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VOLUNTEERS IN THE NEWS

Sandra Lee Pays Visit to Food Bank for Westchester; Food Bank Plans to Leave

The goal for the food bank is to have a new site, likely in southern Westchester, chosen by June 30.

By **Tom Auchterlonie** January 31, 2011

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Media personality and celebrity cook Sandra Lee stopped by the Food Bank for Westchester in Millwood Monday to give a show of support to its initiatives.

Lee, who **is a New Castle resident** and girlfriend of Gov. Andrew Cuomo, was joined by an official from Wal-Mart's Sam's Club division to present a \$10,000 check to the food bank. She also took time to help volunteers bag foodstuffs.

"Hunger has been my issue for a very long time and I not only enjoy my visits to the food bank, but I also really think it's important to raise awareness for the issues that are out there when it comes to hunger," she said at a press conference.

Lee also noted her personal experiences with helping the hungry, which including relying on food stamps as a child and having a grandmother who helped run a food bank.

"I myself, was a child of the welfare and the food stamp program, so this is something that's near and dear to my heart," she told members of the press.

Lee also said that half of the people in Westchester County who could benefit from assistance are receiving it, or 100,000 out of 200,000.

Lee's visit to the Food Bank for Westchester is the seventh in a series of food bank tours she has made, according to Christina Rohatynskyj, who is the food bank's executive director.

In Need of Larger Warehouse, Food Bank Plans to Leave Millwood

With Lee's visit, it was noted that the Food Bank for Westchester plans to depart from its Millwood warehouse once it can find a larger space to supply its growing inventory.

"We need a new facility, as you see, we're busting at the seams here because there is so much need," Lee said.

Rohatynskyj explained that they are running out of space. The 13,000-square-foot facility they currently use was only intended to handle a maximum of 4 million pounds of stuff, while the food bank is now distributing more than 6 million.

"The need has increased by 30 percent over the last year," she said. "So we clearly are where that we need to do more, but we cannot do it because we're limited by the physical size of this warehouse."

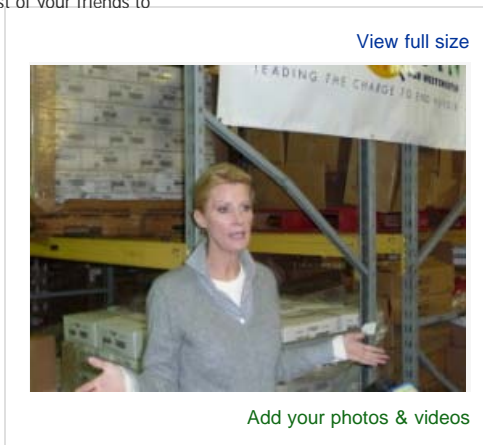
Rohatynskyj said that a minimum of 30,000 square feet is need for a new site, one that can handle more and meet food safety regulations.

The food bank is likely to move to southern Westchester because the majority of clients served are south of White Plains and there would be savings in transportation costs, Rohatynskyj explained. They have been looking at sites in Elmsford, Mount Vernon and Ardsley, "and whatever is popping up on the listings, we're running right out and looking," she said.

The goal is to have a new site selected by June 30, with a move "as soon as possible," she said. It hasn't been decided yet whether the food bank will simply rent, enter into a rental agreement with the option to own the place in the future, or to buy a place outright.

The food bank will need to raise money in order afford a move, however. According to Rohatynskyj, \$700,000 has been saved up, but at least \$1.5 million would be needed. A fundraising campaign might be needed to come up with the funds, she explained.

What are your thoughts on the food bank's plans to move to a new location? [Tell us in the comments.](#)



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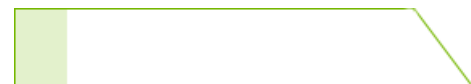
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