

POLLSTAR

Rock and Wrap It Up!

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It all started with [The Black Crowes](#) and pot.

[Chris Robinson of The Black Crowes](#)

The Fillmore, Detroit, Mich.
December 6, 2008

One night in the summer of 1993, Syd Mandelbaum was backstage at Jones Beach in Wantagh, N.Y., picking up leftover catering food after a show to deliver to a local soup kitchen.

It was common practice at Jones Beach, an idea cooked up by promoter Ron Delsener during a meeting with Mandelbaum a few years earlier.

Herb Robinson, the venue's backstage manager, called Mandelbaum over to show him The Black Crowes' contract, which included a section in the rider that requested a half ounce of pot in each dressing room.

"I looked at Herb and said, 'How can they do that?' and he said, 'Well, what they're doing is making everybody know that they are in favor of having liberalization of marijuana laws,'" Mandelbaum told *Pollstar*.

"Well, it struck me like a thunderbolt," Mandelbaum said. "I said, 'Herb, what if I want to feed people? Can I put that in the contract?'"

"And he looked at me and said, 'Syd, that is a great idea.' And that's how Rock and Wrap It Up! was born."

Mandelbaum is a scientist by trade and headed the American team that in 1993 disproved Anna Anderson's claim that she was Anastasia, daughter of Czar Nicholas II. He was inspired to fight hunger by his parents who survived the Holocaust after almost starving to death in concentration camps as teenagers.

"My parents have been great role models for me," Mandelbaum said. "Their will to live allowed me to be born [after] so many people died and there were so few survivors. I feel like I owe it to the future to honor what my parents did in the past."

The nonprofit, anti-poverty think tank Rock and Wrap It Up! was launched nationally in 1994.

"We starting asking bands if we could be in their rider," Mandelbaum said. "And they said yes! Which blew us away."

Mandelbaum explained that if a band wants to get involved, the first step is to put in their rider a statement that says: "All edible leftover food from our tour that is prepared but not served cannot go into landfills; it must feed the hungry. Rock and Wrap It Up! will arrange for the recovery."

“So, put it in the rider, give us a contact person, send us the itinerary and then speak to the caterer. Tell them that this is a Rock and Wrap It Up! tour, and we do the rest,” Mandelbaum said.

Once the caterer knows the band does not want its food thrown out, the caterer packs it up and volunteers pick it up and deliver it to a food bank or shelter.

The first artists to sign on with Rock and Wrap It Up! included [The Rolling Stones](#), [Aerosmith](#), [Bruce Hornsby](#), [Phish](#), [Michael Bolton](#) and [Nine Inch Nails](#).

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[Phish](#)

Phish improvises at New York City's Radio City Music Hall.
May 21, 2000

Mandelbaum said the organization was able to get 15 cities covered within a week of launching.

Rock and Wrap It Up! has worked with more than 150 bands and now covers almost 80 percent of all cities that bands play – more than 500 cities. The organization has grown to more than 5,000 volunteers and works with a national database of more than 43,000 shelters and places of need.

In 1997, Dan Glickman, the former U.S. secretary of agriculture, contacted Mandelbaum and asked, “How can we help you feed America?”

The Rock and Wrap It Up! school program was launched and hundreds of schools throughout America now feed their community’s hungry through school-generated food that is prepared but not served or sold.

In May 2003, the organization expanded again after Mandelbaum received an e-mail from Brooke Maroth, the wife of Detroit Tigers pitcher Mike Maroth (now with the Toronto Blue Jays).

Maroth said her husband always told her there was a lot of food leftover at the clubhouse after major league baseball games. She asked, “Can we feed the hungry of Detroit with this food?”

A month after receiving the e-mail, the Detroit Tigers became the first team to donate its leftover food to the hungry. Under Sports Wrap, the organization now has 30 sports franchises donating food, sometimes including concession food that’s not sold, to Rock and Wrap it Up! volunteers and agencies throughout the U.S.

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[Joe Perry and Steven Tyler of Aerosmith](#)

After seeing a large number of senior citizens using hunger agency services, Rock and Wrap It Up! worked closely with U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson and Sen. Chuck Schumer to create the Federal Food Donation Act of 2008. It passed unanimously in the House and Senate and was signed into law in June by President Bush. The act encourages federal buildings in America that either have restaurants or cafeterias to feed the hungry with the leftover, unused food rather than throwing it away.

Mandelbaum said that one of Rock and Wrap It Up's future goals is to ask all 50 governors to follow the lead of the federal buildings and donate all leftover food from state buildings to the community's hungry.

Mandelbaum recently appeared on the "VH1 Rock of Love Charm School," hosted by Sharon Osbourne. [Ozzy](#) and Sharon have been big supporters of Rock and Wrap It Up! for many years and Sharon asked Mandelbaum to teach a lesson at the school on charity in an episode that aired in late 2008.

"One of the lessons we were teaching the girls on 'Charm School' was about giving back," Sharon Osbourne told *Pollstar*. "You don't need to have a lot of money to do it, just a little time and initiative. If you give a homeless person a chance to clean themselves up (take a shower, brush their teeth, shave, etc.) and give them a good meal, it's a step towards giving them their self-respect back again."

After the episode aired, someone saw it in Germany and e-mailed Mandelbaum to say that they were in the music industry and wanted to know how to feed the people of Germany with rock leftovers.

Rock and Wrap It Up! has worked with Israel, Canada and the U.K. in the past and after signing on with Germany, wants to continue to move forward and think globally. Mandelbaum said Rock and Wrap It Up! would eventually like to get the other super powers of G8 to follow the lead of the U.S. in donating food from federal buildings to their nation's hungry rather than to a landfill.

Rock and Wrap It Up! has also jumped on the green wagon, asking bands that don't use the soap and shampoo from their hotel rooms to donate the unused supplies along with the leftover food after shows as a way of greening the country and fighting poverty.

"It's something that takes so little effort for the artist," Sharon Osbourne said. "They can ask their crew to bring their hotel soaps and leftover food from their bus. Catering can wrap up leftover food from the show instead of throwing it away. You can have bands donate leftover items from their riders. Rock and Wrap it Up! will come pick it all up. It doesn't tax the artist at all."

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[The Adventures Of Ozzy & Sharon](#)

Sharon Osbourne clasps a hand over husband Ozzy's mouth as they arrive for the Classic Rock awards in central London.
November 3, 2008

Rock and Wrap It Up! is now working with the Grand Hyatt Hotel chain and the Langham hotel chain to pick up tissues, toilet paper, unopened shampoo and conditioners and soaps after a guest checks out.

"And that's been an incredible way of fighting poverty because our mission is very simple," Mandelbaum said. "Our mission is this: The more assets we give to agencies that fight poverty, the more money they have left over to hire more tutors, more social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and job placement counselors to actually treat the root causes of why people are poor."

Fifteen years after launching the organization, all leftover food and concessions at Nikon at Jones Beach Theatre that is prepared but not used still goes to feed the hungry, regardless of whether a band is signed up with Rock and Wrap It Up. Mandelbaum encourages artists and individuals to get involved as well as other venues.

“The important thing to stress now is we’re going to go into a two-year period of incredible economic downturn,” Mandelbaum said. “There is going to be so much need so the more that we inculcate people now so they can make a difference, the better it will be for the whole county.”