

# DAILY NEWS



BE OUR GUEST: JENNIFER MARCH-JOLY, children's group advocate

## Green carts are a first step toward a healthier N.Y.C.

**T**he city famous for its pizza, hot dogs and cheesecake is about to embark on a major health initiative aimed at getting fresh produce into the hands of those families that need it most — and it comes not a moment too soon.

The recently passed Intro 665, known as the Green Carts Legislation, will create 1,000 new licenses for street vendors to sell fruit and vegetables in underserved neighborhoods across the five boroughs. Soon, communities such as Brownsville, Melrose, Corona, East Harlem and Willowbrook, which have long been passed over by traditional grocery stores and supermarkets, will have at least one healthy food outlet close at hand.

The Green Carts Legislation is by all accounts a life-saving measure for families currently living in “food deserts.” For them, buying healthy food isn’t as simple as walking down the block to the local grocer — it means taking a subway ride, bus ride or car service to someone else’s local grocer. Not surprisingly, in neighborhoods like these where healthy food isn’t readily available, children and families often go without, suffering the devastating consequences of soaring obesity rates, heart disease and diabetes.

Now, thanks to the Green Carts Legislation, street vendors will be coming to the sidewalks of community “food deserts” in

all five boroughs, offering fresh produce where families live and work — and at prices they can afford.

While Green Carts will mean better health outcomes for at least 100,000 New Yorkers, they are just one immediate response to a problem that requires a multifaceted, long-term solution. The Green Cart legislative victory has not only raised awareness about the ill effects on children and families resulting from the lack of access to nutritious, affordable food, but has also provoked profound public interest in resolving food access issues that plague so many communities in this city.

To truly increase the supply of healthy food in low-income and underserved communities, we must do more to create a food infrastructure in every neighborhood that is accessible, affordable and offers a variety of options, including Green Carts, supermarkets, small grocers, farmers’ markets and bodegas.

To make healthy diets and healthy lives achievable for all New Yorkers, city leaders should

consider the following proposals:

- Develop and actualize a plan for supermarket siting in neighborhoods currently lacking them.
- Encourage existing supermarkets to expand delivery catchment areas and/or provide free shuttle service to underserved communities.

- Enhance the capacity of small, independent grocers and bodegas to carry nutritious, affordable food.

- Create year-round indoor markets in city-owned complexes with underutilized space.

- Promote the expansion of food co-ops, buying clubs and farmers’ markets in low-income neighborhoods.

- Expand efforts to inform New Yorkers where to access nutritious food and to provide menu-planning information and ideas.

Nutritious food is the foundation for a healthy lifestyle. Ensuring that residents in each neighborhood, in every borough, have access to healthy, affordable food is critical to reversing the health epidemics that are plaguing our communities and a must-have in the quest for better overall health and success in life.

**T**here are many ways to bring fresh foods into “food deserts” and neighborhoods with limited food retail options. Whether New York City invests in new markets or enhances existing ones, provides transportation or more convenient distribution centers for fresh farm goods, the right combination of opportunities must be in place for every neighborhood, in a city otherwise abundant with food. Improving access to and increasing the availability of healthy food choices will create healthier children and families, more local jobs and a stronger economy.

*Jennifer March-Joly is executive director of the Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York.*

**Access to healthy food is a must for success in life**

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