

# Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Hosts Ceremony to Honor New York City's Hunger Heroes

March 10, 2022

**Mayor Eric Adams:** I'm so excited to be here and join with our Chancellor David Banks and the President of Local District 37, one of our powerful unions, my brother, Shaun. I saw him on the streets all through the pandemic. You know, stopping at schools, handing out masks and just encouraging his folks. And, Rachel, thank you for No Kid Hungry, New York, and it should be No Kid Hungry, United States. You are really setting the mark for doing so. Actually, this is a Rachel – Rachel coordination, you know.

**Mayor Adams:** So, this is an important initiative – I think that sometimes we overlook the power of feeding our children, something that Kate talks about all the time. You know, you can give children healthy food to do the things that they need, and I really want to thank what Rachel is doing with No Kid Hungry for recognizing how important it is to give our children access to food. We want to remind people, as we look behind us, that heroes are not only in the movies, you know. They don't play out on a big screen. They play out on the big streets in our city. And these amazing people were there for our children in the most difficult time, walking in our schools, and watching children line up to get food, good healthy food. So, you know, whoever thought that heroes only wear capes, they're wrong. They wear aprons.

[Applause]

**Mayor Adams:** The cooks, the food service workers. Mind you, my mother was a food service worker. And she played such a vital role of, you know, the connection with food and people. Those who give them a healthy balanced meal is imperative. And then it's our school aides, and so many more that come together. Because even the school crossing guards were there to make sure that children can cross the street safely, to get to the school to get the food. And our food delivery people who had to bring the food into the building. And the school safety agents who were there to make sure that the schools were open. That family that came together provided food in the most difficult

time during COVID. Many people were home, but they were there. They responded appropriately. So it's that security, that safety, of a balanced meal, and then the love and nurture.

**Mayor Adams:** You know, children, they have an authentic meter. They can tell if you really care about them or you don't care about them. They walked inside our schools and other places where food was being delivered, and they acknowledged that the individuals who were providing those meals had a deep compassion and caring for them. And so I am extremely proud today to give this certificate for those who took care of our young people. We want to make sure we take care of them. And that's the future – it holds all of our opportunities, and it depends on us getting it right in a real way. If we can help children eat right, eat balanced, and make sure that they are removing the insecurity of the uncertainty that – do you have a meal or not? When you remove that insecurity, when you wake up and know you have a balanced meal waiting for you, that sends a loud and strong message. And that was the goal.

**Mayor Adams:** We've successfully accomplished the goal every time these heroes were on their job. They're saying, government would do its job. And we want to thank them for that. So when you look at the analysis of one in four children are hungry – that has to settle in – one in four children are hungry and don't have the access and opportunity to be fed. We're going to destroy that number. I don't accept that a child must go to bed hungry. That is unacceptable in our city, and it's unacceptable in our country. So today, we are also announcing that we're going to join the Mayor's Alliance to End Child Hunger. We're going to be part of the team.

[Applause]

**Mayor Adams:** Because we see the impact on young people, in their families, our schools. This is a moral imperative. That's the starting place. You cannot really comprehend your education opportunities if you are worrying about your next meal. This is tied into the overall health of our children and families, and we're going to get it right. We are starting the healthy food revolution in the city. Everything from Meatless Mondays, to having access to plant-based food on Fridays, to our hospitals, to all the places that we feed people. We want to give them access to healthy food so that we can end not only hunger, but we can end some of the negative byproducts of not having access to good-tasting, healthy foods. So I thank Rachel, the entire team, the union, our heroes that are here. I thank you for what you're doing.

[Applause]

**Mayor Adams:** This is only the beginning, and we cannot say thank you enough. I want to bring up my good friend Shaun Francois. Thank you, brother. You know, you were on the ground throughout the entire time of COVID. I appreciate you.

[Applause]

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**Mayor Adams:** Bring up Kate MacKenzie. Kate.

[Applause]

[...]

**Chancellor David Banks, Department of Education:** Thank you so much. First of all, I'm just so honored to be here today. As someone who was a former school principal, I understand the importance of our school food service workers and how critically important they are. But I'm also honored to be here, first of all, to join with Camille Joseph Varlack, who's on my team as Special Advisor for Operations, and Chris Tricarico, Senior Executive Director for the DOE (Department of Education) Office of Food and Nutrition Services.

[Applause]

**Chancellor Banks:** Recognizing all of the amazing hunger heroes with us today, and every single food service worker in New York City. I'm so proud that Mayor Adams is joining the Mayor's Alliance to End Child Hunger as well. And glad to be here during National School Breakfast Week. We all know how important a healthy start to the day is in helping students perform better in the classroom. Our food service employees are true heroes, I'm going to echo the Mayor's words on that, and are critically important in the fabric of our schools. Just as essential as the third grade teacher, or the eighth grade teacher, or even a school principal, our food service workers are critically important to the daily functioning of our schools. These are the folks who have been there not just while the kids are in school, but when life throws our families curveballs.

As we've seen throughout this pandemic, these heroes have been there making sure every student is taken care of. I'm so grateful for all that they do, for all that you do. I know that I speak on behalf of all New York City families and school communities when I say thank you. We appreciate you deeply, and I personally salute you. Thank you.

[Applause]

**Kate MacKenzie, Executive Director, Mayor's Office of Food Policy:** Thank you, Chancellor Banks. Rachel Sabella is someone that I've had the pleasure to work with for many, many years, whether it is ensuring our Summer Meal Program serves as many kids as it possibly can. Whether it's making sure that again, in this moment of National School Breakfast Week, she makes sure that – and No Kid Hungry makes sure that – students can eat that breakfast in their classroom, and after the bell. This initiative that makes so many kids have access to school breakfast. Whether it is making sure that everyone knew about the pandemic EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) program, which was a lifeline to families across the city who were struggling to put meals on their table. Rachel was like, what can we do? Tell us what we need to do to make sure that kids and families across the pandemic can get served. Rachel, thank you for your support and for your commitment to ending childhood hunger.

[Applause]

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[Applause]