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Volunteers Prepare For Thanksgiving At Bowery Mission, City Food Pantries

By: Roger Clark



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As Americans prepare their turkeys and all the trimmings ahead of Thanksgiving dinner, there are those in need just happy to have a hot meal. Serving its community all year long, the Bowery Mission is readying itself for tomorrow's feast. NY1's Roger Clark filed the following report.

As New Yorkers prepare for tomorrow's Thanksgiving dinner, the Bowery Mission is making sure the city's less fortunate also get a hot meal.

"We started to cook from Saturday, and it was non-stop up until last night 12 o'clock," said Bowery Mission chef Clyde Edey. "It was like 580-something turkeys roasted."

Workers at the Bowery Mission took to carving those roasted turkeys Wednesday. They are the main course at its massive Thanksgiving meal.

The mission, located in a century-old chapel, is expecting 4,000 people during six sittings. Food will also be delivered to 15 outreach sites in the five boroughs and New Jersey.

Those in attendance will get more than just a hot meal, they'll receive coats and a "blessing bag" with winter clothes and personal hygiene products. Kids will get toys.

"Gonna get a blessing bag with soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, all the personal hygiene stuff," said James Macklin, director of outreach at the Bowery Mission. "It's just a blessing. I walked around the building yesterday and looked at all these coats and it's amazing how this organization has been blessed to be able to provide for the lost and the lonely."

According to organizers, about 700 volunteers will lend a hand for the dinner, which is in its 131st year. And while the Bowery Mission operates year round, its director of outreach says the need of the community is highlighted during the holiday season, and in tough economic times.

"A lot of agencies are calling and we are donating to a lot of agencies, churches, places of that nature," Macklin said.

The food and gifts have been donated by generous supporters, from New York and beyond.

Among those looking forward to tomorrow's dinner is Edwin Cruz, who is part of a program at the Bowery Mission that keeps 80 homeless men off of the streets.

"Honestly, [I wouldn't have been able to get a meal], but with God's grace, the Bowery has been able to feed a lot of people including myself and including other residents here as well," said Cruz.

Aramis Fernandez is familiar with Cruz's situation. He is a graduate of the program and is now giving back, working as a volunteer.

"I just wanted to come back here and help out because it did so much for me, putting my life back on track, so why not give back to the people that helped you," he said.

The Bowery Mission already has plenty of volunteers to help serve Thanksgiving dinner, but there are still other ways you can help out during this holiday season.

To donate, you can text the word "Bowery" to 20222 or go to bowery.org. A \$10 donation feeds six people on Thanksgiving.

If you want to help in the fight against hunger – or if you yourself are in need of a meal this holiday – Public Advocate Bill de Blasio has set up an online database and hotline that lists 188 food pantries in all five boroughs.