



Community Food

A Resource Publication for New York's Emergency Food Programs

Community Garden Project Blooms at Schoharie CAP

Issue 10, June 2004

In 2002, Schoharie County Community Action Program (SCCAP) made its first attempt in many years to initiate a community garden. Our efforts were made possible with the support of many cosponsors and the community as a whole. The Schoharie County Farm Bureau plowed the land while Cornell Cooperative Extension tested the soil and was available for consultation. Schoharie County Planning and Development Agency (SCPDA) donated $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre of land and the village of Cobleskill donated the water. Many local greenhouses and farms provided seedling donations.

In 2003, we were able to expand the garden and provide fresh vegetables to Schoharie County's network of 12 food pantries. A one-time grant from Hunger Action enabled SCCAP to purchase equipment and supplies such as a rototiller, garden tools, and a shed for storage, materials for tomato trellises, seeds, and hoses.

SCPDA donated land again. Plants donated by local greenhouses were valued at more than \$600!



Schoharie County Community Action Program Garden

This summer begins our third year of gardening, and there is still great enthusiasm for this project in our small town. Countywide participation and collaborative partners make this program a big success! Staff and over 30 volunteers prepared and planted the garden. We put in more than 220 hours of weeding and watering. All our efforts provided food for 285 families and the yield was tremendous!

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Plant-a-Row for the Hungry Takes Root in Southern Tier

“What am I going to do with all this zucchini?” For some vegetable gardeners, this is the million dollar question come late summer. Others ask the same question in reference to anything from tomatoes to green beans to rhubarb.

With nearly 1 million New Yorkers visiting food pantries and soup kitchens each week, we have a simple answer for gardeners with abundance: Bring the extra produce to emergency food programs! In fact, we'd like gardeners to grow specifically for their neighbors

in need!

The concept, of course, is not new. Generous gardeners have been sharing their bounties for years with people in need. Starting in 1995, the Garden Writers Association (www.gardenwriters.org) helped support and formalize the process of garden donations in many parts of the country with the “Plant-a-Row for the Hungry” (PAR) program. Since that time, PAR has collected nearly 5 million pounds of fresh and nutritious garden goodies. *Continued on page 5...*

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Dear Friends:

Welcome to the tenth edition of *Community Food News*! This edition contains announcements and updates about exciting spring projects which are bringing fresh locally grown produce to New Yorkers across the state.

Hunger Action recently kicked off a round of regional community food security listening and organizing trainings in Albany, with highlights on page 3. We plan on traveling to the Southern Tier, Western NY, and New York City this fall and winter. We also included our new nutrition education section on pages 7-8. Feel free to make copies of the handouts for your guests, too, or contact us for more copies.

Again, thanks for the invaluable work that you do! Together, we can end hunger!

Sheila McCarthy & Susannah Pasquantonio



Community Food News is brought to you by the Community Food and Nutrition Program of the Hunger Action Network of NYS. Hunger Action 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 NYS.

Senate Agriculture Committee Approves Child Nutrition Reauthorization

According to the Food Research Action Center (FRAC), the Senate Agriculture Committee supports a child nutrition reauthorization bill that is similar to the House-passed bill (H.R. 3873), but contains some additional program improvements. Such improvements include increasing access to programs for low-income children, enhancing the nutritional quality of meals, improving nutrition education, and providing additional resources to homeless, runaway and migrant children. In a joint letter, FRAC and more than 20 national groups expressed their support for the Senate Committee bill.

The Senate bill adds six new "Lugar Pilot" states (CO, MS, LA, MI, OR, OH). It also expands participation to private, non-profit sponsors in all pilot states and phases in mandatory direct certification for free or reduced price meals for food stamp households. It also provides for a Child and Adult Care Program (CACFP) pilot that expands area eligibility for family child care in rural areas by decreasing the threshold of free and reduced price meals from 50 to 40%. It even establishes a three-year summer food rural transportation pilot for 60 sponsors in five states. The bill also continues and expands the current fresh fruit and vegetable pilots with special emphasis on serving children in low-income areas. Subject to Congressional funding, it allows up to five states (or subdivisions within the states), to offer free meals to households with incomes up to 185% of poverty.

Members of Congress will be home for the Memorial Day recess (May 22 to June 1). Shortly thereafter, the Senate is likely to vote on the child nutrition reauthorization. Once the Senate passes the bill, it will go to conference committee with the House. It appears that the Senate bill includes more improvements and support for child nutrition programs than the House bill. An ongoing concern is that Congress will pay for the program expansions by increasing the verification of children in the school meal programs or removing any safeguards that protects vulnerable children in these programs.

For more information on Child Nutrition Reauthorization, go to www.frac.org or contact the Nutrition Consortium of NYS at (518) 436-3757 ext. 16.

HANNYS Kicks Off Regional Food Meetings in the Capital District

How do we increase access to healthy food in our inner cities and rural areas? How do we form simple connections between all the locally grown food in our region and our lower-income communities?

These were just a few of the many questions raised at HANNYS' first regional Community Food Security Meeting held in Troy on April 3rd. The 45 participants included gardeners, government workers, farm groups, food pantry providers, low-income community residents and leaders, and local schools, among others. The diverse group shared ideas and developed next steps to bridge the gap between local food and lower-income folks. With a little follow-through, we will have some affordable and nutritious results!

The day began with a look at what shapes our food system, which is the web of connections that brings produce from the farm to our families' tables. Typically, our food travels 1500 miles in the United States. It comes from the farm to processors, to central distributors, to our supermarkets, and then finally to us, the consumers. Yet, for 10% of New Yorkers who lack access to enough food to meet their needs, this food system is not working. The food system also challenges New York's small farmers who struggle to compete with corporate agribusinesses for markets.

During the meeting, the New York Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NYSAWG) shared a report that showed some of the shocking imbalances in the Capital District's food system. In the counties of Schenectady, Saratoga, Albany, Rensselaer and Greene, farmers earn \$117 million dollars each year even though the region's consumers purchase \$1.9 billion in food. This leaves a \$1.8 billion gap between what local consumers spend and revenue received by local farmers. If they captured a mere 10% of that gap, Capital District farmers would have an increase in revenue of \$180 million annually!

In the afternoon, volunteers from Mediation Matters facilitated hour long Break-Out Sessions in which smaller groups discussed their concerns, potential assets, and next steps toward making local food connections. Participants shared their ideas with the larger group and came up with seven main themes on which to focus our efforts in the future: *Food education, Food Pantries and Local Food, Farm Connections, Community Food Assessments, Produce Affordability, Youth Programs, and Food Policy*. Ideas ranged from expanding Grow an Extra Row Campaigns to creating more affordable farmers' markets and coordinating youth cooking competitions.

This summer, many meeting participants will meet again to determine what resources are available for their local food endeavors. Once they have the tools they need, Hunger Action will help them get started. Some meeting participants are already initiating local food projects.

The Capital District Meeting was the first of a series of meetings that will occur throughout New York State over the fall and winter of 2004. Staff will conduct meetings in New York City, Western New York, and the Southern Tier. If you think your region is ripe for a Community Food Meeting, contact Hunger Action to learn more.

HANNYS' Annual Membership Meeting Set for Monday, September 27 in New York City

Join Hunger Action for its next Annual Membership meeting on Monday, September 27 in New York City. The conference will feature various workshops, including an informative one about Community Food Security and Innovative Food Projects. This will be a great opportunity to network and strategize with other organizations about the most important hunger-related issues facing food pantries and low-income New Yorkers. We can provide transportation assistance and childcare if necessary. Spread the word and please contact us if you or someone you know are interested in attending.

Community Supported Agriculture: A Local Source for Fresh Produce

As many of you already know, it is sometimes difficult to provide fresh produce to food program guests. It is perishable and requires refrigeration. It is not always easy to acquire. Usually, whatever is available was harvested weeks beforehand, making it not so “fresh” after all. This is unfortunate because fresh produce is one of the healthiest foods that a person can eat. Fruits and vegetables are full of vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber, and they’re free of unhealthy fats and added sugars.

The good news is that in recent years several EFPs have taken advantage of a relatively new source of fresh produce: local farms that run Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs. CSA is a way of purchasing a wide variety of fresh, seasonal produce directly from a farmer, cutting out the middle steps of distribution and retail. In a typical CSA, a family “joins” a CSA farm for a full growing season (usually June–November) for a set fee. In return, the family receives a variety of seasonal vegetables every week-- whatever food the farmer harvests divided equally among the CSA members. For example, if a farmer harvests 200 pounds of carrots one week, and 100 families are members of his farm, each family receives 2 pounds of carrots that week, in addition to the other vegetables that are harvested. The CSA system benefits everyone: members get the freshest possible food at a lower price than they would at the supermarket; and the farmer gets a higher price than if s/he were to sell wholesale.

There are several ways that EFPs can work with CSA’s. Some EFPs might want to purchase a few CSA shares, and distribute the weekly produce to their guests. Another option is to connect guests with the CSA directly; many CSA’s offer subsidies or sliding-scale fees to ensure that low-income people can join the membership. When CSA produce is distributed to members (usually at the farm, or at a community site, once per week) there is often some left over. Most CSA’s are glad to donate this extra good food to a food pantry or soup kitchen.

Organizations have also been successful in arranging for local businesses to pay low-income families’ membership fees to a CSA. Banks are often a good option for this, especially in rural areas where the banks have a commitment to seeing local farms do well.

There are more ambitious options as well. The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts established its own CSA farm in the 1990’s. 50% of the produce grown is sold to families as CSA shares, and the remaining 50% is donated to the Food Bank. Thanks to many community volunteers who help with everything from harvesting to weeding, the farm is financially self-sufficient from its sales and therefore does not need additional donations to grow the tons of food that it provides to the Food Bank each year.

If you’d like to locate a CSA farm near you, contact Benjamin Shute at Hunger Action Network, 212-741-8192 x5#, or bshute@hungeractionnys.org.

SFSP: Free Meals For Kids All Summer Long!

The Summer Food Service Program provides free nutritious food to children of all income levels age eighteen and younger during the summer months. This program is a vital resource for many New York families and it can help prevent childhood hunger throughout our state, yet it is greatly underutilized. The number of income eligible children who participate in SFSP drops dramatically when compared to the number of children participating in free or reduced priced School Meals. Thousands of children go without enough healthy meals during the summer months.

To increase participation, please encourage the children in your area to utilize SFSP! For a list of all open sites in your community or for a promotional flyer, contact Hunger Action Network or the Nutrition Consortium of NYS at 518-436-8757 ext. 16. As of July, you can call the SFSP hotline at 1-800-201-3694 for a list of local sites. You can also increase program participation by becoming a site sponsor to serve more children. Site sponsors are reimbursed for the cost of meals and bring federal dollars into communities. If you are interested in sponsorship, please contact Hunger Action.

Community Garden Project Blooms at Schoharie CAP cont.

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We harvested more than 900 pounds of tomatoes, close to 30 dozen peppers, 160 heads of broccoli, and dozens and dozens of squash, cucumbers, and corn. We even had a few pumpkins.

If you are interested in establishing a community garden in your area, it is a good idea to start identifying local potential partners first. Starting out small is recommended. Even starting a smaller scale container garden project at your pantry or soup kitchen can make a big difference and show people how to grow their own food. People have grown a lot of produce in 5 pound buckets or even in plastic swimming pools. Many gardens can operate off of donations, but fundraisers and small grants are always helpful. We wish all those interested in starting a garden good luck and happy growing!

By Linda Ostrander, Food Pantry Coordinator, Schoharie County Community Action Program

For those interested in starting a community garden, a potential funding resource for 2005 is Project Orange Thumb-Fiskars Garden Tools, located at 780 Carolina Street, Sauk City, Wisconsin, 53583. They can be reached at (608) 294-4577 or check out their website at www.orangethumb.fiskars.com. For more information, contact Hunger Action.



Plant-a-Row for the Hungry Takes Root in Southern Tier cont.

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In 2003, the Food Bank of the Southern Tier in Elmira started a two-county PAR campaign with the help of food pantries and Cornell Cooperative Extension. The group developed an attractive brochure that expressed the need for fresh produce (over 80,000 different people were served by the Food Bank in 2002) and listed drop-off sites. Brochures were distributed at garden events, churches, and garden centers starting in May. The Food Bank acted as one of the drop-off sites, provided pantries with materials, including tax credit receipts for donors, and collected reports on the pounds received.

In its first year, PAR in the Southern Tier gathered 4,243 pounds and was the leading campaign in New York State. The Food Bank has expanded PAR to include 3 counties in 2004 and is planning to work more closely with the media to promote the campaign. The target is to bring in at least 10,000 pounds of produce! Our hope is to make PAR an annual resource of local produce, along with donated harvests from area farmers and the Food Bank garden.

For aspiring PAR campaigns, here are some helpful hints from the Southern Tier:

- Start your campaign small!
- Request PAR materials from the Garden Writers Association (1-877-492-2727).
- Utilize contacts with the media, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and businesses to get the word out.
- Publicize PAR throughout the season to remind gardeners.
- Identify multiple drop-off sites with different hours of operation. Food pantries are a good bet.
- Emphasize importance of tracking pounds and developing a goal. This will help build your campaign from one year to the next.

For more information on PAR, please contact Matt Griffin at 607-796-6061 or mgriffin@secondharvest.org. If you would like assistance in promoting PAR via the media, contact Hunger Action.

Matt Griffin, Food Bank of the Southern Tier

Featured Veggie: Broccoli!

Be on the lookout for the first of the season's fresh and tasty New York broccoli. Broccoli is grown throughout New York State, and many people plant it in their home vegetable gardens. Broccoli is a member of the Brassicaceae family of plants, whose other members include cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and kale. All of these plants are referred to as cold crops, and they grow best in cool weather. In New York, broccoli is generally harvested and available from mid-May through the end of December. Broccoli plants often survive some frost. As well as tasting good, broccoli is a nutrition bonanza that provides a wide variety of nutrients, including vitamin C, beta carotene (plant form of vitamin A), and fiber.



Broccoli & Black Bean

Quesadilla

1 cup cooked black beans
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup salsa
1 cup grated cheddar cheese
1 cup cooked, chopped broccoli
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
4 8-inch flour tortillas

1. Mash beans.
2. Add salsa, grated cheese, and chopped broccoli to beans.
3. Heat oil in frying pan on medium.
4. Lay tortilla flat on plate. Using $\frac{1}{4}$ of bean mixture,

fill half of tortilla, folding other half over mixture.
5. Place folded tortilla in pan and cook 3 to 4 minutes, or until lightly browned. Flip and cook second side.
6. Remove from pan and



Makes 8 servings

cut in half.

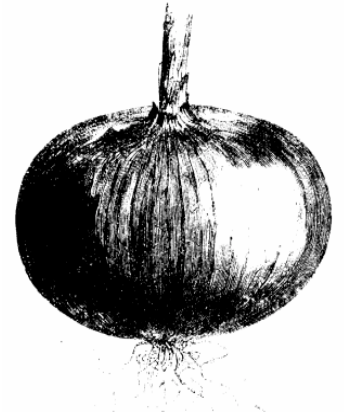
7. Repeat with remaining tortillas.

Fresh broccoli is usually available in heads or bunches. Choose broccoli that is dark green in color, and firm to the touch, with tightly closed buds. Avoid broccoli that has open yellow flowers or that has dry, wilted or yellowed stalks. You can store broccoli in the refrigerator for several days. When you prepare broccoli, use all parts, including the stalks and leaves. If the stalks are tough, you can peel them with a vegetable peeler.



"New York Food of the Month" information produced by Cornell Farm to School Program. For more information, including listings of other New York Food of the Month selections, check out <http://www.cce.cornell.edu/farmto-school>.

Gardening in a Bucket



Growing your own food without the benefit of yard space is fun and easy!

Enjoy growing your own fresh vegetables this summer without a backyard! All you need is a bucket, soil, vegetable seeds and/or plants and a sunny location indoors or out (though outside is preferred). You can grow one vegetable plant or a combination of tomato, pepper, squash and pole beans in a five gallon bucket. It may seem like this is too many plants for one bucket, but these different plants

STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL BUCKET GARDEN

1. Select a bucket that has **not** had any toxic material in it such as building/painting materials or cleaners/chemicals. Drill or nail several holes into the bottom of the bucket or put rocks in the bottom few inches of the bucket to allow for drainage.
2. Fill your bucket with soil. If you are sure of the quality of the soil in your yard you can use that, but a good blended potting soil is rich in nutrients and will work better.
3. Select the plants you want in your bucket. Below are some planting tips for each plant type.
TOMATOES: Cherry, patio or bush varieties work the best. Place your tomato plant in the center of the bucket and stake it. Drive a four foot pole several inches into the soil about 3" away from the stem. Tie the plant loosely to the pole with some type of cloth. One tomato plant per bucket!!!
CUCUMBERS/MELONS/SQUASH: Plant the seeds or plants in the front of your bucket and train them to grow over the side onto your porch, steps, deck or windowsill.
PEPPERS: Place these bush-like plants on either side of the tomato plant.
POLE BEANS: Plant seeds to the rear of the bucket and train the vines to grow up a string tied to the edge of the bucket.
4. Decide where to place your bucket. When you are picking a place, remember that your bucket will need lots of sunshine and water. Try to find a secure place so the bucket cannot be knocked over.

HAPPY GROWING!!



*Getting to the
Root of the
Problem*

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Community Food News

Hunger Action is on the Move: Please Note our Change of Address

Hunger Action has recently moved its New York City office. Please update your records so that we continue to receive your important information. Our new address is 260 W. 36th Street, Suite 504, New York, NY 10018. Our fax, phone, and email are the same. We are also moving our Albany office at the end of June. The new Albany address is 275 State Street, Albany, NY 12210. Please feel free to stop by either office and say hello at any time.

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

Hunger Action Network
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