



United Passaic Organization Unveils Food Truck to Combat Food Insecurity in Passaic County on MLK Day

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United Passaic Organization (UPO) Chief Executive Officer Dr. Janelle C. Hall embarked on an extensive search for a food truck, courtesy of funding from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. The Passaic-based Community Action Agency aimed to procure a food truck to deliver meals directly to individuals facing food insecurity across Passaic County.



"We found it right in our backyard, here in Passaic," Dr. Hall expressed. "We discovered this fully equipped food truck right in our hometown."



The De Los Santos family immigrated to the United States from the Dominican Republic with the dream of serving food inspired by their heritage. With the support of a loan from PNC Bank, they purchased a food truck from Jersey City. The Aplatanaos Food Truck, known for its pasteles en hojas, quickly gained popularity, necessitating an upgrade after two years due to high demand.

"When we opened the food truck, we had a line down all of Madison Street," shared Mrs. De Los Santos. "Nobody sells that kind of food near us because it is difficult to prepare. Our customers really appreciate our fresh and homemade food and drinks. The community supports us."



Main Ave., Passaic, NJ 07055) from 11:00am - 3:00pm The food truck will provide to-go bags of prepared meals and groceries to those in attendance. Joining the food truck, Jane the Virgin actress Andrea Navedo will join the event from 12:00pm - 2:00pm to speak with students and the community about her book *Our Otherness Is Our Strength: Wisdom from the Boogie Down Bronx* and do a book signing. The day of service will conclude at 7:00pm at Mt. Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church (163 Autumn St., Passaic, NJ 07055) for an MLK Service by the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Passaic and Vicinity.

The Day of Service is being run in partnership with More Than Bootstraps, which just received a \$750 award from Citizens Back to assist its mission of helping low-income, first-generation students access and succeed in higher education.

"It is fitting to unveil the food truck on Martin Luther King Day," Dr. Hall said. "He had a dream that affected so many people, and this food truck has been a dream for us at UPO."



STARTS WITH A DREAM

WELL THIS IS OURS...

PLEASE JOIN US IN CELEBRATING OUR GRAND OPENING OF UPO'S COMMUNITY FOOD TRUCK ON

Monday, January 15th, 2024

11am-3pm

In case of rain or snow we will postpone the event
Saturday, January 20th, 2024

AT:

Mt. Zion Baptist Church

857 Main Ave, Passaic NJ 07055

For more information please reach out to us:

(973) 472-2488

"UPO was the best group to sell the truck to," Mrs. De Los Santos added. "They are going to use what was the beginning of our dream to help people who really need food. We couldn't find a better organization to sell this to."

This venture marks UPO's second collaboration with a food truck. From June 2022 to December 2022, UPO partnered with



"UCC gave us the blueprint to duplicate those services," Dr. Hall explained. "Even though the food truck stopped coming in January, it did not stop families from needing food and our services."

UPO received approval to purchase the food truck after securing funding through the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs' non-discretionary funds program in September 2023. The City of Passaic ranked No. 9 on New Jersey's Economic Development Authority's list of New Jersey's food deserts and was the second-highest-rated food desert in Passaic County. UPO currently addresses food insecurity with pantries at Mt Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church and Union Baptist Church, as well as the UJAMAA Mobile Cafe Community Refrigerator. Having assisted over 10,000 people in 2023, UPO anticipates expanding its impact once the food truck debuts in 2024.

"It's surreal that we're going to have this program," Dr. Hall expressed. "This is a turning point for UPO."

For those interested in supporting the United Passaic Organization financially or through volunteering, visit [UPO's website](#). For more information about UPO's events and services, including the upcoming Martin Luther King Day of Service Event on Monday, please contact info@unitedpassaic.org, call 973-472-2478, or visit the office at 1 Howe Ave., Suite 301, Passaic, NJ 07055.

<https://www.newjerseystage.com/articles/getarticle2.php?titlelink=united-passaic-organization-unveils-food-truck-to-combat-food-insecurity-in-passaic-county-on-mlk-day012024>