

Continue the Fight to End Hunger All Through the Year

By Debra Mulé

The holiday season is a time for reflection and paying forward our blessings – and I believe that is important to demonstrate charity and compassion for the most vulnerable members of our society.

In the practice of my own Catholic faith, Paul’s words to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:35 ring especially true at this time of year:

“In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Paired with my professional background as a social worker, this focus on helping families and individuals emerge from periods of struggle has guided my approach serving in the Nassau County Legislature. Most recently, it informed my advocacy for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grants for our district – and thanks to the unity demonstrated by my colleagues in the Legislature’s Democratic minority, our collective districts received their fair share of this once-in-a-generation influx of federal aid.

A good number of the grants that have been approved or will be finalized by the end of the year are focusing on grassroots organizations in our communities that fight hunger. In Baldwin, my office secured \$50,000 for the food pantry at the Roman Catholic Church of St. Christopher, which is sure to tremendously amplify their ability to deliver vital nutrition assistance to the families they serve.

In Freeport, I worked alongside my colleague, Legislator Seth Koslow, to secure \$22,348 for Ladles of Hope, a 501(c)(3) organization based out of Our Holy Redeemer Roman Catholic Church. They are fully volunteer based, operate entirely on private donations, and serve individuals and families in need in Nassau County through soup kitchens and pantries.

Another wonderful organization that my office has secured ARPA funding for is The NEST at Nassau Community College. Short for “Nassau: Empowerment and Support for Tomorrow,” NEST is a 501 (c)3 not-for-profit organization that operates a free-choice food pantry that provides food, personal care items, and support services to students, employees, and families in need. They have been approved for a \$10,000 grant in pursuit of their philanthropic efforts to promote health and wellness in the college community.

To further amplify these efforts, my office has extended our Thanksgiving food drive for The NEST until Wednesday, Dec. 18. If you would like to make your own contribution to support their efforts, please visit either the Roosevelt Public Library (27 W. Fulton Avenue, Roosevelt, N.Y. 11575), Freeport Memorial Library (144 W. Merrick Road, Freeport, N.Y. 11520), or South Hempstead Fire Department Headquarters (555 May St., South Hempstead, N.Y. 11550) during normal business hours to contribute.

Across the County, I am gratified to see how my colleagues have taken up the fight to end food insecurity and are on track to secure vital resources for regional and grassroots local entities alike. Most importantly, it will equip these organizations to continue their efforts into the New Year well after the generous proceeds of Thanksgiving and holiday season food drives leave the shelves of food pantries.

That is perhaps the most important message of all in this conversation. As we come to the end of 2024 and take stock of our lives, may we all resolve to make our own personal commitment to joining this fight not just during the holiday season, but all year long so that we can collectively position everyone in our society to thrive.

Whether you are supporting the regional efforts of Long Island Cares or Island Harvest, major organized events such as the biannual Nassau County Veterans Stand Down at the Freeport Armory, or the food ministry at your local church, every contribution will make a positive impact upon the life of one your neighbors in their hour of need.

Until we next speak, I wish you and your families a blessed holiday season and peace in a joyful, prosperous New Year to come.

Debra Mulé, of Freeport, was first elected to the Nassau County Legislature in 2017. She represents the 6th Legislative District.