

CORONA VIRUS HEROES



How RDS Delivery's

Random Act of Kindness

Became an Economic Stimulant
for New York's Restaurants

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A courier company has found a way to stimulate the local economy, keep restaurant workers employed and feed frontline heroes, senior citizens and those in need. And it all began with a random act of kindness.

Since April 1, [RDS Delivery](#) in Long Island City has delivered over 137,000 meals to healthcare workers and those in need. It started with a call to Larry Zogby, the owner of RDS delivery from Andy Duddleston, the Managing Partner of the Little Beet at 1140 Broadway. The chain is a long-time client of RDS Delivery, a courier service that delivers product between their seven metro-area restaurants. He told Zogby that he had an inventory of food that he would not be able to serve customers because he expected the governor to shut down the state, including restaurants. He asked him to help him find a way to get the food to those who needed it. Zogby's response was, "Whatever you need."

The economic slow-down meant RDS Delivery had excess capacity. "Andy called on us to move the excess food inventory to soup kitchens and nonprofits. We loved the idea of helping to put that food to good use instead of

it going to waste or ending up in the garbage," says Zogby.

That primed the pump. Duddleston shared the good news about the deliveries with Becky Mulligan, the CEO of The Little Beet Brands. When one of the restaurant's patrons raised \$30,000 to feed hospital front-line workers, Mulligan called RDS Delivery. She told Zogby that they had a patron who donated the funds for the Little Beet restaurants to make 250 to 500 meals a day for frontline hospital workers around the city. "I have no idea how we're going to deliver all that food," Mulligan said. Once again, Zogby's response was "Whatever you need." That mushroomed into deliveries of over 25,000 meals a week. RDS has been doing this since Apr. 3, as well as working with other restaurants throughout the city to feed those who depend on soup kitchens, churches, community-based organizations and continue to serve the hospitals as well. "In the process, we've become a part of a bigger effort that not only feeds people, but also keeps restaurants in business and their workers employed," Zogby said. "I was truly amazed and proud at how we've all worked together during this pandemic for the good of the whole. I am a firm believer that good things can always arise from a crisis."



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“Larry and the entire RDS team are amazing partners for The Little Beet,” said Mulligan. “We have worked together for years, to support the movement of product between our New York restaurants. However, during the COVID-19 crisis, we have found that we can band together to serve our city in new ways that are very meaningful. From taking donations to food banks when we closed restaurants, to stepping up for daily deliveries to hospitals, frontline workers, and our cities most vulnerable and food-challenged, Larry just says yes, and figures out how to make it happen. Every day I am grateful to have RDS as part of the team.”

That was only the beginning of the story. Mulligan got a call from, Samantha Katz, CEO of Chefs With Spirits. She is connected to the World Kitchen, a nonprofit started by celebrity chef José Andrés to fight hunger in the face of tragedies. They asked Little Beets to prepare and deliver 7,000 meals per week for World Kitchen. Mulligan asked RDS Same Day Delivery to help them get those meals to front-line workers.

“The next thing you know, we’re delivering 7,000 to 10,000 meals a week combined,” recalls Zogby. “Everything aligned to make that initial act of kindness reverberate.”

And reverberate it did. Little Beet’s landlord, SL Green Realty Corporation was looking for a way to support the restaurants that rent from them. They donated \$1 million and formed a non-profit they named Food First. As of July 3, the organization has sent meals 92,000 meals to hospital workers throughout the city made by the restaurants that rent from them. They turned to RDS Delivery to get those meals to healthcare workers around the city. “Every time we did one of those deliveries, we would take photos and post them on our social media,” recalls Zogby. “We shared these photos with Food First. They, in turn, shared them with their donors, restaurant owners and management and posted them on their social media platforms. Those photos generated interest and that interest spawned donations to

Food First. The more we did and the more we posted, the more steam the effort generated. People were able to see where their donations were going, and they contributed more. Everyone won – the healthcare workers got spectacular meals; the restaurants were able to open up and get their people back to work and those who donated got to see their dollars at work. The economic impact and the good it’s been able to do are both remarkable!”

The effort continues to grow. At this point, RDS Delivery is transporting meals from SL Green tenants. They include Armani Ristourante, Avere, NY Vintners, Little Beet, Eat Real Tacos, Just Salads, Juice Press, Sushi Ito, Stout and 5 Guys. Food from these restaurants is being distributed to hospitals and multiple community-based organizations. “It’s bringing back hundreds of employees who depend on those paychecks to support their families,” points out Zogby. “We’re hoping this inspires other landlords that rent to restaurants will follow suit.”

In addition, RDS Delivery is delivering meals for Catholic Charities of New York, Citymeals on Wheels, Food First Inc., Housing Works, North Brooklyn Angles, Rethink Food NYC and World Kitchen.

As RDS Delivery continues its efforts to deliver all those meals, Zogby looks back in amazement. “What shocks me is how just helping a client make the most of a challenging situation ballooned into delivering over 25,000 meals a week. In the beginning, we had no idea how this would multiply. And precisely how we’d pull it off. We’ve been in the delivery business since 1973. We’ve transported everything from paper to human tissue. But we’ve never delivered pre-made meals. That didn’t stop us. We found a way to leverage what we knew and who we knew to grow this effort into what it’s become today. It’s been fueled by hope, faith and a belief that doing the right thing would be the right thing to do. It’s become so much more than we ever anticipated. It’s been an honor to be a part of it.” **CLDA**