**Food Bank for New York City implements Self-Measured Blood Pressure initiative**

The Food Bank for New York City (FBNYC) has been working to end food poverty in the five boroughs since 1983. Their work as the city’s largest hunger relief organization helps to provide over 1.2 billion meals for eligible New Yorkers. In particular, the Food Bank for New York City has been incredibly impactful through their Community Kitchen, located in Harlem. The Community Kitchen serves 100,000 meals each month through their soup kitchen, food pantry and senior program. According to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, about 35% of adults in Harlem have been informed by a medical professional they have hypertension compared to the citywide average of 23%. Hypertension is the leading risk factor in the development of heart disease and stroke. The Food Bank for New York City is addressing hypertension with the launch of a Self-Measured Blood Pressure initiative.

In May of 2022, the American Heart Association (AHA) reinvigorated their collaboration with the Food Bank for New York City. At the onset of the partnership, the AHA team and FBNYC collaborated to produce a health education workshop for their older adult community. This effort was led by Melanie Zuniga, Community Dietitian for Food Bank for New York City. In support, Dr. Napoor Narula, longtime AHA volunteer, co-facilitated the educational session. After the success of this event, the teams of FBNYC and the AHA brainstormed pathways for additional support to the patrons of the Community Kitchen. In November of 2022, the Food Bank for New York City implemented a Self-Measured Blood Pressure initiative at their Community Kitchen location.

The American Heart Association provided three (3) blood pressure monitoring devices to create three separate measurement stations. These measurement stations will provide a consistent hypertension management resource to 2400 community members each month. The stations, located throughout the Community Kitchen campus, are complete with an American Heart Association suite of educational resources for proper self-measurement. While the stations are in a common area, the stations have been positioned to create privacy for each patron performing a blood pressure check. The Food Bank team worked to create the appropriate signage to guide all patrons of the pantry from the self-service food area to the blood pressure stations. Also, FBNYC team members have been trained in the basics of hypertension management. Each trained team member supports pantry members in performing accurate blood pressure measurements. To further serve her older adult clients, Melanie Zuniga, FBNYC Community Dietician, promotes the blood pressure resources in their distributable calendar and makes it a part of her educational lectures.

In addition, the American Heart Association helped to establish a working relationship between the Food Bank for New York City and nearby NYC Health + Hospitals/Harlem. NYC Health + Hospitals/Harlem provides comprehensive health services to community members in Central Harlem regardless of their ability to pay. The hospital’s team of community health workers are present in the center on Thursdays, with plans to expand services to additional days of the week. The team of community health workers assists in performing accurate blood pressure checks, providing immediate referrals, and establishing connections to vital primary care This relationship is in support of the Food Bank for New York City Community Kitchen team.

Self-Measured Blood Pressure (SMBP) enables and empowers each member of the Community Kitchen to take control of their blood pressure. The partnership between the Food Bank for New York City’s Community Kitchen and the American Heart Association will increase blood pressure control and help to remove barriers to improving health in vulnerable populations. The potential is limitless, as both organizations are committed to this unifying mission. Together, we will enhance our efforts to ensure every New Yorker in Central Harlem lives their healthiest life.

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Date

Zac Hall

Vice President of Programs

Food Bank for New York City

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Robin Vitale                                    Date

Vice President, Community Impact

New York City

American Heart Association