

By Beverly Fortune

This column is dedicated to honoring 52 different Long Island women who make significant, unique and lasting contributions to their communities and workplaces.



Featured This Week
Aimee Holtzman
Founder/President,
Rock CAN Roll

"What does someone who is hungry look like? You don't know. Some people ignore it and don't see the problem. I took off my rose-colored glasses," said Aimee Holtzman.

On a mission to ease the hunger pangs of those less fortunate, Aimee took action and devised a different way of collecting food. As a lifelong rock-and-roll fan, these three words took on new meaning in 2005, when she founded the Jericho-based, all-volunteer, nonprofit organization rock CAN roll, inc. (rCr).

There are more than 800 food pantries, soup kitchens and relief organizations in operation on Long Island, serving 44,000 of our residents in any given week. With all of those resources, there's still not enough to feed everyone, and people are being turned away hungry.

Aimee explains the concept of rCr: "It's as simple as bringing a can of food to an event you're attending."

With her volunteers, called rock CAN rollers, Aimee helps coordinate events where they collect canned food and other necessities for people in need of assistance. Working with schools, social groups and businesses, rCr collects and delivers the donated items to where the event sponsor designates they would like the collections sent; as Aimee explains, "We try to keep it local, within 10 miles of your event."

The launch of rCr was at a concert at Jericho High School, where Aimee's son is a student.

"Everyone who was attending the concert was asked to bring a can of nonperishable food," Aimee says. "All you have to do is ask people. Everybody can do something, but sometimes they don't know how. It's easy to collect the food and then have us distribute it. I orchestrate everything.

"People should not have to worry if they're going to get a meal."

No stranger to organizing a relief effort, Aimee collected literally tons of items donated by Long Islanders and had them shipped to Honduras after the country was devastated by Hurricane Mitch in 1998. She also collected fire gear donated from local firehouses that was no longer up to U.S. fire code. She says that when she went to Honduras, she saw Honduran firemen with "Jericho FD" or "Syosset FD" emblazoned on the backs of their coats. She remembers, "It was almost surreal."

When Hurricane Katrina struck, Aimee organized another relief effort and had three truckloads of items delivered to New Orleans.

Common Cents Penny Harvest, a national child philanthropy organization where students can decide what organization should receive the funds they raise, recently selected rCr to receive a \$1,000 donation for collecting and donating coats to needy children. "I've seen mothers literally push their kids into school and then take their coat to bring home for another child to wear," Aimee says.

Beaming, Aimee said that the ceremony where she received the check was "an event more exciting than *American Idol*!"

As rCr expands its role in helping those in need, Aimee is looking to recruit corporate partners. North Fork Theater at Westbury is supporting rCr by allowing the organization to have permanent donation bins to which concertgoers can contribute.

Aimee is a believer in "paying it forward" and seeing the giving potential in everybody. As she puts it, "I just need a piece of you: Give me a few hours of your time." ①

For more information, or to be a volunteer, call 516-822-3457, e-mail aimee@rockCANroll.org or visit www.rockCANroll.org.

If you know a super woman who deserves good Fortune—and a profile—e-mail your nominations to Beverly at bfortune@longislandpress.com.