

Community Food

A Resource Publication for New York's Emergency Food Programs

Issue 7, Jan. 2003

Thanksgiving Highlights Increased Hunger

Hunger Action coordinates the Thanksgiving Action Against Hunger each year in order to raise awareness of hunger and generate donations to food programs. This year, more than 40 organizations and several hundred individuals organized activities such as food drives, fasts, letter writing campaigns, petitions, community meals and educational forums.

As part of this year's event, Hunger Action released the results of its statewide survey of over 200 Emer-

gency Food Programs. The survey found that use of Emergency Food Programs increased by 27% statewide comparing September 2001 and 2002. Over 70% of EFPs throughout the state reported an increase in program use over the last year. Programs attributed the increase to: (1) the poor economy; (2) low wages; (3) job loss and business closures; (4) reduction in the number of hours or days people work; and (5) the ripple effects caused by the World Trade Center attack, among other things.

About 80% of programs experienced an increase in the number of working poor people, with 71% of programs reporting an increase in the guests citing a recent job loss. Two-thirds reported an increase in the number of children using their program, and 84% expect the demand for emergency food to increase in the next six months.

Other studies by the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) and the NYC Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCA) found similar trends.



Photo courtesy of the Queens Ledger.

Community Supported Agriculture: A Farmer's Point of View

By Janet Britt
Buttermilk Falls Organic Farm in Schaghticoke, NY

Community Supported Agriculture provides an opportunity for consumers and community members to form a closer and more direct link to the farms in their communities. Consumers agree to support the farm by buying a "share" of the harvest. In general, farm members, or "shareholders", pay for at least part of the share cost when they sign up for food in the winter. Each shareholder then receives a bag or box of produce each week during the summer and fall, containing whatever is ready to harvest from the farm. Some farms offer additional shares of meat, fruit or other locally produced products.

The benefits include: access to the freshest, tastiest produce available at a reasonable cost, developing a relationship with the farmer and other community members, establishing a connection to land, and the knowledge that your food is being grown in an environmentally sustainable manner. The benefits to the farmer include access to capital early in the season, a sure market for their agricultural production and getting to know their customers who often become their friends.

CSA farms are quite variable in the details of how they are organized. Some farms market strictly as a CSA, but on other farms the CSA may be one of several marketing outlets. Farms also vary in the numbers...*Continued on p. 6*

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In this issue...

Index

Page 1...Thanksgiving Update; Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Page 3...Thanksgiving Update continued; Hunger Action Mini-Grants

Page 4...Child and Adult Care Food Program

Page 5...Hunger Awareness Day; Update on Food Stamps

Page 6...CSA continued; A Heart Healthy Diet

Page 7...Hunger Action Calendar

Page 8...Food Stamp Meeting in Hudson Valley, Membership Coupon

Dear Friends:

Welcome to the seventh edition of *Community Food News*. This edition contains many important changes that have transpired since our last newsletter. In response to increased phone calls for emergency food, Hunger Action Network conducted a statewide survey of food pantries and soup kitchens. Survey results showed a 27% increase in the use of food programs when comparing the month of September in 2001 and 2002. Hunger Action reported these survey results in conjunction with anti-hunger organizers across the state as part of the Thanksgiving Action Against Hunger on Monday, November 25, 2002. Hundreds of people participated in the event, bringing attention to hunger and promoting increased donations and funding for Emergency Food Programs.

Many EFPs also reported a decline in community donations. In times such as these where demand is going up and resources may be going down, it is hard not to wonder, where do we go from here? One possible way to help is to consider promoting the federal nutrition programs to your clients. For example, a family of four can earn up to an additional \$465 a month if they apply for food stamps! Hunger Action can provide you with brochures on federal nutrition programs or we can conduct a workshop at your program. Or you may want to become involved in one of our Department of Social Services Coalitions where we work with local groups and DSS for a more just welfare system. Check out our brand-new calendar on page 7 for other ideas.

Hunger Action is pleased to announce that we plan to distribute about a dozen mini-grants worth around \$5,000 to organizations interested in starting a community food project such as a community garden or food rescue program. See page 3 to find out how you can apply.

We also want to include your thoughts in this newsletter. Please inform us if you know of a great program that has helped people in your community. We also welcome general comments and feedback for publication in this newsletter. Please look at *Community Food News* as a way to communicate with other food providers and to voice any of your own concerns about hunger related issues.

Again, thanks for the invaluable work that you do!

Together, we can end hunger!

Sheila McCarthy & Susannah Pasquantonio
Community Food Coordinators

Community Food News is brought to you by the Community Food and Nutrition Program of the Hunger Action Network of New York State. The Hunger Action Network is a statewide membership organization of direct food providers, low-income New Yorkers, religious groups, anti-hunger advocates, and concerned citizens whose goal is to end hunger and address its roots causes, including poverty, in New York State.

Thanksgiving Highlights Hunger

...continued from page 1

USCM found increased requests for emergency food in every city across the nation surveyed, with an average increase of 19%. 48% of those seeking food assistance were either children or their parents, with 38% of adults employed. There was also increased need among elderly persons. USCM recommended that the federal government help alleviate hunger by increasing benefit levels and participation rates in the Food Stamp Program; raising minimum wages to living wages, and enacting policies to create more jobs and increase household incomes.

NYCCAH's report, *Hunger Among Hidden Victims*, found that NYC's soup kitchens and food pantries fed 45% more people in 2002 than in 2000. The agencies were forced to turn away an estimated 349,776 New Yorkers (of whom 84,672 were children and 19,432 were senior citizens), a 241% increase overall since 2000. See www.nyccah.org for the full report.

Doreen Wohl, Executive Director of the West Side Campaign Against Hunger, noted, "Even before Sept. 11, our pantry fed an increasing number of working



Ms. Pham, Hunger Action E.D., and Rev. Maxwell of Holy Apostles at Thanksgiving event.

people who just didn't earn enough to feed their families. But since Sept. 11, we have fed a staggering number of people who either lost their jobs entirely or lost sig-

nificant parts of their income in the aftermath of the attacks. It is no wonder that we will feed 69% more people here in 2002 than we did in 2000."

In addition to the increased demand for food, Hunger Action's survey highlighted the decrease in food and monetary donations to EFPs. Over half of Emergency Food Programs reported that they experienced a decrease in monetary donations in the last year. The \$6 to \$10 billion state budget deficit could potentially mean more cuts to EFP funding. Since large deficits have previously been solved by cutting social programs, advocates urged legislators to close corporate tax loopholes and make personal tax incomes more fair as an alternative way of generating revenues.

"Cutting State funding to EFPs would make it impossible for food pantries and soup kitchens to keep up with the increasing number of households utilizing these services," stated Rev. Jim Reisner, of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Albany.

The Thanksgiving Actions and survey resulted in food donations and public education via media coverage from Channel 2 CBS, Regional News Network, Associated Press, Gannett, the Legislative Gazette, Hoy, New York Public Radio, WABC 880, Inside Albany, WBAI 99.5, Queens Courier, and many others.

For a full copy of the report, contact Hunger Action or go to our website at www.hungeractionnys.org. Consider contacting the local media in your community and asking them to run a story about the hunger survey and

Hunger Action Mini-Grants

Hunger Action will be awarding grants to Emergency Food Programs, schools, and community-based organizations that aim to develop a community food project that increases low-income New Yorkers access to nutritious food. Some examples of innovative projects include community gardens, rooftop and container gardening, food rescue/gleaning programs, food buying clubs, and Community Supported Agriculture projects, etc.

Since these types of innovative projects usually require start-up funds, Hunger Action will be awarding approximately a dozen mini-grants around \$5,000 each. A request for proposal application will soon be posted on our website at www.hungeractionnys.org. If you are interested in applying for a grant, or have any questions, please contact Hunger Action at (212) 741-8192 or (518) 434-7371.

Recipe for Healthy Children: How the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Supports the Children in Your Community!

In these times of economic hardship and childhood poverty, parents, educators, advocates and policy makers are searching for solutions and answers. One often overlooked asset for bringing federal funds into our state and the local economy is called the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). CACFP supports the needs of working families and employers by providing reimbursement for meals and snacks at various child care settings and by providing participating child care professionals with the most up to date training.

What Is The Child and Adult Care Food Program?

CACFP is a federally funded nutrition education and meal reimbursement program, provided through the NYS Department of Health, that funds nutritious and safely prepared meals and snacks to children in a variety of settings.

Types of Child Care Programs That Can Receive Meal Reimbursements Through CACFP

Family Day Care Homes: A private home which is licensed/registered or legally exempt and provides care for a small number of children may receive reimbursement for up to 2 meals and one snack a day for each preschool child. Federal Welfare Reform established two tiers of reimbursement rates for day care homes: Tier I and Tier II. Tier I homes are those located in low-income areas or where the provider/children's families meet certain income guidelines. All other homes are classified as Tier II and are reimbursed at a lower rate. A family child care provider serving six low-income children could be eligible to receive as much as \$4,500 a year for meals and snacks served.

Child Care Centers: Licensed or legally exempt nonresidential, public or private nonprofit child care centers, and for-profit child care centers (receiving child care compensation for at least 25% of enrolled children under Title XX of the Social Security Act) can receive meal reimbursements for up to 2 meals and a snack each day for each preschool child. A child care center serving 25 mostly low-income children could be eligible to receive up to \$21,000.00 a year for meals and snacks served.

After-school Programs: Thanks to recent federal legislation, after-school programs in New York State serving school-aged children up to 19 can now be reimbursed for serving at risk supper and snacks through CACFP.

CACFP: A Financial Resource for New York State

In 2001, New York CACFP provided approximately \$120 million dollars in food program funds to serve 250,000 participants each working day. The funding comes without any state matching requirements and with separate federally funded state administrative funds.

CACFP reimbursements also support New York's agriculture and dairy industries. All breakfast, lunch and supper meals reimbursed by CACFP must contain fluid milk and a required amount of vegetables and/or fruit. CACFP encourages providing fresh fruits/vegetables and supporting local farmers' markets.



Unfortunately, many child care providers do not know about the Child and Adult Care Food Program. In New York State, only about half of the eligible child care homes participate. There are hundreds of programs serving children in low-income areas that have not yet taken advantage of this resource. For each additional 1000 children participating in the program, over a half million dollars in reimbursement would be injected into the state economy every year!

To spread the word about this great community resource, ask your guests if they operate home child care and encourage them to apply for CACFP funds! For more information, contact SENSES at 518-463-5576.

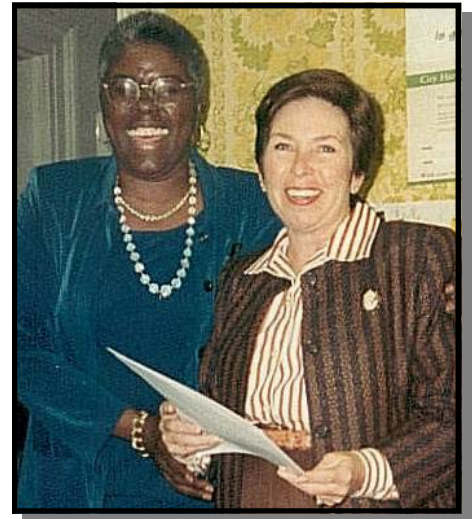
For more information on the NYS Child and Adult Care Food Program call 1-800-942-3858 or go to www.health.state.ny.us (search for CACFP) or go to www.fns.usda.gov.

Join Us on Hunger Awareness Day, Thursday, March 20th

Thursday, March 20, 2003 is the 13th annual Hunger Awareness Day. The overall purpose of Hunger Awareness Day is to raise awareness of hunger and bring about long-term solutions. As the hunger crisis continues to grow in our state, advocates fear that hunger has become a widely accepted problem by the general community. Therefore, it is crucial that lower-income individuals, advocates, students, faith communities, elected officials, emergency food providers and their clients join together to strengthen this year's call to end hunger on Hunger Awareness Day.

Please consider playing a role in the day by organizing a local event in your community. Some ideas for effective, educational activities can include: inviting elected representatives to volunteer at your food program; organizing a Children's Anti-Hunger Poster Project in which children draw pictures about hunger for display at the State Capitol; organizing a community forum on hunger; soliciting local media to run a series on hunger related issues, and writing letters to elected officials. Letters to the editor of local newspapers have a very good chance of being published, especially when the issue impacts the local community.

Last year, over 70 groups participated in Hunger Awareness Day and the event lead to many food donations and media coverage. Help us make this year's event just as effective. For more information or to sign up as a co-sponsor, please contact Hunger Action Network. Together, we can put an end to hunger!



CAMBA at Hunger Awareness Day

Update on Food Stamps: Great News for Your Guests!

In our last edition of *Community Food News*, we provided information about major changes made to the Food Stamp Program as part of the Farm Bill that was passed in May 2002. The changes highlighted included expansion of the 6-month reporting system, increases in the standard deduction, expansion of eligibility to more legal immigrants, and changes in transitional food stamps. Below are some other significant changes that could mean that more of your guests will be able to benefit from food stamps.

As of October 1, 2002, households with a disabled member can have up to \$3000 in resources such as bank accounts, stocks or bonds and still be eligible for food stamps. In addition, child support is now treated as an income exclusion rather than a deduction when determining an applicant's income eligibility. There are other new income and resource exclusions, including foster care payments, individual development accounts (IDAs), adoption assistance payments, most educational grants and loans, and savings accounts worth up to \$500 for children under 21. These exclusions expand eligibility to even more

people.

Another important change in food stamps concerns single "able bodied adults" without dependents, also know as ABAWDS. People who fall under this category generally can only get food stamps for 3 months in a 3-year period. Before the passage of the Farm Bill, districts were not obligated to help ABAWDS maintain their eligibility. But thanks to an option available to states under the Farm Bill, New York has agreed to offer a qualifying work/training opportunity to ABAWDS reaching their 3-month time limit so that they can maintain their food stamp benefits. However, such assistance will be provided only upon request. Please inform your guests about this new regulation so that they may benefit from it.

Informing your guests about the changes listed above could encourage them to apply and assist you in meeting the increasing demand for food. Hunger Action has flyers available for distribution. If your guests have any specific questions about food stamps, feel free to refer them to Hunger Action's Emergency Food Help-Line at 1-866-526-2978.

CSA: A Farmer's Perspective

...continued from page 1

of members (from 10 to 700), in the logistics of delivering the produce, and the extent of member involvement.

I have been operating a CSA farm for 15 years in the Capital District of New York. Our farm was initiated by consumers in the area looking for organically grown produce. We farm on leased land and usually have about 100 members each year. Many families have been members for years. I grow about 3 acres of certified organic vegetables and market all of my production to the CSA members. The CSA model works well for me. I enjoy growing a large variety of vegetables, flowers, herbs and fruits. I have gotten to know most of my members and have formed wonderful friendships. CSA also offers a way to educate consumers about agricultural, food policy, and land use issues. If we are to preserve farmland, especially here in the northeast, and work to reduce the use of toxic pesticides, consumers need to be involved and value local farms and the food they produce.

CSA is not necessarily for everyone. Not all farmers want or are set up to grow such a large variety of produce. We can often do a better job producing fewer crops on a larger scale. A CSA farmer also should enjoy the interaction with shareholders. CSAs have attracted many new farmers, which is good. However, a farmer needs to have good growing skills, a business plan and adequate financing to get started. It can be very disappointing for both farmer and shareholder when the farmer lacks skills and training. Not everyone who becomes a CSA member stays with it. Some people cannot adjust their cooking to use what they get in their share each week. Some farms are able to offer their members more choice in the type of vegetables they get each week, which is an ideal arrangement.

CSA allows me to do the kind of farming that I love to do. I enjoy having my members come to the farm and see how the plants grow. When I had some health problems in 2001, CSA members contributed many hours of help to make the season a success. It was a great example of the community we have created over the years.

Contact Hunger Action if you or your guests are interested in purchasing produce from Community Supported Agriculture farmers in New York State.



Lowering Cholesterol With a Heart Healthy Diet

Did you know that one in five people has high cholesterol? That is because anyone can have high cholesterol, even if you are active or thin, young or old. High cholesterol can cause serious health problems such as heart disease and strokes. Fortunately, eating certain “heart healthy” foods can help keep down cholesterol levels. The following is a list of foods that are considered heart healthy:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains, like cereal, rice (brown is the best) and pasta
- Lean red meats, and skinless poultry dishes
- Low fat or skim dairy products
- Lean fish and shellfish
- Beans and peas
- Vegetable oil

The following is a list of foods that are considered high in saturated fat, which the American Heart Association sug-

gests that you eat in moderation:

- Cream and ice cream
- Butter, egg yolks and cheese
- Saturated oils like coconut oil, palm oil and palm kernel oil
- High-fat processed meats like sausage, bologna, salami and hot dogs
- Fatty red meats that aren't trimmed
- Solid fats like shortening, soft margarine and lard
- Fried foods

Some interesting heart healthy recipes can be found at the following website: www.goodnewscholesterol.com/popSurvey.asp. You can also contact the American Heart Association at **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721) to request copies of informational brochures and/or healthy recipes for distribution at your program. If you have any heart healthy recipes for meals that you serve at your food program, please feel free to share them with us.

Community Food News

Increasing Food Stamp Participation in the Hudson Valley

Hunger Action, Nutrition Consortium, SENSES, and others will be holding the next regional Food Stamp Meeting this March in Westchester County. We will provide a general overview of this extremely effective and important Federal Nutrition Program. The meeting will also provide an opportunity for you, your staff, and your clients to become familiar with recent improvements to the Food Stamp Program that expand program eligibility, increase benefit levels, and improve the quality control system. Information about innovative outreach campaigns and existing food stamp resources will also be discussed, along with county specific hunger data and Federal Nutrition Program participation rates for the Hudson Valley region.

Only 50% of New Yorkers who are eligible for food stamps are currently enrolled in the program. Many people do not know that they are eligible and don't know how much food stamps can help. For example, a family of four can earn up to an additional \$465 a month if they apply for food stamps!

Please contact Hunger Action for more information or to cosponsor a meeting in your community.

Hunger Action Network of New York State Membership Coupon

Yes, I want to help end the root causes of hunger by becoming a member:

\$30 Individual

\$5 (low/fixed income)

\$40 sm. organization

\$75 med. org.

\$150 lg. org.

Please send me information about volunteer opportunities _____

Name _____ Organization _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Phone (day) _____ Evening _____ Fax _____ E-mail _____

Please return to the Hunger Action Network of NYS, 94 Central Ave., #2, Albany, NY 12206

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