



**CORNELIUS** (right) gives a meal to a building resident.

COURTESY OF YASMIN CORNELIUS

## YASMIN CORNELIUS

**BORN** Harlem

**RESIDES** Harlem

**EDUCATION** Bachelor's in psychology, City College

**FOR THE BOYS** Cornelius lives with her two sons, Tchiyuka Jr., 20, and Ajani, 17.

**IN THE FAMILY** She is related to acclaimed Harlem Renaissance writer Zora Neale Hurston.

**BEST ADVICE** "My mother would tell me not to wait for those to ask for help," Cornelius said. "Just help them."

**PAST WORK** Before joining L&M, Cornelius spent years working in the state and local government, most notably as a district manager for various borough presidents and as a director of intergovernmental relations in the state Senate. She was also deputy director at the Local Initiatives Support Corp., which assists nonprofits in improving housing and economic conditions in distressed neighborhoods.

# Helping keep food on the table

**A development firm VP pivots to delivering meals to residents in need**

BY BRIAN PASCUS

**Y**asmin Cornelius feels a mix of emotions by the time she makes her final daily meal delivery to a family in need during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"It's bittersweet," she said. "I'm glad that we're able to provide food, but every day more and more people need it."

Cornelius, 48, is vice president of community affairs for L&M Development Partners, an affordable-housing developer, and its property-management arm, C&C. Cornelius leads a team that delivers food to low-income families and individuals in the company's portfolio of 16,668 affordable-housing units.

Cornelius came to L&M after a long career in community and state government and housing advocacy.

"It was an easy transition to work with L&M because I'm doing the same thing by making sure we're

addressing the needs of housing for the same people," she said. "It's reaching out to residents and stakeholders to make sure their quality of life is impacted in a positive way."

Cornelius was director of external affairs at L&M for almost six years and became a VP in June 2017. She transitioned to delivering food to residents after the pandemic inspired staff to help out in order to minimize the spread of the virus.

"It's in my nature to help people," she said.

When C&C began its deliveries March 16, Cornelius noted, it was able to cover only one or two buildings, giving out roughly 70 meals the first day. Today C&C feeds about 11,000 families daily across the five boroughs and Newark. To date, 51,000 meals have been delivered.

"It's been a tremendous feat," she said. "Because of the relationships we've had with resident leaders, community organizations and elected officials, we have been able

to connect our residents to healthy and fresh foods."

C&C works with suppliers such as World Central Kitchen, local food banks and nonprofits including City Harvest.

Cornelius has seen the need for the program increase since it began—and she's witnessed just how willing other New Yorkers are to assist with the deliveries.

"People come and chip in and see how they can help," she said. "Volunteers have come to deliver food, and resident leaders help us distribute to their own buildings."

She recalls how the Brownsville Community Culinary Center's assistance caught the eye of local caterer Collective Fare, which began to cook for all of C&C's Brownsville homes. Now one of C&C's senior citizen buildings has hot meals delivered every afternoon, including for the homebound elderly.

"It's really a village effort," Cornelius said. ■

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