



PRESS RELEASE

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**UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL FOUNDATION
COMBATS FOOD INSECURITY IN THE COMMUNITY
WITH SUPPORT FROM SUSTAIN & SERVE NJ AND THE NJEDA**

***Hospital Volunteers to Distribute Holiday Meals
to Students & Families of Irvington Public Schools on December 19;
Effort Also Supports Regional Small Business Community***

NEWARK, NJ – University Hospital Foundation, the fundraising arm of New Jersey’s public acute care hospital and the principal teaching hospital for Rutgers New Jersey Medical School (NJMS) and Rutgers School of Dental Medicine (RSDM), in collaboration with the Hospital’s Community Affairs department, will address food insecurity during the holiday season by distributing meals to students and their families throughout the Irvington Public Schools this week. Meals are provided by local, small restaurants at no cost through the New Jersey Economic Development Authority’s (NJEDA) *Sustain & Serve NJ* grant program.

Throughout the week, as part of University Hospital’s *Season of Service* volunteerism program, students from the five elementary schools in the district will receive hot and nutritious meals for them to share with their families. This helps foster quality time amongst families during this busy holiday season, as well as expose community members to cuisines that they might not otherwise encounter. In total, more than 10,000 meals are scheduled to be distributed. Hospital employees will be volunteering all week to distribute the meals.

Dr. April Vauss, Irvington Public Schools Superintendent said, “We are grateful for the benevolence from the cooperation of the University Hospital Foundation, Hospital employees, the local restaurants, Alpha Kappa Alpha, and the *Sustain & Serve NJ* program. Your generosity to our students and families during this holiday season is greatly appreciated and personifies the goodwill that is necessary for us to build our community one student at a time.”

Supporting the *Season of Service* program, the University Hospital Foundation is the beneficiary of continued grants from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) *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.

“The Sustain & Serve NJ program and our collaboration with University Hospital have ensured that my business was able to survive the pandemic and put us on a sure footing moving forward. Without the vital funds from these grants, we would have had to close permanently and our small staff would have been unemployed,” said **Chef Roscoe Coleman of RMT Buffet Catering**. “To serve our neighbors and the community during this festive season is a distinct honor for me and my employees.”

Since the *Sustain and Serve* program first began in April 2021, University Hospital Foundation has fed 140,000 people experiencing some level of food insecurity. The Foundation has received nearly \$2 million in *Sustain & Serve NJ* grants since the program’s inception in 2020, including more than \$800,000 in the latest phase. The newest grant was awarded on December 20, as part of the NJEDA’s announcement of an additional \$5 million allocation to the program.

“Under Governor Murphy’s leadership, *Sustain & Serve NJ* has grown from a \$2 million pilot program to a \$57 million initiative dispersing over four million meals through 36 organizations, including University Hospital, to help COVID-impacted restaurants and mitigate food insecurity statewide,” said **NJEDA Chief Executive Officer Tim Sullivan**. “Due to the program’s continued success, yesterday, the NJEDA was proud to announce an additional \$5 million for the *Sustain & Serve NJ* program, helping to ensure that, especially during the holiday season, New Jerseyans will have access to nutritious meals.”

“We feel fortunate to be able combat food insecurity in Newark, while also supporting local restaurants,” said **Jess Backofen, Executive Director of the University Hospital Foundation**. “Our efforts in connection with the *Sustain & Serve NJ* program continue to make a meaningful impact on 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.”

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About the University Hospital Foundation

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.