

NY'ers Answer Obama's Call on MLK Day

By Katy Mantyk
Epoch Times Staff

Jan 20, 2009

NEW YORK—From January 17th to 19th the New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCAH) sponsored its 6th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Anti-Hunger “Serve-a-Thon.” The three-day event featured opportunities at over thirty food pantries and soup kitchens throughout New York City.

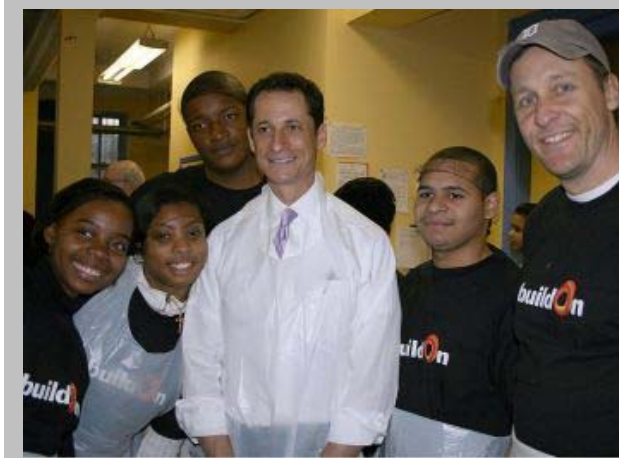
The Dr. King Day Serve-a-Thon is part of President Barak Obama's “Renew America Together: A Call to Service” in honor of Dr. King's legacy.

During the events, volunteers performed a wide variety of tasks such as preparing and serving hot meals, cleaning and painting facilities, and conducting food stamp and Earned Income Tax Credit outreach.

At the Broadway Community Inc. (BCI) at 114th Street on Monday, elected officials and volunteers joined together both to work and to draw attention to the soaring level of hunger in New York City. They want more government action to help the over 1.3 million New Yorkers who are forced to go to food pantries and soup kitchens each year.

“Dr. King called for making service to others a centerpiece of American life, saying ‘Everybody can be great because anybody can serve.’ The Obama inauguration is perfectly honoring that legacy by marking Dr. King's birthday as a national day of community service,” said Joel Berg, executive director of the NYCCAH.

The Broadway Community Inc. is a faith and community based social service organization that provides emergency food, shelter and clothing to those in need, as well as long-term support aimed at healing the body, mind and spirit.



ANSWERING THE CALL: Congressman Anthony Weiner and volunteers at the Broadway Community Inc. soup kitchen on Monday. President Barak Obama called for Americans, in honor of Martin Luther King Day, to commit to volunteer service. (Katy Mantyk/The Epoch Times)

Senator Liz Kruger said after a quarter century of hard work, there's still a long way to go.

“25 years ago, I helped to start the NYC FoodBank and chaired the Board of the NYC Coalition Against Hunger. We thought it would take less than a decade to end hunger in America through improved government programs for the poor. We have yet to fulfill the promises of the War on Poverty and the Great Society programs that Martin Luther King and others fought so hard to begin,” said Kruger.

“Today, one day before the Inauguration of President Barak Obama, it is fitting that we remember the teachings of Martin Luther King and renew our commitment to ending hunger and ensuring that in these troubled times it is more important than ever for government to help those who are most in need.” Continued Kruger.

The NYCCAH represents the more than 1,200 nonprofit soup kitchens and food pantries in NYC and serves more than 1.3 million low-income New Yorkers that use them.

“There is no better way to honor Dr. King's 80th birthday than with a national call to service, just a day before our country inaugurates its first African-American President. In New York, we answer this call with a citywide commitment to ending poverty and hunger. Today I am thrilled to join the NYCCAH at a soup kitchen to help serve New Yorkers in need.” Said Kruger.

The Serve-a-Thon honored Dr. King's dream of ending poverty by encouraging New Yorkers to commit to long-term volunteer opportunities and anti-hunger advocacy in 2009. During his campaign, President Obama pledged to end child hunger by 2015 as a down payment on ending all domestic hunger. In addition, on January 15, 2009, the transition team proposed the “American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009” that includes the largest investment in nutrition assistance funding in decades, including critical funding such as \$200 billion for SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps) and \$750 million for after school meals.