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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES RESTRUCTURING OF FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EXPANDS NETWORK AND PROVIDES BETTER SERVICES FOR CHICAGOANS IN NEED AT THE SAME COST

Expanded Access to Food Assistance Network of 77 New Food Pantry Locations Provides More Than 440,000 Additional Meals in First Four Months

As thousands of Chicagoans gather on the lakefront to participate in the 28th Annual Hunger Walk for the Greater Chicago Food Depository today, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) announced a complete transformation of the Food Assistance Program for needy families, which has expanded the City's food assistance network to 77 locations and increased the amount of meals served by more than 440,000. DFSS held the line on operating costs, providing greater and healthier food choices to residents in need.

"Expanded access to food assistance programs is essential to assisting needy families, individuals and children in Chicago," said Mayor Emanuel. "By reevaluating and revamping the operation of our network, the City of Chicago will serve residents in need more efficiently and effectively. Partnering with the Greater Chicago Food Depository allows the City to continue to provide this essential service through the most direct route to ensure we reach all community members who seek aid."

Previously, DFSS used six Community Service Centers and mobile outreach to provide emergency food boxes to Chicagoans in need. Residents received a box of food as a stopgap measure. Through a new partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository, DFSS increased its food distribution network substantially and virtually overnight to 77 food pantries located throughout Chicago. Residents in need are now able to choose from a greater variety and volume of nutritious foods, closer to home. These locations have flexible hours to ensure food distribution during evening hours and on weekends.

Eliminating the cost of cardboard boxes and packing allows DFSS to save and reinvest into expanded food access. In just the first four months of operation, DFSS provided 528,439 additional pounds of food that went to serve hungry residents in 2013 compared to the same four month period in 2012. According to the USDA's formula, this equates to as many as 440,366 more meals that DFSS and the Greater Chicago Food Depository generated as a result of this new partnership. This is an average of 110,092 meals per month or 3,670 meals a day. In addition to greater volumes of food, the quality and variety of foods saw notable upgrades. Nutritious choices now include fresh produce, meat and dairy products, as well as non-perishable food commodities.

“Food insecurity has become an unfortunate reality for more and more Chicagoans,” said Evelyn Diaz, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services. “By making some simple modifications to our program, we are now able to serve a greater quantity and variety of healthier food at more locations with better hours. These are the kinds of solutions our families and children deserve.”

These program changes allowed the Greater Chicago Food Depository and DFSS to serve 374,468 residents from February to May of this year.

“The Greater Chicago Food Depository is extremely pleased at our expanded partnership with Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Department of Family and Support Services to provide Chicagoans in need with improved access to better, fresher foods,” said Kate Maehr, Executive Director and CEO of the Greater Chicago Food Depository. “Our individual pantries are telling us that they are delighted with the increased number of visitors and greater quantities of nutritious foods moving through their locations.”

Residents seeking food assistance and the locations of food pantries around the city can go to the Chicago Food Bank’s agency locator site at: chicagosfoodbank.org. Another site that can provide valuable information related to food pantries is direct2food.org. To learn more about this program and the many other programs available to Chicagoans in need, residents can arrange a meeting with a case worker at any of DFSS’s six Community Service Centers. Residents can call 3-1-1 to be directed to the nearest center or online [here](#).

For an overview of the changes to the City’s Food Assistance Program, residents can access an informational flyer in English or Spanish online [here](#).

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