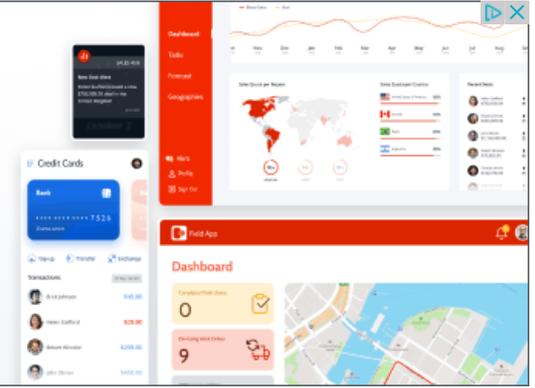




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Coronavirus: Fulfill food bank, NJ restaurants partner to feed needy people at the door

Sarah Griesemer, Asbury Park Press Published 12:36 p.m. ET March 16, 2020

When an outbreak shuts schools, churches and businesses, what happens to people who rely on such places for food?

Food pantries, which provide millions of meals each year in the state, are closing because they can no longer safely serve families nor do they have enough volunteers, said Kim Guadagno, [president of Fulfill](#), ([/story/money/business/career/2019/05/04/kim-guadagno-taking-over-fulfill-food-bank-monmouth-and-ocean/1089898001/](#))formerly the FoodBank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties. Pantries in Toms River, Lacey, Deal and beyond have closed in recent days, she said.

"And that, I suspect, like everything else, is just the tip of the iceberg," Guadagno said Monday morning during a news conference at Fulfill's headquarters in Neptune. "But I'm pleased to say today that it's not the end. It's something we can do something about."

More: [NJ asks for statewide curfew and casinos, restaurants to close until further notice](#) ([/story/news/new-jersey/2020/03/16/nj-curfew-coronavirus-prompts-statewide-curfew-gov-murphy/5057576002/](#)).

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Fulfill has partnered with the New Jersey Restaurant & Hospitality Association to provide to-go meals for families who rely on local food pantries. (Photo: Doug Hood)

Fulfill has partnered with the New Jersey Restaurant & Hospitality Association to provide to-go meals for families who rely on local food pantries, Guadagno announced. The food bank provides food to 136,000 people in New Jersey.

Local restaurants will box single meals and Fulfill will pick them up and pay the restaurants a \$5 per meal stipend. Fulfill when then distribute the meals through its network.

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a partnership to their businesses who didn't want to layoff any of their hardworking high school kids," Guadagno said.

"We're changing over this facility to be nothing but grab and go" she said. "We are building boxes right now (that) we deliver to the pantries and you literally just hand out food in bags instead of letting people go through and shop."

More: [To our readers: A letter from the editor about our coronavirus coverage. \(/story/news/2020/03/16/our-readers-letter-editor-our-coronavirus-coverage/5055296002/\)](https://www.app.com/story/news/2020/03/16/our-readers-letter-editor-our-coronavirus-coverage/5055296002/)

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Participating restaurants include McLoone's Restaurants, which operates 11 eateries in New Jersey; Turning Point, with a dozen restaurants in New Jersey; and those run by Chefs International, which operates nine eateries in Monmouth and Ocean counties.

"The word surreal gets used a lot," restaurateur Tim McLoone said. "This feels extraordinarily surreal. We really don't know what's coming, all of us. How do you react? As I'm standing here, I'm thinking about people who are very fragile in our society. We'll just do this as long as we can."

The announcement of the partnership came moments before [Gov. Phil Murphy announced](https://www.app.com/story/news/new-jersey/2020/03/16/nj-curfew-coronavirus-prompts-statewide-curfew-gov-murphy/5057576002/) (/story/news/new-jersey/2020/03/16/nj-curfew-coronavirus-prompts-statewide-curfew-gov-murphy/5057576002/) all casinos, restaurants, bars, movie theaters and gyms must shut down at 8 p.m. March 16 and remain closed until further notice. New Jersey joins New York and Connecticut in such measures.

Restaurants still are permitted [to offer takeout and delivery services.](https://www.app.com/story/news/new-jersey/2020/03/16/nj-coronavirus-curfew-heres-what-know/5058142002/) (/story/news/new-jersey/2020/03/16/nj-coronavirus-curfew-heres-what-know/5058142002/)

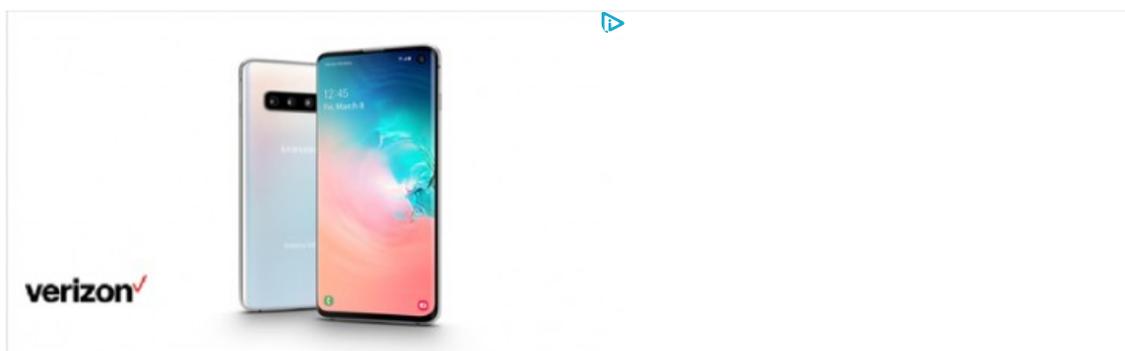
"There's no doubt in my mind that people have to eat, Guadagno said. "And that includes people that are regularly serviced by food banks."

"We are going to give it our all and take it week by week," said Karla Bardinias, Fulfill spokeswoman.

Those interested in donating to Fulfill can visit [fulfillnj.org.](https://fulfillnj.org/) (<https://fulfillnj.org/>)

A lifelong Jersey girl, Sarah Griesemer joined the USA TODAY NETWORK New Jersey more than 15 years ago. Send restaurant tips to sgriesemer@gannettnj.com and follow [@jersey.shore.eats.](https://www.instagram.com/jersey.shore.eats/) (<https://www.instagram.com/jersey.shore.eats/>)

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