

PROJECT BREAD

Wal-Mart donates \$25,000 for Food for Seniors Program

By JOHN LYNDIS
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After scoring a \$10,000 grant last week from Eastern Bank for its annual Walk for Hunger, East Boston-based Project Bread got some more good news from the Wal-Mart Foundation.

The foundation recently awarded Project Bread \$25,000 to support its Food for Seniors Program, which supports Project Bread's mission by providing immediate hunger relief to homebound elders while helping to enroll them in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps.

Escalating food costs and fixed incomes are creating an increasing number of seniors to seek out food assistance.

"Project Bread is grateful that the Wal-Mart Foundation recognizes the importance of our Food for Seniors Program," said Project Bread's Executive Director Ellen Parker. "SNAP benefits are a win-win strategy, giving seniors the nutrition they need while also bringing federal dollars into the state's economy."

Funding from the Wal-Mart Foundation will enable Project Bread to build upon its experience reaching hungry elders through new partnerships with three critical homecare organizations: Central Boston Elder Services in Roxbury, Ethos in Jamaica Plain, and Boston Senior Home Care.

These organizations serve 7,000 low-income seniors in neighborhoods across the city. Caseworkers from these organizations visit homebound seniors to assess their need for food. Supported by emergency vouchers provided by the grant, the caseworkers will then help the seniors order groceries, arranging for home delivery or contacting family members for shopping assistance. Beyond

this, caseworkers work with Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline to help elders apply for SNAP benefits for longer-term help. Caseworkers make sure that each senior's application for benefits is completed correctly and sent to the Department of Transitional Assistance. And, as part of their ongoing care, the caseworkers maintain a watchful eye on seniors' ability to access sufficient nutritious food.

"We're pleased to contribute to Project Bread for this important program that provides direct care services to elders in Boston," said Chris Buchanan, senior manager for public affairs and government relations at Wal-Mart Stores Inc. "Wal-Mart is eager to support vital programs like this that ensure seniors in Boston receive basic necessities at a time when they are struggling to make ends meet."

Project Bread is also gearing up for the Sunday, May 3rd Walk for Hunger.

"With the economy still struggling, many Massachusetts families are seeing their monthly income stretched beyond capacity," said Parker. "They are forced to go without food in order to pay their rent, utility, and medical bills."

The demand for emergency food has never been greater, with pantries and meal programs supported by Project Bread serving 43.4 million meals last year alone.

"Hunger is not just an urban problem — it exists in nearly every community throughout the state," said Parker.

Project Bread kicked off this year's Walk for Hunger on March 26, at a special breakfast in Boston, when 350 walk supporters and corporate sponsors enjoyed an inspirational video and a keynote address by Senate President Therese Murray

and Parker.

In 2008, more than 40,000 generous supporters braved rainy weather to take part in Project Bread's 40th Walk for Hunger. Walkers of all ages from a spectrum of economic circumstances participated in this event dedicated to feeding hungry people. They raised over \$4 million, an amazing success.

"It was incredibly moving to see thousands of walkers show their support for their hungry neighbors on a rainy," said Parker. "They came prepared for the weather, wearing ponchos and carrying umbrellas. They're an inspiration, and a wakeup call that the people of this state care about those who are struggling to put bread on their table. And this year, we've never needed them more."





Senate President Therese Murray (center), along with Ellen Parker, executive director of Project Bread's Walk for Hunger, and former Senate President Robert E. Travaglini (right), Project Bread board chair, accept a grant for \$25,000 from Chris N. Buchanan, senior manager of public affairs and government relations for Wal-Mart Stores at the recent Kickoff Breakfast for the Walk for Hunger at the Colonnade Hotel. Funding from the Wal-Mart Foundation supports Project Bread's Food for Seniors Program by providing immediate relief to frail homebound elders and enrolling them in the Federal Food Stamp Program.