

Long Island Volunteer Hall

Archive Project

Inception to Induction

Rock and Wrap it Up!

Year of founding: 1991

Issues addressed: Hunger, poverty

Induction category & year: Hunger, 2005

Founder: Syd Mandelbaum

Personal quote from founder: “Give a man a fish, you have fed him for today. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

History: Syd Mandelbaum began Rock and Wrap It Up in December of 1990. He served on the Board of Long Island Cares Agency in 1988 and was able to have a clear look at how the reduction of hunger and poverty was being addressed. Syd started gathering food following discussions with his friend Ron. Ron asked him to recover food from Jones Beach Theater, which was discarded and untouched. He realized that if one place had untouched leftover food, then other places would have it too, and it was a potential resource. He was wanted to help prevent hunger and poverty because his parents were Holocaust survivors who almost died of hunger. Mr. Mandel wanted to help the country that accepted his parents and made a difference in their lives. It also made sense to receive free food instead of buying food that would cost a fortune. RWU was launched on Labor Day, 1994 by Kurt Loder on MTV News. This helped get hundreds of volunteers for RWU across the United States.

In 1994 RWU worked with Leslie Leventman the co founder of MTV network, and started a project called We Share. The MTV video music award donated over 4,000 pounds of food to RWU. Famous volunteers like Howard Stern, Ralph Cerilla and many others, helped in a food recovery effort. In 1996, RWU had an article in “Rolling Stone” which helped to launch a school program to empower students not to waste food. RWU also worked with the music industry by receiving donations and recovering food. In 2000, RWU started a program with Duke University and in 2002, RWU had an article in a Detroit magazine and worked with the Detroit Tigers, a pro baseball team.

This led to a Sport Wrap and recovery of food in arenas and stadiums. It built up a program to work with 40 franchises in the NHL, NFL, MLB and NBA. In 2006, RWU started to help senior citizens because their social security was not enough. In 2007, RWU wrote a Federal Food Donation Act to make federal buildings donate their untouched food to the poor and to keep the food from landfills. It passed in 2008, and

not only did the federal buildings have to donate food, they also had to donate other products like shampoo, conditioner, soap and other supplies. The latest program in 2009 was called “It’s a Wrap,” and they started working with TV, film executives and NBC Universal.

Agency Mission: Rock and Wrap it Up is fighting poverty and hunger by recovering food from different events, even collecting cleaning products and toiletries and sending it to other agencies fighting poverty. It helps save a lot of money because buying food alone can be very expensive. This allows the agency to hire more social workers, tutors, mental health counselors, and job placement counselors to attack the main cause of poverty.

Scope of Activities: RWU serves the homeless, middle-class, lower-class, lower middle-class, and senior citizens. It has grown since 2008 because the poor economy left many people in need. RWU is feeding the lower-class and middle-class citizens in need and helping them find jobs. For the senior citizens, social security service is not enough for their daily living because everything is expensive. RWU also have been politically recognized for the Federal Food Donations Act, signed by President Bush before he left office, suggesting that all federal buildings encourage donating their untouched food to feed the poor and not put it into a landfill. They reduced the earth poverty footprint. Since it started in 1991, RWU has donated to over 43,000 shelters, and also worked with 60 sport franchises, 150 bands and 200 schools, also collecting over 250 million pounds of food and fed over 500 million people in need.

Volunteer Involvement: The agency has seven paid workers and has about 2,000 volunteers around the country. The majority of them do it just to volunteer because it’s mandatory for their schools, and others do it because they are passionate and believe in the cause and want to make a difference in society. Typically, the responsibilities that the volunteers do are to go pick up food from other places and bring it to the local agency. Some professional people help raise money for the agency. For example, lawyers volunteer their time and connections to help organize charity events. All in all, Rock and Wrap it Up! is doing a great job on Long Island.

**Submitted by:
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