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The Neighborhood Files

## In Tough Economy, More Local Seniors Apply for Food Stamps

As part of our "Dispatches" series on how the economy has affected life in the Rivertowns, Patch explores the increase in seniors applying for food stamps.

By Lizzie Hedrick | [Email the author](#) | August 17, 2011 | [Print](#)

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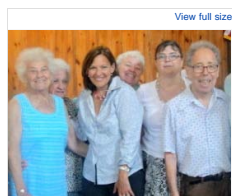
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Many local senior citizens are faced with a tough choice: pay for medication or pay for food.

"Over the last few years, we've helped a lot of seniors in the Rivertowns get food stamps," said Abby Connett, one of Dobbs Ferry's two volunteer senior advocates.

Especially for seniors in affluent communities like Hastings, Dobbs Ferry and Irvington, it can be difficult to have to ask for help paying for food, Connett said. "Many will pull me over privately and say, 'I think I may be eligible.'"

At that point, Connett directs seniors to Marilyn Rivera at the Food Bank for Westchester.

The county's local food bank has seen a staggering increase in the number of local senior citizens applying for food stamps, said Jeanne Wilcox, communications manager at the Food Bank.

"The reason we're pushing for people who may be eligible for these programs to apply for assistance is that our philosophy is providing nutrition, not just calories," Wilcox said.

Rivera helps seniors find out if they're qualified to receive nutritional assistance through the federal food stamps program, renamed SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) in 2008.

According to Wilcox, eligibility requirements have changed, which actually make it easier for seniors to reap the benefits of the program.

Connett agreed. "In the past, your home was judged as an asset, so people with houses in communities like Dobbs Ferry were denied food stamps."

Though Wilcox said she and her colleagues at the Food Bank for Westchester couldn't say for sure why there were so many more seniors applying for food stamps, she said she believed the increase stemmed from a combination of factors, like decreased medicare benefits and social security.

You can access the SNAP eligibility screening survey [here](#).

You can also hear a presentation from Marilyn Rivera at the Food Bank for Westchester at the Dobbs Ferry's "Back to School" party on Sept. 22.

You can also read more about senior citizens and hunger on the Food Bank for Westchester's website [here](#).

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