



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Photos: <http://bit.ly/47Tcktz>

Credit: Bruno Savoca

Over 1,000 New Yorkers Sit Down to a Massive Outdoor Potluck on a Chelsea Street, Where Everyone Belongs

**From Dumplings to Delis: 'The Longest Table' Event Sparks
Nationwide Movement of Face-to-Face Community Gatherings**

New York, NY, October 6, 2024 - In a groundbreaking display of community spirit, Chelsea hosted a massive neighborhood potluck. The annual "The Longest Table" event, organized by NYCNext, transformed West 21st Street into a vibrant communal space, welcoming over 1,000 New Yorkers to share a meal together – to connect, create community, eat and have fun.

Record-Breaking Longest Table

This year's event marks a significant milestone, doubling the 2022 attendance of 500 participants. The street was lined with a single, continuous table stretching from one end of the block to the other, creating a truly remarkable sight.

"The Longest Table is a reminder of what makes this city so amazing - the people, the diversity, the energy, and the possibilities," said Maryam Banikarim, Co-Founder of NYCNext. "It's pure joy to see more than 1,000 neighbors and friends sit down together to share a meal. We keep hearing about the loneliness epidemic, and events like this are an antidote. They connect us, bring us joy and remind us why we love New York City."

Inspiring Tables Across The Country

The success of "The Longest Table" reflects a growing movement across New York City and beyond to foster real-life connections and shared experiences. From Chelsea to Harlem to Rockefeller Center to Kansas City, San Francisco, Oklahoma City, and even Paris, communities are embracing the power of coming together.

Event Highlights

- **Diverse Participation:** Attendees ranged from local residents to visitors from other boroughs and even international guests.
- **Culinary Variety:** The potluck-style event showcased New York's culinary diversity, featuring everything from homemade dumplings, pork buns, and cakes, to sandwiches from local delis.

- **Community Effort:** Volunteers managed logistics, including street clearance, garbage removal, and setting up chairs and tables.
- **Family-Friendly Atmosphere:** A dedicated children's corner offered activities like sidewalk chalk, toys, and games, encouraging intergenerational connections.
- **Spontaneous Community Chorus:** Over 1,000 attendees joined voices to sing the chorus of "Lean on Me," creating a powerful, unifying experience that embodied the event's spirit of connection and support.

Impact on Participants

According to a 2023 study of The Longest Table by Barnard College Urban Studies Program, 97% of attendees reported connecting with friends and neighbors, 89% made new connections, and 69% said the event reduced their feelings of loneliness.

"The longest table is my favorite day of the year in New York City because it brings such a cornucopia of folks from New York together to sit at one table. It's such a blast, it's such a sense of community," Jerry Brandehoff.

"So I'm from the Midwest originally and we have a long and glorious tradition of potlucks. Potlucks are in my blood. To see a potluck on a New York City street, having been a New Yorker now for almost 20 years of being in New York, is amazing! It feels like my old and it feels like my new home. Connecting with everybody is so glorious. I love it," Casey Clark.

"What I love about the Longest Table is that you get the opportunity to meet people from different neighborhoods in New York. I'm ex-Pat and I love living here but building community is hard, and so it's an opportunity to come together for two hours and meet people in New York you wouldn't meet normally," Ellie Austin.

This gathering comes at a critical time, as recent studies reveal alarming trends in social isolation and mental health:

- Nearly half of Americans (48%) reported feeling lonely at least sometimes in 2024, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey
- Only 54% of Americans feel connected to their local communities, compared to a global average of 78%
- The U.S. Surgeon General has declared loneliness a "public health crisis," with its mortality impact comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

"Events like this remind us that despite our differences, we can have hospitality, congeniality and grace in a world that can feel like it doesn't have much these days. We're all looking to connect and belong," Andy Lerner.

Looking Ahead

As "The Longest Table" continues to grow, it serves as a model for community-building initiatives nationwide. NYCNext, the non-profit behind the event, aims to expand this movement, fostering connections and spreading joy to help rebuild New York City.

For more information about NYCNext and future events, visit longesttablecommunity.org and NYCNext.org