

Neighbors Link



OUR MISSION: To strengthen the whole community by actively enhancing the healthy integration of immigrants

Neighbors Link's Response to COVID-19

During the COVID-19 crisis, the vital role that immigrants play in society has been clearly demonstrated. Immigrants make up disproportionately large shares of essential workers, particularly in the food, manufacturing, landscaping, cleaning, and health sectors. In addition, immigrants have also been among those hardest hit economically, both because many immigrants have been left out of government benefit packages and because of significant job losses or wage reductions. Due to strong community support, we have been able to increase and alter our services to meet the unprecedented need. Some of the services we are providing during this crisis include:

- We are **providing food to more than 3,400 people each week** throughout Westchester County through our partnership with Feeding Westchester, Hot Meals program with local restaurants and food delivery.
- We are distributing **800 hot meals** weekly with Gullotta House.
- We have distributed **\$50,000 worth of gift cards**.
- Dedicated volunteers are making food deliveries, assisting with food distribution and helping with online programming.
- We have transitioned our English Language and Parent Education programming to **remote learning**.
- Our **Learning Links and Summer Links** programs are continuing virtually.
- Our staff is making **1,000 calls each week** to clients.
- Our Community Law Practice is providing remote legal services and consultation days and recording and sharing **webinars**.
- Through our partnership with 914 Cares, we have been able to **deliver diapers to 80 families**.



Your Fight is Our Fight

As an organization, Neighbors Link has always stood for healthy integration. Healthy integration can only be achieved when every member of our community is able to live and work and learn and thrive. As we face the events of the past few weeks and the history of systemic racism in our country, this is a moment where Neighbors Link needs to stand strongly in solidarity with the black community. Recently, at rallies and protests throughout the county, we all stood together and listened to the voices of victims of racism. Now we must all act together. Neighbors Link will do all we can to fight racism. Tu Lucha es Mi Lucha; Your Fight is My Fight.



SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS



Bags of food are loaded into cars for volunteers to deliver to individuals and families in our community.

The services we have been able to provide during the coronavirus crisis simply would not be possible without the extraordinary efforts of our volunteers. From the beginning of the pandemic, volunteers immediately asked us how they could help. Neighbors Link usually has more than 400 people (including both long-term residents and recent immigrants) volunteering in our programs each year. For the past few months, more than 150 of those volunteers have been delivering food, grocery store gift cards, hot meals, diapers, and other supplies to people who need to isolate. In addition, volunteers have been instrumental in our weekly food distribution, from unloading food, packing food bags (working one family at a time to respect social distancing) and helping manage logistics during the distribution.

Finally, volunteers have been active in our remote programming, helping with legal services, creating online tutorials for students, and assisting with remote ESL and Family Center programs.

"The volunteers have been invaluable," said Martha Palomino, Volunteer Coordinator at Neighbors Link. "Because of them, we are able to meet so many needs. Knowing that the volunteers are available to deliver necessities gives staff hope when calling clients because we have solutions to offer to the many concerns that people are facing."

The volunteers also comment on how grateful they are to have something concrete they can do. "Helping our community right now is keeping me grounded and focused on what truly matters," said Amy Baker.

Volunteers have always been a critical part of Neighbors Link, providing English conversation, working with children during parenting programs, providing assistance to our legal team and more. With programs now being provided virtually, it is inspiring to see how quickly our volunteers were able to continue to step up in new and different ways for their community.



Volunteers like Wendy Reingold deliver bags of food to families throughout the community.

VOLUNTEER IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

Over the past ten weeks, Neighbors Link volunteers have:

- Unloaded over **80,000 pounds of food**
- Assembled **5,600 bags of food**
- Helped with weekly Saturday food distribution at Neighbors Link
- Delivered **food bags to over 100 homes** each week
- Delivered **gift cards to over 300** clients
- Delivered **diapers to over 80 families**
- Delivered **books and puzzles to over 80 families**
- Delivered **hot meals to over 250 families**
- Delivered **school meals twice a week** to families



VIRTUAL FAMILY CENTER

Our Family Center programming has moved online! Each week, participants gather remotely in small groups to learn together. Parents and their children immerse themselves in themes including colors, shapes, numbers, letters, musical instruments and more! In different sessions, parents gather together for educational workshops. Recent and upcoming presenters include the Ossining Library, Northern Westchester Hospital, Dr. Jill Ratner (pediatrician), Pace Women's Justice Center and Mount Kisco Elementary School. We may be staying home, but learning continues!



English Language Learning Goes Online!

English language education has always been a critical part of Neighbors Link programming. As soon as it became clear that in-person activities would need to be paused for public safety, our English as a Second Language (ESL) team moved learning online. Our intake, assessment, and class placement procedures have all been altered to work in a virtual environment.

Barbara Ribeiro, who has been an ESL teacher with Neighbors Link for the past year and a half, began offering open Zoom classes, inviting anyone who wanted to work on English to join in. "The biggest success in the program has been meeting new faces and learning that, even though the world has been living in a very sensitive time, people take their time to learn a new language," said Barbara. "Most importantly, they share hope with one another. When we started the remote classes, I wasn't sure how we would break the ice and how could I provide a class that would not only teach a new language,

but also connect people. Over the course of almost 3 months, I have to say that the classes became a fun meeting time where students and teacher learn and feel comfortable to share experiences because there are no barriers but simply friendships."

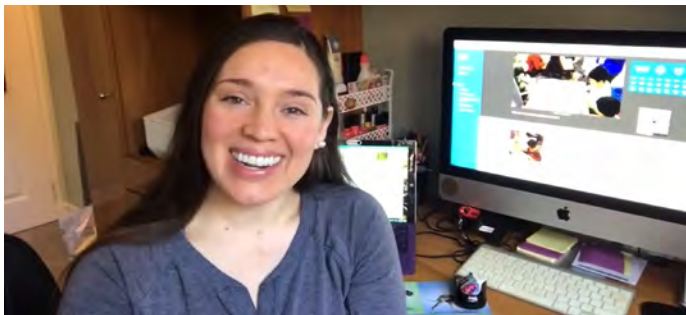
ESL learners have embraced the opportunity to continue learning. "The online classes have been a different experience for me," said Erika. "It has been incredible because we have been able to continue our studying with the support of our teacher Barbara. The support that she has given us has been unconditional during this time."

Our online ESL programming continues, with both drop-in classes as well as registration based classes. If you or someone you know is interested in joining our online ESL programming, please email Ramiro Rincon, Program Director at rrincon@neighborslink.org.



Virtual Learning Links and Summer Links

With schools moving to online learning, our after school Learning Links program and Summer Links program have also moved online! In addition to academic support in reading and math, we have been able to provide online tutoring and enrichment activities. For one activity, two Learning Links volunteers, Reese and Dylan Ertel, raised funds to purchase art supplies and soccer balls. They delivered supplies to families and created online tutorials on soccer skills and art projects! Numerous other enrichment activities are in place through our many partners and volunteers.



Beverliz Gillert, Learning Links and Summer Links Program Manager, sharing online resources with families.



Learning Links volunteers Reese and Dylan Ertel delivering art supplies and soccer balls to students!

Updates from our Legal Team

Our Community Law Practice is serving more clients than ever, as many people have questions or remain fearful of taking advantage of assistance programs. In addition to remote legal services, our legal team is providing remote consultation days and recording and sharing public service announcements and webinars about changes in law or policies. These presentations are available on the Neighbors Link YouTube page and cover topics such as:

Citizenship and Naturalization
Immigration Updates During COVID-19
Unemployment Insurance
Public Charge and COVID-19
CARES Act
Know Your Rights During COVID-19
Census



\$ CARES Act \$

The Migration Policy Institute estimates that immigrants make up disproportionately large shares of essential workers. Immigrants are also overrepresented in industries hardest hit economically by the pandemic.

Despite this, the majority of undocumented immigrants AND their U.S. citizen and legal permanent resident relatives (if they file taxes jointly with someone without a social security number) have been excluded from the most important of the government relief measures, the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Medicaid

In March, Congress passed the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act, which ensures that COVID-19 testing is covered by Medicaid. Unfortunately, only “qualified” immigrants (such as lawful permanent residents with more than five years in that status, asylees and refugees) are eligible for Medicaid. This means that millions of undocumented immigrants who are low-income and uninsured will not have coverage for testing and treatment under Medicaid.

Public Charge

The new “public charge” rule, which is a test immigration officials use when they review certain types of green card or visa applications, went into effect on February 24, 2020. In April, New York, Connecticut and Vermont filed a motion in federal court requesting that the court halt implementation of the new rule because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this lawsuit, USCIS is still utilizing the public charge rule in adjudicating applications; however, USCIS has publicly stated they will take COVID-19 into consideration when determining if the public charge rule applies.

Census

There is still time to fill out your Census! You can complete the Census questionnaire online, by mail or by phone. To fill it out online, go to: <https://2020census.gov>. If you need help, call Neighbors Link at 914-666-3410.



English as a Second Language Online Classes

Inglés como Segundo Idioma Curso por Internet



Various dates and times available.
For more information or to register, email
Ramiro Rincon at rrincon@neighborslink.org or visit
www.neighborslink.org/esl.

Varias fechas y horarios disponibles. Para obtener
más información o para registrarse, envíe un correo
electrónico a Ramiro Rincón a rrincon@neighborslink.org
o visite www.neighborslink.org/esl.

Community Partners Working Together

Community partnerships are critical and we are incredibly grateful for the many partners working closely with Neighbors Link to meet community needs during this time.

Bedford Central School District	Curtis Instruments	Gullota House
Ossining Union Free School District	Stone Fire	Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry
Village of Mount Kisco	Falafel Taco	Feeding Westchester
Westchester County Police Department	El Tesoro	914 Cares
Village of Ossining	Quaker Hill Tavern	Henry's Deli
Town of Ossining	Ryder Farms	InterGenerate
Friends of Neighbors Link	Community Center of Northern Westchester	

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