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# Eastchester philanthropist offers \$750,000 challenge grant to aid Food Bank move

12:47 AM, Aug. 13, 2011 | Comments



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EASTCHESTER — Eastchester philanthropist Pat Lanza is putting up \$750,000 to help the Food Bank for Westchester — and hopes her generosity is catching.

The "challenge grant" money is available on a matching basis to help offset the Food Bank's \$2.2 million cost of moving its operation from Millwood to Elmsford. If other donors take Lanza's lead, nearly all the needed funds will be covered, said Christine Rohatynskij, executive director for the Food Bank.

"She's an absolutely spectacular person," said Rohatynskij of Lanza. "It means a great deal to us. She stepped forward after reading about our move, knowing that we've been looking for years and years and years. When she heard that we did locate a spot and we were preparing to launch a campaign to raise the rest of the money, she offered a challenge grant."

The organization provides emergency food to Westchester's estimated 200,000 hungry, many of whom are children and senior citizens. The 13,000-square-foot Millwood warehouse has long been inadequate, Rohatynskij said, and after years of searching for a new place to house food donations, a 36,666-square-foot office/warehouse space came on the market.

The Food Bank signed a long-term lease and set out to raise \$1.5 million to help pay for the move. That's when Lanza stepped up, Rohatynskij said.

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Food Bank will be sending out solicitation letters to former and possible donors to try to match Lanza's seed money. Rohatynskij said the campaign, which she termed a "silent" one because of its focus on targeted donors, should be under way shortly. Although it is slated to close on Jan. 1, Rohatynskij said she hoped the money would be raised long before that.

"Times are tough, but we're hoping Mrs. Lanza will inspire them," Rohatynskij said of potential donors. "We've been preparing for this move for quite a long time. We do have money that we had been collecting over the years specifically for this purpose. We have \$700,000 that will supplement the \$1.5 million (from donors) and we hope it's enough."

People who want to donate to the Food Bank or help with the challenge grant can visit [www.foodbankforwestchester.org](http://www.foodbankforwestchester.org) or call 914-923-1100 for information. Donations can be made online, by mail or in person.

In 2010, the Food Bank distributed 7.1 million pounds of food to 227 local hunger-relief organizations including food pantries, soup kitchens, day cares, senior centers and shelters. The increased capacity of the new warehouse would allow the organization to house nearly 10 million more pounds of food for distribution.

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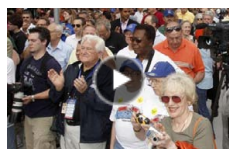
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