HOW CAN YOU HELP VENEZUELA?

August 18, 2026



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By Sonia Alio

July 24 marked one month since the devastating double earthquake struck Venezuela. As our hearts remain with those who are no longer with us, survivors are now facing the difficult task of rebuilding their lives. I wanted to share the names of a few organizations for those who may wish to support the ongoing recovery efforts. Direct donations to reputable nonprofits can make a meaningful difference.

HelpThemDirectly.org centralizes and verifies fundraising campaigns for earth-

quake victims, creating a trusted platform where people around the world can support affected families directly. More than 100 families are currently listed, and their stories are heartbreaking. Each fundraiser is carefully verified, giving donors confidence that their support will reach those in need. No donation is too small. Contributions help cover search efforts, burial expenses, hospital bills and basic needs and help families begin rebuilding their lives.

Global Empowerment Mission/Venezuela Earthquake has been an exceptionally effective disaster relief organization, with a strong boots-on-the-ground presence delivering aid directly to those affected by the earthquake. From coordinating the collection of donations to warehousing, shipping and distributing essential supplies, the organization has demonstrated remarkable efficiency and commitment at every stage of the relief effort.

World Central Kitchen/Chefs for Venezuela. Preparing more than 10,000 meals each day, World Central Kitchen (WCK) recently marked one month of operations by serving more than one million fresh, nutritious meals to earthquake survivors and rescue teams. WCK has been a shining example of compassion and efficiency throughout this crisis, and its teams remain on the ground providing critical support to those in need. I encourage you to visit WCK's Instagram page to gain a better appreciation of the scale of their operation and the extraordinary impact they continue to make.

Fundacion Juan Pablo 2 Santos is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping individuals in need of prosthetic limbs regain their mobility and independence. Working in partnership with the Hospital Ortopédico Infantil, the foundation provides hope and life-changing support to those whose lives have been affected by injury or limb loss.

I encourage you to visit the foundation's Instagram page to learn more about its work. To support its mission, click on "Donaciones" to access the PayPal donation link.

RAC: Red de Apoyo Canino is one of the many organizations leading animal rescue

efforts in the aftermath of the earthquake. Their team has been at the core of the affected areas, providing assistance to animals who have lost their families, become separated from their owners or were already living on the streets. Their networks mobilized all of their programs, including pet food bank, basic veterinary care and surgeries, foster home network and adoption programs.

I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to read this article. I encourage you to consider making a direct donation to one of these verified, independent and nonpolitical organizations. If donating is not possible, simply sharing this information with others can also make a meaningful difference.

Thank you for your kindness, compassion, and support.

Sonia Alio has been a Coop member since 2002. Born in Venezuela, she has lived in Brooklyn since 1994. She has family and friends in Venezuela who lived through the recent double earthquake and its consequences.Through them, she can attest that the situation is dire. Much of the assistance has come through personal initiatives and organizations that provide direct aid or have developed the experience and networks needed to deliver effective relief despite the country's challenging political and economic conditions. Sonia works as a set designer for film, television, and corporate events, and teaches as a guest in two NYC high schools.

PSFC HELPS SOUP KITCHEN FEED HUNDREDS OF MIGRANTS

August 18, 2026



By Hayley Gorenberg

The Coop and community members have leaped into action to help a local soup kitchen and food pantry feed hundreds of migrants who have arrived in New York.

Around the New Year, “We saw a huge influx of people, and we didn’t know what was happening!” said Shanice Branch, the development director at Community Help in Park Slope, Inc. (CHiPS). A survey the organization distributed in Spanish and English quickly helped scope out the needs of newly arrived migrants, and CHiPS expanded its food pantry availability from a couple hours once weekly to two days each week. Lunch demand jumped from about 225 lunches per day to 300, then, on a recent day, to 338—until one day in February, CHiPS ran out of food.



PHOTO BY JOHN MIDGLE

THE COOP'S ROLE

The February PSFC food drive—one of two or three annually that are organized for CHiPS—helped stave off local hunger with 67 large banana boxes full of food and cash donations totaling $2,367.92, according to General Coordinator Elinoar Astrinsky, who joined the CHiPS board last year to further reinforce the Coop's half-century partnership with the organization. "They were looking to cement that relationship by having someone from the Coop be part of their board, so I was happy to do that. I absolutely believe in their mission and everything they are doing."



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

Though the Coop has long donated edible but unsalable produce and has run drives for additional items, Astrinsky said that upon joining the board she “realized that their food operations person had never actually been to the Coop—so I invited her, and we walked through the aisles, and she told me what kind of things people were looking for.” The walk-through helped sharpen the Coop’s response to CHiPS’ newest clientele, including families seeking asylum who are housed at a nearby hotel and single men at a local shelter.

THE DONATED FOOD



“It used to be that all our drives were basic pantry food that people could cook at home,” Astrinsky said. “The usual pasta, sauce, beans, some canned fish, some peanut butter, jelly—kinda more the staple-y things.”

By contrast, for the most recent food drive, the Coop pre-ordered pouches of food acceptable in shelters that won’t allow pop-top metal cans, as well as single-serve items in packaging that could be ripped open by hand. “Plastic fruit cups, juice boxes, a lot of one-time things,” were requested, with “a lot more packaging than we’re used to selling,” Astrinsky conceded. “They wanted cookies that were single-serve cookies. We don’t usually sell those, but people just needed snacks to tide them over to the next meal.” The Coop ordered and featured the items for purchase and donation when the food drive geared up.

WHAT COOP MEMBERS ARE DOING

Membership Coordinator Jacquelyn Scaduto and a group of members experienced in

running PSFC food drives pitched the drive over the paging system, further alerting members about what CHiPS needed. The Coop displayed key items on endcaps and filled banana boxes to load on carts bound for the food kitchen. Astrinsky, herself a Coop member since 1992 and a General Coordinator for over a decade, marveled at the response, even as she said it was not unusual. “The numbers are amazing. [Members] always rise to the occasion!”

In addition to the drives, the Coop rolls U-boats of produce to CHiPS every couple of days, and some Coop members fulfill their shifts by working in the CHiPS kitchen. “Some of the most consistent volunteers [at CHiPS] are Coop members,” Astrinsky said. The shift system contributes to regular scheduling, “and they just love it,” she remarked. “They’ve been doing their shifts for many years.” The Coop has gradually added more shifts for cooking and pantry food distribution, depending on the needs at CHiPS.



Mark Hoglund (CHiPS Volunteer), Melissa Hart (Co-op Member) and Yolanda Johnson

(CHiPs Volunteer)

CHiPS hopes community members will help meet their ongoing needs by contributing in three specific ways, according to Development Director Shanice Branch.

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Donate!
First, the organization hopes for direct financial donations, and plans to use the money to buy food in bulk from wholesalers.
ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE
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Shop!
Second, CHiPS asks that people purchase items from the organization's "wish list."
ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

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The CHiPS wish list is available here.



Brother Thomas Barton, Shanice Smith-Branch, Melissa Newark and Pauline Auguste.

Donations are accepted for drop off Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at CHiPS, located at 200 4th Ave., between Sackett Street and Degraw Street. CHiPS will also accept hot meals and cooked food for lunch (11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.). “Some people bring trays of lasagna, chicken and rice,” Branch said. “Restaurants are dropping off, too. Someone brought a roasted pork shoulder!”

Hayley Gorenberg joined the Coop in 1993 and became a Gazette *reporter soon thereafter.*