



PRESS RELEASE

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**UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL & FOUNDATION FOR UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL
COMBAT FOOD INSECURITY IN THE COMMUNITY
WITH SUPPORT FROM \$1 MILLION *SUSTAIN & SERVE NJ* PHASE 2 GRANT
FROM NJEDA'S PROGRAM**

*Volunteers from University Hospital Workforce Distributed Holiday Meals
to Students & Families of Hillside Public Schools on November 22;
Effort Supported Regional Small Business Community*

NEWARK, NJ – The Foundation for University Hospital, the hospital's not-for-profit organization that serves as its primary charitable fundraising arm, in collaboration with University Hospital's Department of Community Affairs and volunteers from the Hospital's workforce, recently addressed food insecurity during the Thanksgiving holiday with a major meal distribution at the Hillside Public Schools on November 22. The distribution was part of the Hospital's *Season of Service* program.

The purchase of the meals was supported by the Foundation's \$1 million Phase 2 grant from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority's *Sustain & Serve NJ* program. At the event, each student received four hot holiday meals for them to take home for their families, all to encourage the students' families to gather for a meal during this festive season and to experience cuisine that they might not otherwise have access to. In total 12, 400 meals were distributed across the seven schools of the Hillside district.

“Receiving fresh, hot meals during these difficult times is a blessing to our entire community. Our students and families will experience food they've never tried before,” said **Maite Hernandez Ibanez, a parent of a student at Park Elementary School in Newark**. Students and families of Park Elementary School were the beneficiaries of a similar program on November 17.

Hillside Schools Superintendent Erskine R. Glover said, “We are grateful to benefit from the cooperation between the Foundation for University Hospital, the Hospital itself, the local restaurant community, and the *Sustain & Serve NJ* program. With our community partners, our



students and their loved ones were able to gather for a festive holiday meal as a family, and as a school district, while experiencing the unique food opportunities available in our community.”

Supporting the *Season of Service* program, the Foundation for University Hospital is the beneficiary of a \$1 million grant from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), as part of Phase 2 of the agency’s *Sustain & Serve NJ* grant program. The goal of the program, launched in late 2020 to support restaurants and small businesses negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, is to purchase 1.5 million meals from more than 160 New Jersey restaurants in 69 municipalities across 12 counties. This second grant follows a Phase 1 grant to the Foundation of \$100,000.

“We feel fortunate to be able combat food insecurity in Newark, while also supporting local restaurants,” said **Jess Backofen, Executive Director of The Foundation for University Hospital**. “Our efforts in connection with the *Sustain & Serve* program continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of patients, caregivers and community members. The Hospital is surrounded by a large and ambitious community of small business owners, many of which have become close partners throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We are happy to continue to partner with them to serve our mutual neighbors.”

Since April 2021, through University Hospital, more than 40,000 meals have been provided to the community and to patients experiencing food insecurity. Within the hospital, patients ready to be discharged, but would rather stay admitted to get their next meal, are provided with a meal as they leave. Other meal recipients include, the homeless, who come to the Emergency Department simply because they are hungry, along with family members and caregivers who are waiting for the medical diagnosis of their loved ones. In addition, the meal offer is extended to victims of violent crime who are under the Hospital’s care. Meals under *Sustain & Serve NJ* are also used to honor nurses and clinical staff with a hot meal during their shift.

“The overwhelming and heartfelt response from organizations stepping up to support their local restaurants and their neighbors truly embodies the Jersey spirit,” said **New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy** in a recent announcement of the Phase 2 grants. “Restaurants are an essential part of our economy and their success is essential to our state’s recovery from the pandemic. Having so many entities leverage *Sustain & Serve NJ* funds to not only inject cash into restaurants, but also partner with those restaurants to feed members of their community is an absolute grand slam.”

“This second, larger grant will allow us to continue to address the nutritional, social and personal needs of the most disadvantaged members of our community. We find that though patients are ready for discharge, there is apprehension about leaving as they are concerned about where their next meal is coming from,” said **Dr. Anthony Rosania, Vice Chair Clinical Operations**,



Department of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. “With *Sustain & Serve NJ*, we can address one’s food insecurity, complete their patient care, and allow them to be safely discharged on a timely basis, especially as hospitals continue to see high volumes of patients as we continue to address the COVID-19 pandemic.”

With Phase 2 of *Sustain & Serve NJ*, the NJEDA has awarded \$20 million in grant funding to entities throughout the state to support expenses directly tied to bulk purchasing of meals from New Jersey-based restaurants. Each awardee received a grant of between \$100,000 and \$2 million to fund these purchases. The entities then distribute the meals, at no cost, to the recipients. Governor Murphy signed legislation in June 2021 that, in part, allocated funding for *Sustain & Serve NJ*, enabling the NJEDA to open Phase 2 of the program. Due to the enormous interest from organizations and restaurants throughout the state, NJEDA is dedicating an additional \$11 million in federal funds to the program.

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About The Foundation for University Hospital

The Foundation for University Hospital raises funds to advance University Hospital's mission of improving healthcare, education, and wellness in greater Newark. Contributions to The Foundation for University Hospital sustain and enhance the critical clinical and community outreach programs of University Hospital. For more information about how you can contribute and make a difference, please contact the Foundation office at (973) 972-1873.

About University Hospital

University Hospital is part of one of the nation's leading academic medical centers and is the Level 1 Trauma Center for Northern New Jersey. Located at University Heights in Newark, University Hospital is a principal teaching hospital of Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences and a regional resource for advanced services across many medical specialties. For more information about University Hospital, please visit www.uhnj.org.