take the bus." What Brianna's mom probably doesn't know is that there is a federal law which compels the City to provide transportation for homeless children, so they can stay in their original school. Minimizing disruption in a child's education is key to helping them succeed in school and beyond.

I asked Brianna what the hardest thing about moving so many times was. She described going to the PATH office with her mom and twin siblings, who are only two. "We had as much of our stuff as we could, piled up on the carriage. I lost a lot of things...." Her voice trailed off. Chief among them, her furniture set for her Barbies. "Also, the bathrooms at the shelter – we have to share with everyone else, and they are so dirty, I get scared sometimes." She tries to read in her bed, but her toddler siblings make that nearly impossible, as everyone lives in a single room. "Half of the room is full with all our stuff in piles. All that's left."

I met Brianna through our After School Program. She arrives each afternoon with dozens of other kids and our staff is there in her shelter to help them, first with their homework. Afterwards, they experiment with arts & crafts, dance, play games, and "we just laugh a LOT!"

You can see from the graph on the cover of this issue that family homelessness has reached yet another all time high in New York City. Working with

Channel 11, the UFT, and scores of private schools throughout the city, we've put together backpacks and supplies for over 1,500 of these children. But we need your help to press to undo the destructive policies that led to this unprecedented crisis. This record homelessness is not just a predictable consequence of the economic collapse. The number of families in our municipal shelters began skyrocketing years ago, particularly after Mayor Bloomberg took away federal housing vouchers for homeless families.

On the cusp of this mayoral election, now more than ever, I'm hoping you can take a few minutes and read more in depth about these misguided policies and speak up. In the next several weeks, both the incumbents and challengers for many offices will be out and about – appearing at forums, shaking hands at subway entrances, visiting schools and senior centers alike. This is one of the few moments when even a small amount of vocal pressure will really be felt.

Brianna wants to be an artist when she grows up. "I just love making the mess and then seeing how pretty it looks when I get finished with it!" Brianna and over 16,000 other girls and boys are counting on us.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Brosnahan
Executive Director

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COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

129 Fulton Street
New York, NY 10038
Telephone: 212-776-2002
www.coalitionforthehomeless.org

MARY E. BROSNAHAN
Executive Director



Editor
SARAH MURPHY

Design
CLARE MANIAS

Photography, Page 7
PATRICK MCMULLAN

Spotlight on the Board: Rich Russo

By Sarah Murphy

The Coalition is proud to welcome the newest member of our Board of Directors, Rich Russo.

Currently the Executive Creative Director and Managing Director of the advertising agency, EuroRSCG/Adrenaline, Rich brings to the Coalition new insight on effective media communications. Over the course of his career, he has successfully launched and reinvigorated several ad agencies, managed many high profile clients, and earned top industry awards for excellence. He has also written and produced a short film and has published a number of articles on his innovative approach to communications. Rich understands the power of media in shaping people's perceptions and has already helped the Coalition craft its message to reach a broader audience.

Rich was first introduced to the Coalition through his friend and Coalition Board member, Jeff Pundyk, who told Rich about recent record increases in New York City's homeless population. Right away, Rich looked for ways to help. He met our Executive Director, Mary Brosnahan, learned more about Coalition programs, and began sharing ideas on how to increase awareness.

"I knew this was a cause I could line up with and, hopefully, contribute something of impact, as the Coalition does everyday."

Rich immediately pulled in favors from friends in the advertising and film world to shoot a short, informative, and motivating video on Camp Homeward Bound, the Coalition's summer sleep away camp for homeless children. Rich saw how upbeat the staff was in providing campers with the skills to rise above the many challenges they face. He was impressed by how simply and effectively camp worked and "seriously did change the course of some kids' lives."

Visiting camp, meeting the kids



The Coalition's newest board member, Rich Russo

and staff, and pulling the footage together changed his view of homelessness forever. "I came back with a nice film and some perspective on life and the human potential, the value of New York's 16,000 homeless kids, and not to mention, a better picture of the issues behind homelessness. Most of my previous perceptions were wrong."

When asked about what part of the Coalition has made the greatest impression on him, he responded, "The staff – I challenge anyone to experience the Coalition up close and then not get involved in some small way. The staff is very inspiring."

Rich continues to work with the Coalition in crafting Public Service Announcements and videos featuring other Coalition programs, such as the First Step Job Training Program for homeless and low income women. As he moves forward, he says he hopes to continue "to help the Coalition raise awareness and correct many people's perceptions about the issues."

You can watch the videos Rich produced for the Coalition on our website, www.coalitionforthehomeless.org.

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Lost Decade: The Legacy of Mayor Bloomberg's Homeless Policies

By Patrick Markee

Nearly eight years after he took office, more New Yorkers have experienced homelessness under Mayor Bloomberg than under any previous New York City mayor since modern homelessness began three decades ago. The homeless shelter population, currently more than 37,000 people each night, is nearly 20 percent higher than when he took office. The number of homeless families and children bedding down each night in municipal shelters has reached an all-time high, with more than 10,000 homeless families (including over 16,000 homeless children) this past summer. All in all, the failure of Mayor Bloomberg's approach to homelessness, along with a worsening housing affordability crunch, meant that more New Yorkers have experienced homelessness during the current decade than at any time since the Great Depression.

When Mayor Bloomberg took office in January 2002, he inherited what was then a record homeless shelter population – 31,000 homeless New Yorkers including 6,900 homeless families in municipal shelters each night – along

with the failed policies of the Giuliani administration. Although the shelter population continued to soar during Bloomberg's first years in office, his administration made one positive policy change: accelerating the use of Federal housing programs to help homeless families move from shelters to their own homes. Indeed, while the nightly homeless family shelter population grew to more than 9,000 families in 2003, the City's effective use of Federal housing assistance targeted to homeless families helped reduce that number to 8,000 families by 2005.

That year, however, Mayor Bloomberg broke with this longstanding, successful policy of targeting Federal housing aid to homeless New Yorkers, effectively cutting off homeless families from Federal housing programs. As a result, since 2005, the number of homeless families sleeping each night in New York City shelters has risen to record levels – even before the current economic downturn.

Mayor Bloomberg's Plan to End Homelessness

In June 2004, Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced an ambitious

plan to reduce homelessness by two-thirds over five years. This year, on the fifth anniversary of the plan, the number of homeless families had reached an all-time high and the number of homeless individuals in municipal shelters remained essentially unchanged. While the text of the Mayor's five-year plan outlined worthy goals – a greater emphasis on prevention, permanent housing, and reducing the City's over-reliance on shelter instead of long-term solutions – the mayor failed to follow through in implementation or funding.

Plan: Prioritize the creation and maintenance of affordable housing for homeless individuals and families.

Reality: In 2005, the Mayor ended the long-standing City policy of granting homeless families priority for Federal housing programs. This policy was replaced by the mayor's "Housing Stability Plus" (HSP), a program that placed homeless children and families in lead-paint-infested, hazardous apartments, and was abandoned a few years later as a failure. Aggressive policies pushed homeless adults out of shelter and into an ever-growing number of illegal boarding houses, or so-called "three-quarter houses." The conditions of these dwellings are overcrowded, and unsafe, violating occupancy standards and fire codes.

Plan: Create long-term solutions to prevent homelessness.

Reality: In 2007, as a response to the failed HSP program, the Bloomberg administration implemented a second round of housing subsidy programs ("Work Advantage Program" and "Child Advantage Program"). These flawed programs limit many homeless families to only two years of housing assistance regardless of their need. Over the next year, more than 2,000 such families will be cut off from housing subsidies.

Plan: "Overcoming street homelessness," with a specific plan of "expanding the capacity of drop-in centers."

Reality: Drop-in centers uniquely serve the street homeless population by providing walk-in access to social services, meals, showers, and overnight sleeping accommodations. The City recently closed nearly half of the drop-in centers

Bloomberg's Legacy:	Bloomberg Takes Office (Jan. 2002)	Bloomberg Unveils 5-Year Homeless Plan (June 2004)	Bloomberg Plan 5-Year Targets	Bloomberg Plan 5 Years Later (August 31, 2009)
Total Homeless Shelter Population	31,009	36,642	12,210	37,944
Number of Homeless Families	6,921	8,712	2,900	10,096
Number of Homeless Children	13,081	15,361	5,120	15,961
Number of Homeless Adults in Families	10,061	12,849	4,280	14,518
Number of Homeless Single Adults	7,867	8,432	2,810	7,465



citywide and drastically cut services in those remaining. This was done with no evidence of reduced need, and in fact, remaining drop-in centers are now struggling to provide enough services to meet demands – oftentimes turning people away in the process.

Plan: Increase the number of intake shelters for homeless men.

Reality: The Bloomberg administration has since reversed its commitment to expand the number of intake facilities for homeless men, and last year took steps to move the sole men’s intake shelter from Manhattan, where the majority of street homelessness is concentrated, to Crown Heights in Brooklyn.

One positive achievement of the Bloomberg homeless plan, for which advocates and service providers lobbied vigorously, was a commitment to create new permanent supportive housing

for homeless people living with mental illness and other disabilities. In 2005, the Mayor signed an agreement with the State to provide 9,000 units of permanent supportive housing over ten years. While this commitment falls far short of meeting the need for such housing, it is a significant step forward.

For the most part, however, the Bloomberg record is marred by many misguided, even harsh policies, including the use of a Bronx jail to shelter homeless children and families in the summer of 2002, and shelter application rules that discriminated against domestic-partner families, including gay and lesbian couples. Throughout his administration, Mayor Bloomberg embraced some of Giuliani’s most punitive policies that expanded use of apartment

buildings as costly temporary shelter, which displaced many low-income tenants; punitive policing

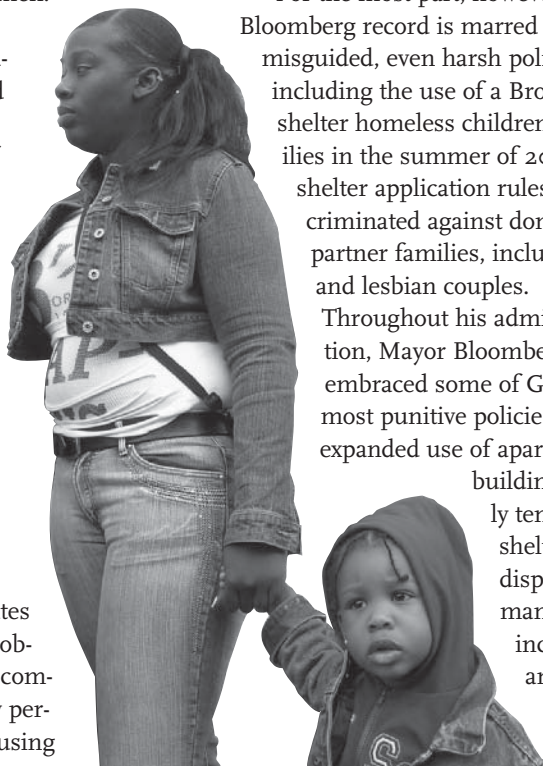
policies that included arresting homeless people sleeping on church property; and most troubling, dangerous new rules to eject homeless children and adults from shelter to the streets for minor, bureaucratic mistakes (see the accompanying article).

Ultimately, the primary failure of Mayor Bloomberg’s approach to homelessness is that it fails to recognize that any successful policy must address the affordable housing needs of homeless families and individuals. In virtually all other aspects of his administration, Mayor Bloomberg touts “research-driven” and “outcome-based” analysis to drive decision making. But Mayor Bloomberg’s homeless policies fundamentally break with this approach and have failed to build on the growing body of evidence and academic research showing that long-term affordable housing assistance, like Federal housing vouchers, is a proven way to reduce family homelessness.

Another major failure is the lack of accountability. Despite the resounding failures of his plan to reduce New York City’s homeless shelter population, Mayor Bloomberg and administration officials have repeatedly failed to acknowledge the plan’s numerous flaws and have refused to change course.

Like his predecessor Rudolph Giuliani, Mayor Bloomberg’s homeless policies remain mired in the mistaken, ideological notion that homelessness is caused by the behavior of homeless people and that the answer is to implement harsh, punitive rules. The results of this failed approach are clear: record homelessness in New York City.

Amidst the worsening economic recession, as more and more New Yorkers are losing their jobs and homes, the Coalition for the Homeless urges the next mayor of New York City to embrace policies that genuinely address long-term solutions and the housing affordability crisis affecting growing numbers of families and individuals. This includes targeting Federal housing aid to homeless New Yorkers, accelerating the construction of affordable housing targeted to homeless people, and abandoning a punitive system for one with more resources for homeless families and individuals in need.



New Rules to Eject Homeless Families from Shelter

In late June, the Bloomberg administration obtained State approval to implement harsh new rules allowing the City to eject homeless families and children from shelter to the streets for at least 30 days for failing to comply with bureaucratic requirements such as missing appointments, having their welfare case closed or sanctioned, or failing to pay “rent” for shelter.

This new policy is punitive and dangerous for homeless families in many ways:

Welfare case closings and sanctions very commonly occur as a result of bureaucratic error, placing families and children at risk of being ejected from shelter for mistakes out of their control.

Even for the least serious violations, families are not offered an opportunity to correct the violation and stay in shelter. Instead, they are given a mandatory 30-day “sentence” to the streets.

Perhaps most disturbing, children are at risk of being placed in foster care if their families lose shelter

– a dangerous policy that runs counter to longstanding court rulings that prohibit children from being removed from families based on homelessness or poverty alone.

Furthermore, the rules do not accommodate for persons with disabilities or impairments, placing responsibility entirely upon them to prove that (1) they are impaired and that (2) the impairment caused their non-compliance.

The City’s shelter ejection rules, which the Bloomberg administration vigorously sought to enforce, are based on a State regulation established in 1995 by former Governor Pataki. Coalition for the Homeless and the Legal Aid Society fought in the courts for years to block their implementation in New York City, and have recommended rules changes that would protect homeless children and adults from harm. Fortunately, Governor David Paterson has the opportunity to act on those recommendations in order to protect the most vulnerable New Yorkers from loss of emergency shelter.

Timothy's Law Made Permanent

By Shelly Nortz

Timothy's Law, New York State's requirement that health plans cover treatment for mental health, and do so on par with coverage for other illnesses, was our top legislative priority in 2006. It took effect in 2007, and on July 11, 2009, Gov. David A. Paterson signed legislation making the law permanent.

Over five million New Yorkers benefit from Timothy's Law; it has expanded coverage for mental health needs for everyone with private state-regulated group health plans. A May 2009 Insurance Department report showed the proportion of insured New Yorkers with coverage for at least 30 inpatient days and 20 outpatient visits per year for mental health care doubled to 100 percent as a result of the law. This improved basic mental health coverage for over 2.5 million New Yorkers with no mental health coverage or coverage of fewer than the new minimum day and visit requirements. Timothy's Law increased mental health coverage for 77 percent of those served in the small group market.

Another 2.6 million New Yorkers saw their mental health coverage improved by the law which equalized co-payments and deductibles, including out-of-network, so that they are not greater than for other conditions like heart disease, in- and out-of-network.

Prior to Timothy's Law, only 453,000 New Yorkers in state-regulated group markets had comprehensive coverage for the most serious mental illnesses in 2006, but this coverage was included for over four million New Yorkers once the law took effect. Among those covered by large state-regulated employers (3.4 million people in 2008), the number provided with comprehensive coverage grew from just 11 percent to 100 percent.

For employees in small groups (1.7 million people in 2008), this comprehensive expanded coverage is optional for the employer and grew dramatically

from 9.6 percent in 2006 to 43.7 percent in 2008. Advocates hope that all small groups will opt for this affordable enhanced coverage in the future. The increased cost of providing the mandatory coverage for small employers was only \$1.04 per member per month, or less than one half of one percent of health insurance premiums in this market; it is subsidized by the State for some 300,000 small employers at about \$4.77 per member, per month, or nearly \$100 million per year.

Timothy's Law was set to expire at the end of 2009, but now that it has been made permanent, New York can make the most of the new federal parity requirements — the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act.

Extending parity to federal plans

The new federal parity requirements will not only extend parity to federally regulated health plans (self-funded employers) but also to Medicare and Child Health Plus. Although the new federal rules exclude small employers, they will expand mental health and addiction treatment coverage for employers of 50 or more regulated by Timothy's Law and the NYS Chemical Dependency Mandate in three crucial ways:

Day and visit limits will no longer be permitted by health plans for mental health care and addiction treatment coverage. This will render the enhanced coverage mandate for serious illnesses moot for the large groups because all conditions will qualify for medically necessary care without arbitrary limits.

State regulated group health plans will be required to cover inpatient and outpatient treatment for chemical dependency because, in requiring parity, federal law does not distinguish between inpatient and outpatient treatment. Since state law mandates outpatient coverage and makes inpatient coverage optional, the action of federal law will convert the option to a requirement.

Some mental health co-pays are,

even under Timothy's Law, charged at the "specialty" rather than the "general office visit" rate — this will no longer be permitted under federal law.

Insurance coverage for mental health and chemical dependency needs has been dramatically improved in recent years, and will continue to improve as new federal rules take effect. Millions have better coverage and lower out-of-pocket costs, and this helps individuals, their families, and their employers.

Thank You!!!

Coalition for the Homeless is very fortunate to have the support of scores of legislators who sponsor bills, restore budget cuts, and appropriate funds to address homelessness, including funds that directly support the Coalition's crisis intervention, eviction prevention, mobile emergency food, and client advocacy programs. We rely on charitable contributions, corporate grants, and foundation support for well over half our budget and also rely on government grants to help the neediest New Yorkers.

Everyone relies on lawmakers to make the right decisions in Albany. We are most grateful to all lawmakers, including the following officials, for their leadership on legislative and budgetary initiatives in 2009:

Assemblymember Jonathan Bing
Senator Neil Breslin
Assemblymember RoAnn Destito
Senator Tom Duane
Senator Shirley Huntley
Senator Liz Krueger
Senator Velmonette Montgomery
Senator Tom Morahan
Assemblymember Joe Morelle
Governor David A. Paterson
Assemblymember Peter Rivera
Senator Diane Savino
Senator Eric Schneiderman
Senator Jose Serrano
Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver
Senate President Pro Tempore Malcolm Smith
Senator Daniel Squadron
Assemblymember Keith Wright

15th Annual ARTWALK NY to be Held Tuesday, November 17

The 15th annual ARTWALK NY will take place on Tuesday, November 17th at Skylight Studio, and will honor renowned artist Pat Steir. More than 700 guests will attend the auction, raising funds for the Coalition for the Homeless's life-saving programs and services.

Co-chaired by Richard Gere and Carey Lowell, ARTWALK will be sponsored by *Time Out New York*. Featuring a live and silent art auction and cocktail party, the event will include works from more than 150 prominent artists, including Yoko Ono, Jeff Koons, Ed Ruscha, and Jenny Holzer.

To purchase tickets or for more information, please visit www.coalitionforthehomeless.org, or contact ArtwalkNY@cfthomeless.org.



Richard Gere and Carey Lowell will once again serve as co-chairs for this year's ARTWALK.

ARTWALK Junior Committee Hosts Hamptons Benefit

By Rachel Edelman

The ARTWALK NY Junior Committee hosted a cocktail party to celebrate ARTWALK NY on Saturday, August 15th in Sagaponack, NY. More than 150 guests attended the event, raising more than \$6,000 for the fall auction.

The benefit was hosted by Junior Committee Chairs Kipton Cronkite, Peter Davis, Liam McMullan, and

Bettina Prentice. Guests sipped on champagne mojitos courtesy of the Bubble Lounge, bid on a raffle featuring works by artists Aziz + Cucher, Quentin Curry, and Torben Giehler, and had the opportunity to learn more about ARTWALK and the Coalition.

Many thanks to the ARTWALK Junior Committee, Bubble Lounge, and Bettina Prentice and Peter and Maily Smith for generously hosting the event.



Titina von Waldow, Maily Smith, Bettina Prentice



Field Kallop, Casey Fremont, Phoebe Vickers, Lilly Hartley, Kelly Fulton



Stephen Gaghan, Minnie Mortimer, Bob Kelty, Bettina Prentice, Jamie Prentice

'Project: Back to School' Helps Homeless Children Prepare for Start of School Year

By Rachel Edelman

Homeless children often lack the basic supplies needed for the start of school, forcing many to fall behind academically. Their families must use their modest financial resources for food and clothing, leaving little left over for pencils, notebooks, erasers and calculators. In response, the Coalition for the Homeless' second annual 'Project: Back to School' initiative collected backpacks and school supplies for homeless children in New York City to give them the tools they need to succeed.

From August 17 through September 21, the Coalition partnered with WPIX / Channel 11, Brooklyn Industries, and Manhattan Mini Storage, collecting backpacks and supplies which were distributed



to children from Pre-K through high school. Donors were able to drop off donations at participating locations, including all Brooklyn Industries stores, as well as at participating City Council, State Senate, and Congressional offices.

In addition, more than 20 schools across the city organized their own backpack and supply drives to benefit Project: Back to

School, which resulted in hundreds of donations.

Thanks to the generosity of donors, the start of the school year was made easier for more than 1,500 homeless boys and girls!

To learn how you can get involved in next year's Project: Back to School efforts, please contact backtoschool@cfthomeless.org, or 212-776-2059.

The Coalition for the Homeless extends our sincere thanks to Project: Back to School's supporters and sponsors!

WPIX 11 / Channel 11
Brooklyn Industries
Manhattan Mini Storage
United Federation of Teachers
Mr. G
Brian McKnight
Modell's Sporting Goods
FAB / Starpoint
Dick's Sporting Goods
Apple Seeds
Joe The Art of Coffee
d.b.a.
Unity Church
Clifford Chance

Participating Elected Officials

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
The Honorable Elliot Engel
The Honorable Letitia James
The Honorable Melinda Katz
The Honorable Liz Krueger
The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
The Honorable Daniel O'Donnell
The Honorable Annabel Palma
The Honorable Christine Quinn
The Honorable Anthony Weiner

Many thanks to the schools that organized backpack drives, and to the parents and students that generously participated!

The Buckley School
Ella Baker School
Horace Mann School
Long Island University
Lower Lab Middle School for Collaborative Studies
Manhattan Country School
M.S. 51 William Alexander Middle School
P.S. 9 Teunis G. Beregen Elementary School
P.S. 77 Lower Lab School
P.S. 137 John L. Bernstein Elementary
P.S. 150
P.S. 199
P.S. 234
P.S. 631
Ramaz School
Riverdale Country School
Rodeph Shalom School
St. Bernard's School
St. John's University
Temple Israel ECLC
The Hellenic Classical Charter School
The School at Columbia University

Students Say Thank You

Dear Project Back to School,

Thank you for giving me some school supplies. Now, I can be extra prepared for my classes. And thank you for the new book bag and for helping my mom not have to find money for all of the school supplies.

- Ka Ren

Dear Project Back to School,

Thank you so much! I was very proud to walk into my classroom with my new backpack.

- Chrissy

Dear Project Back to School,

Thank you for giving us backpacks. It will make my school year much easier. Because of you, I will not run out of supplies this year. I will be ready.

- Kevin