
"There but for the grace of God, go I!"

Philoxenia Times

Summer 2024



Philoxenia's newest volunteers making our Sandwiches & Socks event a huge success. Details on page 2.

President's Message

As you'll read in this edition of the *Philoxenia Times*, our organization has been fortunate to produce a higher number of events over the past six months than ever before.

And the timing could not be more critical. A new report by City Harvest finds one in four children in New York City are experiencing food insecurity — a trend that continues to worsen since the COVID-19 pandemic. At any of our Pop-Up

Pantries or Sandwiches & Socks programs, we often see a significant number of families and children seeking food and other valued supplies. Philoxenia helps our community thanks to the extraordinary generosity of our volunteers and donors. We're grateful for your support and look forward to seeing you at our next event. In the meantime, please accept my best wishes for a great summer.

Despina



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Scenes from Philoxenia's 2024 events to date.

Answering the Call: 2024 Events Seek to Help Fight Food Insecurity

During the first half of the year, Philoxenia held five of its signature events in New York City and neighboring Westchester County, all of which were well-subscribed by our neighbors in need.

Pop-Up Pantries:

Our March 29 Pop-Up Pantry was a phenomenal success. There was an abundance of food: substantial donations from the **St Eleftherios Church** food drive, Philoxenia Inc provided food, including what we purchased and was delivered by **Baldor Specialty Foods, Inc.**, and a massive produce donation from **Hunts Point Produce Market**. And our friends at **Bombas** donated 300 pairs of socks — often cited as among the most needed items — for the event. Everything was first-quality, and we were able to give each guest a full bag of shelf-stable food and produce: apples, oranges, peppers, collards, plantains, potatoes, avocados and onions. We distributed 162 bags of groceries and 150 bags of produce. Guests were lined up by 11:15am for our noon start time. People were so

appreciative and happy. A huge thanks to the St Eleftherios parish community for their donations, hosting the Pantry and all of their hard work. And a ton of gratitude to Hunts Point and to our friend, **Monique Prinos MS**, who has the connection and made this happen.

On April 29, we packed 170 bags of groceries in 20 minutes and gave them to grateful recipients in Harlem in 25 minutes! There is such a need and we were so happy to provide an abundance of groceries and fresh produce during our April 2024 Pop Up Pantry. A very special thank you to our host and collaborators **St. George & St. Demetrios Church, New York** and **Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity**. It was a perfect and beautiful day!

On June 14, our volunteers experienced a rewarding day, filling 170 bags of groceries with students from **The Loukoumi Foundation Good Deed** programming at the **Anne Hutchinson** and **Eastchester Middle Schools**. We served those in need at **United Community Center of Westchester Inc**. As one student said, "we loved seeing the smiles on everyone's faces and it made us smile too!" Thank you **@feedingwestchester**, to the students who donated food and to **Bombas** for their wonderful socks.

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Answering the Call *(continued)*

Sandwiches & Socks:

On March 1, we had a great day preparing 125 Sandwiches & Socks bags for a nearby homeless shelter at the **Floating Hospital** in Long Island City, NY. Philoxenia partnered with enthusiastic students from **IS 10**, the **Variety Boys & Girls Club**, and **The Loukoumi Make a Difference Foundation** to make sandwiches and pack bags. Thanks to **Bombas** for socks, the **New York State Dental Foundation** for toothbrushes, and Loukoumi for snacks and water and for showing how to make a difference.

May 18 was an absolutely inspiring day for Philoxenia Inc, thanks to the extraordinary people at the **RIVER FUND**, a 30-year old, rapidly growing nonprofit helping families in Queens #fightpoverty and #endhunger via education programs, access to benefits and, critically, food. The scale and logistics of their operations were matched by their exceptional kindness, as we contributed to their weekly pantry — helping hundreds of hungry New Yorkers — through our Sandwiches & Socks program. Through our partnership with **The Loukoumi Make A Difference Foundation** and **Bombas**, we gave away 150+ bags of freshly made sandwiches, plus snacks, bottled water, masks and socks. Most of the day's inspiration came in the form of students from **IS 77** in nearby Ridgewood, who made the sandwiches themselves, traveled to Richmond Hill, and personally handed each bag to a fellow neighbor in need.

At a time when nearly one in four New Yorkers are experiencing some form of food insecurity, the efforts of the city's volunteer community, and the nonprofits that organize them, have never been more important.



Community Conversations: Miriam Stoner



In this edition of the *Philoxenia Times*, our Community Conversations focuses on “the voice of the volunteer” – insights and observations from a friendly face who we’ve been delighted to have join our team of volunteers.

Miriam Stoner wears many hats – community leader, Wall Street professional, Big Sister, marathon runner, acclaimed opera singer – and her experiences with Philoxenia are helping inform her own trailblazing in helping New York City's youth through the creation of a nonprofit, **Vivace**.

Miriam, we appreciate you donate a lot of your time to charitable causes in your adopted home of New York City. What prompted you to volunteer with Philoxenia? Hi Jay! Thank you so much for reaching out to me to discuss the important work we can do to give back to our city by volunteering to help others. I spend much of my free time as an active member of **Big Brothers Big Sisters**, the **New York Junior League**, **New York Road Runners**, **Achilles International**, and several other organizations that serve New York City and beyond because it brings me so much fulfillment and joy.

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Community Conversations

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My reasons for joining Philoxenia span all the way back to my time working with Despina in 2019. I read her book, *Last Night's Soup Run*, and was blown away by the emails Despina compiled about the impact Philoxenia has on so many – donors, bystanders, and recipients of services alike. I first became involved with Philoxenia during the COVID-19 Pandemic by donating funds and then began attending pop-up pantries in 2023.

What's been the biggest surprise of your experiences so far with Philoxenia? The last event I volunteered for was a delight and I was very impressed by the range in ages of people who come out to volunteer which spanned from elementary school aged children to retirees. It was truly inspiring to see that everyone, no matter their demographic, can inspire others by working together and lending a helping hand to accomplish a joint mission.

What would you say to someone who's on the fence about volunteering their time to fight food insecurity that might get them to give it a try? You do not need any experience volunteering or any special skills. All you have to do is get yourself physically there and you will be amazed at how organized the events are and how naturally the various steps will come to you. The rewards are so great that any nervousness or reluctance you feel will disappear on the spot. You'll make a big difference in someone's life; I think that speaks for itself.

You recently launched a foundation, Vivace, that will ensure classical arts access for children. Can you please tell us a little about what inspired you to establish this organization, and if you see any parallels between helping kids with essential services and offering them a path to a more enriching arts experience? My foundation, which is in its most beginning phases, was inspired partially by Despina's model for Philoxenia in that it serves people with a broad range of needs by providing them with resources to benefit them instantly while also having a lasting effects. Philoxenia supplies groceries, meals and clothes while Vivace offers the classical arts as soul food. The arts have always provided me with a safe place to imagine a better world and I aspire to share that with all the children of our city. Research shows that children who express themselves through singing, dancing and acting perform better in school and develop integral cognitive and social tools that serve them in life. Every child deserves access to New York's robust classical arts scene just as every child deserves the comfort of proper meals and clothes.

What We're Reading

- Here's an innovative approach to fighting [food insecurity](#) from the team at [Food Rescue US](#): turn a city's large-scale sporting or entertainment event into an opportunity to feed fellow citizens.
<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/5482029/2024/05/09/f1-miami-gp-food-rescue/>
- This [New York Times video essay](#), from the creator of the [Invisible People](#) YouTube channel, offers first-hand insights from those experiencing homelessness each day.
- This [story](#) about the [Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County](#) and [TheWayHomeHOU](#) is an inspiration to all seeking solutions for helping our fellow citizens.



Donate to Philoxenia!

Hunger won't take a vacation this summer, and we have 500 more grocery bags to fill.

Please help feed our neighbors by going to the DONATE page of www.philoxeniainc.org.

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