



Contact: Melissa Demarest, F.Y. Eye
Phone: 631.259.1506
Email: Melissa@fy-eye.org

PSA NETWORK HOST SPOTLIGHT

F.Y. Eye is committed to providing a platform for nonprofits to raise awareness about the services they provide to New York City communities. [YM & YWHA of Washington Heights and Inwood](#) is one of F.Y. Eye's [PSA Network](#) hosts that has managed to stay open and respond resourcefully during the pandemic. To show our appreciation for their longstanding partnership, we are highlighting some of the ways they have adjusted to continue to serve their community during these challenging times.

New York, New York (November 30, 2020) – For over 100 years, YM & YWHA of Washington Heights and Inwood have found new ways to reach some of New York City's most vulnerable residents and meet evolving needs in their diverse community. But since last spring, they have had to adapt at an unprecedented rate to address challenges brought on and exposed by COVID-19.

When many NYC community centers closed to the public at the start of the pandemic in March, the sudden loss of resources and support was devastating to residents already grappling with social isolation, mental health concerns, and food insecurity. Marty Englisher, Executive Director of the Y, didn't view shutting down as an option.

“When a crisis hits, your communities don't close,” Englisher says. “They need responders, and we are those people.”

Nourishing the Community

Food insecurity was an urgent priority. Staff launched into action to host a personalized on-site “grab-and-go” meal program before quickly switching to a home delivery meal service to reach vulnerable older adults.

Victoria Neznansky, Chief Development Officer and Social Services Officer, said the decision to move swiftly to home delivery came from recognizing that signs of trauma in their seniors were starting to take a toll.

“We saw our seniors collapsing and breaking down on the line of the grab-and-go. We realized there was really no one else in the community who would address their needs, so we took it upon ourselves to act very rapidly.”

The Y’s intimate understanding of the community landscape positioned them as a reliable lifeline. Although the City had coordinated its own home-delivered meal program, it wasn’t always dependable. Englisher described it as “a disaster in terms of quality and accuracy of delivery” due to a lack of knowledge the community.

The Y used a \$20,000 emergency grant to establish a partnership with a local restaurant to arrange deliveries of hot, nutritious meals to seniors at home. To sustain the program beyond the first few weeks, the Y turned to its own community for a fundraising challenge. They received an overwhelming response, leveraging the \$20,000 to raise a whopping \$250,000, which carried the program through the thick of the crisis.

Expanding their Impact

With a commitment to enhancing lives, the Y has welcomed members who had not previously sought their services.

“The pandemic showed tremendous gaps and holes in society,” said Neznansky. “It shed light on those who were not seen in our community; those who would not likely be counted in the Census.”

Many immigrant families who accessed the Y’s Emergency Cash Assistance Program (ECAP) at the start of pandemic frequently returned upon discovering other available services. Now that they’ve taken new members under their wing and built trust, the goal is to fully fine-tune services to fully include every individual.

“In addition to continuing to serve our usual community of seniors, children, and families, we feel a moral responsibility to think very carefully about how we can support our new members, now that we know they are there.”

Whether that support means simply answering the phone to lend a friendly ear, or connecting a member to a vital resource, the Y is up to the task. To plan for what lies ahead in 2020 and beyond, they are gearing up to build capacity by expanding their social services program.

“We expect to sharpen our mission to become more focused on social services,” says Neznansky. “This pandemic isn’t going anywhere yet.”

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About F.Y. Eye

[F.Y. Eye](#) is a New York-based and focused full-service nonprofit advertising group that works exclusively with other nonprofits, social enterprises, and government agencies to build public awareness about the wealth of social, civic, educational, legal, financial and

health-related resources available to New Yorkers in need. F.Y. Eye achieves this mission by creating and disseminating PSAs that generate attention and action on issues of public concern. Their cornerstone program is the [digital PSA Network™](#), an ecosystem of over 100 screens located in high-traffic nonprofits throughout New York, built specifically to promote critical advocacy messages and community programs. Additionally, they oversee the [Impact Artist Collective](#)--a community of creative people who use their skills for the public good. F.Y. Eye is building awareness, urgency and confidence in the 2020 Census through a range of creative and strategic GOTC initiatives to make sure New York gets its fair share of federal funding and congressional representation. For more information, please visit <https://www.fyeye.org>.