



Getting to the Root of the Problem GRASSROOTS

The Newsletter of the Hunger Action Network of New York State

February 2007

Faces of Hunger Action Network

Sr. Teresa Fitzgerald is Executive Director of Hour Children, a beacon of light for mothers and their children in Long Island City in Queens.

Hunger Action and Hour Children were first connected when Sr. Tesa participated in a hunger survey of Emergency Food Programs. Running a food program and acting as a site for Food Stamp outreach are just a few of their many programs dedicated to serving the community.



Hour Children is committed to the loving care of incarcerated mothers, ex-offenders, and their children, providing short- and long-term support services. Hour Children was established in 1995 by Sr. Tesa to support incarcerated mothers when in prison and when re-

continued on p. 8

In This Issue of Grassroots...

Hunger Awareness Day	3
Food Policy	4
Better Choice Budget	5
Green Space	6
Summer Food Programs	7
Farm Bill Sign Ons	9
March 13 Lobby Day	12

Spitzer Delivers on Emergency Food, Health Care for Children

Governor Spitzer's proposed budget is the best we have seen since the early days of Governor Cuomo. The Governor is proposing an increase in funding of \$5.15 million for emergency food programs (see article), and the expansion of health care coverage for children and the uninsured. And unlike Governor Pataki, he does not propose cuts in human services and health care for the poor.

The Governor also proposed a number of revenue proposals that Hunger Action has been proposing for years – closing corporate tax loopholes; bulk purchasing of prescription drugs; putting the unclaimed nickels from the bottle bill into the state treasury; and auctioning off (rather than giving away) the carbon emission permits created under the northeast Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

However, key anti-poverty initiatives are missing. For the seventeenth year in a row, there is no proposed increase in welfare benefits. Welfare benefits have

now fallen to below 50% of the federal poverty level and are a key factor in the soaring rate of poverty in the state's major cities. The Governor also fails to embrace universal health care for New York State residents.

Universal Health Care for Children

We support the Governor's proposal to expand income eligibility for Child Health Plus and to reduce the number of uninsured New Yorkers through simplification of the recertification process for Medicaid. However, we wish that the proposal also included simplifying the application process.

For instance, we saw a significant increase in the number of eligible individuals able to access the Medicaid program when a simplified process was followed after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. NY should also eliminate co-pays for low-income New Yorkers. Even modest co-pays discourage people from seeking necessary health care services. The asset test for Medicaid and Family Health Plus should be eliminated.

continued on p. 8

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Notes from the Executive Director..

Dear Hunger Action supporters:

On January 1st, Elliot Spitzer was sworn in as Governor, promising to change things.

The Governor's proposed budget includes some strong improvements. He is proposing universal health care for children in our state. He is supportive of anti-hunger programs, increasing state funding for emergency food. He talked about making sure that welfare to work programs help people escape poverty. He has been supportive of community food security issues such as community gardens and hopefully will endorse the State Food Policy Council. He is proposing many of our progressive revenue options, including closing corporate tax loopholes, bulk purchasing of prescription drugs and reclaiming hundreds of millions of dollars from the bottle bill.

There remain issues we hope the Governor will come to advocate, such as raising welfare grants and enacting true universal health care. In his State of the State address, Governor Spitzer said: "One New York means a state that does not just help get a working parent off the welfare roll, but one that helps lift him out of poverty. That is why we must use the new federal work rules as an opportunity to rethink the way human services are delivered at every level of government and at every stage of life."

We await to see how many of the welfare reforms that anti-poverty groups have pushed for years finally get enacted, including increased access to education and job training, stronger income supports, same day issuances of expedited food stamps and a state food stamp supplement.

Poor people and their advocates are often cut out of the power at the State Capitol. Our voices need to be heard equally with those of special interests before real change can occur. That is why Hunger Action has long been supportive of political reform, including public financing of campaigns, restrictions on lobbyists and expanded voting rights such as same day voter registration, which would greatly help low-income individuals, tenants and young people.

In his State of the State, Governor Spitzer also said: "We will submit a reform package to replace the weakest campaign finance laws in the nation with the strongest... Full public financing must be the ultimate goal of our reform effort. By cutting off the demand for private money, we will cut off the special-interest influence that comes with it."

25 years ago, when Hunger Action was founded, we assumed that food pantries and soup kitchens would be out of business today. Please join us in making our elected officials commit to END HUNGER NOW. One way would be to join us for our statewide Albany day on March 13th.

Sincerely,
Bich Ha Pham
Executive Director



Grassroots is published four times a year by the Hunger Action Network of New York State.

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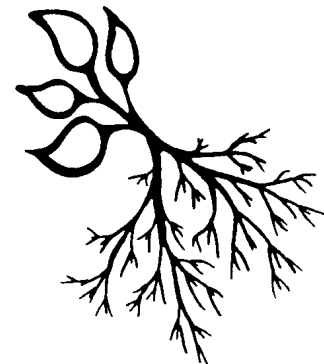
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Hunger Awareness Day!

Take Action - Thursday March 15

On Hunger Awareness Day, New Yorkers organize activities to highlight the devastating problem of hunger in our state.

This year, we are asking the NYS Legislature to Create a Statewide Food Policy Council. We are also supporting Governor Spitzer's Increase in HPNAP funding for Emergency Food Programs in his budget proposal. We had hoped that HPNAP would be funded at over \$30M, but this is a step in the right direction.

Please consider becoming a cosponsor & organizing an event in your community.

Join in the statewide Paper Plate Action: drop off small paper plates at your legislator's office with a hand-written message to support the Food Policy Council & and the increase in HPNAP



Provided by: Jenn Fuentes, Bronx River Art Center

so that New Yorkers plates aren't left empty. You can bring one plate or collect dozens from EFP clients or other community members. This action delivers our message in a creative way! Small paper plates can also be sent through the mail.

There are lots of other events you can conduct. Contact us or go to our website for an Action Packet.

Faith and Hunger Forums: NYC March 7, Buffalo March 10

Hunger Action Network and Bread for the World will be participating in the annual Faith and Hunger conference in Buffalo on Saturday March 10 **Annual Faith and Hunger Conference: Planting the Seeds of Justice** from 9:15 2:00 p.m. at St. Joseph University Church, 3269 Main Street. Raising welfare benefits and the farm bill will be key topics.

HANNYS and BFW will also speak at "Feed the Solution: Ending Hunger through Civic Participation and Advo-

cacy, with Faith Based and Community Empowerment", on Wed. March 7th. It will be at Fordham University Lincoln Center Campus, South Lounge, 113 W. 60th St., at 5:30 PM.

Other speakers will include NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn; Councilman Eric Gioia; Aine Duggan, of the Food Bank; and Rev. Kevin Bean Vicar of St. Bartholomew's Church

For more info, call Craig Murphy, Feed the Solution, 212 316-7585

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Support for Food Policy Council Grows

Assemblyman Felix Ortiz, (Brooklyn) and Senator Cathy Young (Olean) have reintroduced legislation (A 4368 / S 2081) for a New York State Food Policy Council.

The legislation would create a council to develop comprehensive, coordinated state food policies with the goal of providing a plentiful, accessible, affordable, safe and nutritious food supply, comprised of locally produced foods as much as possible, so that all citizens of the State are able to eat a healthy diet and avoid hunger and have the opportunity to support a vibrant local farm and food economy.

Dozens of programs, located in numerous agencies at the federal, State and local level, attempt to reduce hunger, strengthen local agriculture, and reduce nutrition and health problems. The programs would benefit from increased coordination pursuant to comprehensive food policy planning. The Council would also provide government agency representatives with the opportunity to meet and interact with citizens and each other on food and agricultural policy.

Assemblyman Ortiz is very optimistic about the passage of this important legislation. “For years I’ve worked to improve nutrition, help low-income families, and expand markets for New York State farmers. This new bill would help meet all three goals at once”, said Ortiz. “Governor Spitzer has made clear his commitment to helping those in need throughout the state. I feel confident that these initiatives will be supported by our new leadership.”

“When I sponsored the Farm-to-School Law we had to direct the State Educa-

tion Department to work with the Department of Agriculture and Markets. That shouldn’t require a new law”, said Ortiz. “It should be routine that government agencies and programs affecting food coordinate their effort to improve health, reduce hunger and support local agriculture. That is why we need a food policy council.”

The Council has received a positive response so far from the Spitzer administration. Pat Hooker, the nominee for Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets, was in charge of government policy for the NYS Farm Bureau, which has endorsed the Council. Commissioner Hooker told Hunger Action Network that he looks forward to working on the council’s agenda.

Last session this legislation was supported by Hunger Action Network, NY Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, Leisure Taskforce of the New York State Dietetic Association, Foodlink Rochester, Nutrition Consortium of NYS, New York Farm Bureau; and many others.

The Council would consist of the Commissioners or Directors of: Health, Agriculture & Markets, Temporary & Disability Assistance, Education, Aging, Children & Family Services, General Services, Economic Development, Labor, Transportation, Environmental Conservation, State Emergency Management, and others the Governor deems appropriate. The Governor would also establish at least three committees of the council on: hunger and food insecurity; nutrition and health; and, agriculture and food industry.

An Advisory Board to the Council of at least 15 members representing the issue



areas of agriculture, anti-hunger, nutrition, food businesses, and labor.

Among other activities, the Council would make recommendations of state policies, programs and actions to meet the following goals:

reducing and eliminating hunger by providing affordable, nutritious food, from local producers whenever possible; the adoption of diets by New Yorkers that promote health and prevent disease, using foods from local producers whenever possible; increased consumer demand for New York farm and food products; a profitable food producing system which maximizes production of nutritious foods, protects the environment, and provides sufficient income for farm families and farm workers; economic viability for food processing, marketing and distribution industries that support state agriculture; and, increased effectiveness and coordination of food, farm and nutrition programs.

Better Choice Budget Campaign: The Better Choice for “One New York”

The Governor and the Legislature must work together to ensure that the 2007-08 state budget meets New Yorkers' needs and that it is balanced in a fair and equitable manner.

Good jobs require educated New Yorkers, safe communities, affordable health care and a sound transportation infrastructure. In order to grow our economy we must invest in New York's working families.

The richest one percent of New Yorkers pay a much smaller percentage of their incomes in state and local taxes than low and middle income working families. Seniors on fixed incomes, working families and young couples are among those who suffer from the inequities in New York's current state-local tax system while many of the nation's most profitable corporations pay little or nothing in state corporate income taxes. We must take the pressure off the property tax by ending the special treatment of the favored few and restoring some of the income tax system's lost progressivity.

It's time for New York to provide property tax relief in a fair and balanced manner by

- Restoring the state's commitment to revenue sharing with its local governments,
- Implementing a legitimate statewide solution to the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit, and
- Reforming the STAR Program to target it to those most in need.

It's also time for New York to end the special treatment of the favored few by:

- **Closing loopholes** that allow large, profitable corporations to avoid paying their fair share of state taxes.
- **Stopping sweetheart deals** with high-priced consultants who are being overpaid to do jobs that state workers can do better and cheaper.
- **Lowering drug prices** for state and local governments and New York consumers by using New York's purchasing power to get a fair deal from the drug companies and . . .
- **Reforming state and local economic development programs** with an emphasis on improving the effectiveness and accountability of Industrial Development Agencies (IDAs) and the Empire Zones program.
- **Enacting the Bigger, Better Bottle Bill** and making the beverage bottling industry return unclaimed bottle deposits.
- **Making polluters pay** by auctioning the permits under the state's plan to cap the emission of global warming gases by power plants.
- **Making New York's tax system fairer** and more equitable by increasing the top marginal tax rates on the highest income households

We support the Better Choice Budget Campaign and agree to promote its message through our organization's work on the New York State budget:

Organization: _____
 Address _____
 Contact Person: _____
 Telephone: _____ Fax: _____
 e-mail: _____

Please return to New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness, 212 Great Oaks Blvd., Albany, New York 12203.
 or Fax to: 518-869-8649 or fill out the form on the web at www.abetterchoicefornny.org.

Hunger Action Network Green Space



Fresh Food in West Harlem

Hunger Action and many partners are increasing access to delicious farm fresh food in the West Harlem area of NYCity and you are invited to join us!

The West Harlem Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) & Fresh Food Project links a CSA farmer in the Hudson Valley with emergency food programs (EFPs) and low-income families in West Harlem. This link will come in two forms: first, by distributing farm fresh food for free through the meals provided at several EFPs operating in West Harlem; and second, by starting a CSA so that residents of West Harlem can purchase wholesome affordable shares of food from a local farmer. EFP and CSA members will pick up the shares once a week throughout the harvest season (June – November).

Community Supported Agriculture is a system that links a local community with a nearby farmer in a direct, mutually-beneficial partnership. A typical CSA allows families to join with a local farmer and pay in advance for the season's harvest. CSA share prices vary, from \$400-600, depending on the amount of food and the farm.

Every week during the harvest season, members pick up a box of fresh vegetables at a neighborhood location or on the farm. CSAs provide farmers with guaranteed year-long demand for their products and provide consumers with high-quality, locally-

grown produce at below-retail prices. CSA programs are a key component of achieving the goals of community food security: that all people have access to an adequate amount of nutritious food, at all times, through local, non-emergency sources.

This CSA project will specifically target lower-income families and enable them to use Food Stamps and other payment options that are feasible for them and still fair and appropriate for our farmer. The project has initiated a revolving loan fund so that we can pay the farmer upfront for lower-income members' shares, guaranteeing a source of economic security for our

farmer. Lower-income members can pay back into the loan fund every two weeks throughout the CSA season in much smaller, incremental payments. At the end of the season, the revolving loan fund will be replenished so that we can use it annually to pay the farmer at the beginning of the season.

If you're interested, contact Susannah at 212-741-8192, ext. 3# or spasquantonio@hungeractionnys.org. Food Stamp recipients are especially encouraged to participate.

If you're interested in CSA in another part of NYC, contact Just Food at (212) 645-9880. www.justfood.org.

Food Stamps in Hudson Valley

Hunger Action is initiating a campaign to increase access to the Food Stamp Program (FSP) in the Hudson Valley including Dutchess, Putnam, Ulster, Rockland, Sullivan, and Westchester counties. Only about half of the people eligible for this program are participating, and increasing participation could benefit thousands of lower income people in the area.

The project seeks to increase enrollment of eligible persons in the Food Stamp Program, enhance communication and cooperation among various public and private groups relating

to the FSP, present the program in a more favorable light, and build the capacity of local organizations to educate their community about the program.

We will be coordinating workshops, trainings, and running a free Food Stamp pre-screening help-line, among other initiatives. To find out how this project can benefit you and your community in the Hudson Valley or to volunteer to take hotline phone calls, please contact Susannah at 212-741-8192, ext. 3# or spasquantonio@hungeractionnys.org.

Help Feed More Children this Summer

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) offers free breakfast and lunch to children 18 and younger during July and August. However, we need more groups sponsoring the program and promoting the program in order to reach more children in need this summer.

Schools, housing authorities, camps, faith groups, food programs, and other non-profit organizations can sponsor the program and help provide food to kids during the summer. SFSP generates money within communities! Each SFSP sponsor receives reimbursement from the USDA for the meals that are served.

Sponsors are also reimbursed for operational and administrative expenses, such as staff and rental costs. Sponsors have

to go through an application process and new sponsors have to attend a March workshop, run by the New York State SFSP administering agency, the State Education Department.

We especially need more groups working on this program because the program is severely underutilized - only about one fourth of eligible low-income children in NYS participate in the SFSP. The key reasons for low participation are that there are not enough program sponsors and sites and a lack of awareness about the program. With your support, we can reach more children!

If you think that your agency could sponsor the program or if you want to help others, please contact us.



Even if you cannot help run the program, you can help distribute materials on SFSP in your community to help promote the program. We are especially focusing outreach efforts in Queens this year.

For more information, contact Susannah at Hunger Action, 212-741-8192, ext 3# or email _spasquantonio@hungeractionnys.org.

Speed Up Expedited Food Stamps

Hunger Action Network has asked the Spitzer administration to go back to old rule of providing expedited food stamps no later than the day after application.

During the Cuomo administration, at the request of Assembly Social Services Chair Rhoda Jacobs, NYS DSS changed the time frame for issuance of expedited food stamps from five business days after application to the next day after application. Several other states, including Texas, had changed it to the same day. Unfortunately, when Governor Pataki came in, he changed the time frame back to five days after application.

Federal food stamps are 100% federally funded.

NY also needs to improve the intake process and pre-screening for expedited

food stamps. Most people who are eligible for expedited food stamps appear not to be getting them for local DSS offices.

Local DSS offices must do a better job of identifying emergencies and then taking the appropriate response. Far too often people in emergencies end up going through the normal process, which legally can take a month and can end up being quite longer if they are told to bring their application to their interview rather than submitting the application the day they contact DSS (which triggers the timeline).

When Hunger Action first hired staff in 1985, food pantries told us that the best way we could help them was to make sure that local DSS offices handed out expedited food stamps in a timely fashion to need them. Instead, all too often

these households were sent to food pantries for assistance, reducing the ability of the programs to help feed those who could not turn to DSS for help.



To qualify for Expedited Food Stamps person must: Have income less than a \$150 per month and assets of \$100 or less; or, have monthly rent/mortgage and utility expenses that are more than total monthly income plus liquid assets; or be a destitute migrant or seasonal farm worker

Budget ...from p. 1

We support increased efforts by the government to better assist individuals in obtaining needed medical assistance and care in their own homes rather than being required to move into nursing homes or other institutional settings.

Bulk Purchasing of Prescription Drugs

We support the proposal by Governor Spitzer to save money for taxpayers, consumers, workers and employers by expanding the state's efforts to promote the bulk purchasing of prescription drugs. We hope that the Governor and legislature will go even further than what the Governor has proposed. We support the proposal introduced last session by Assemblymember Gottfried and Senator Golden, including allowing individual New Yorkers to participate in the program.

Enact Universal Health Care – for All New Yorkers

Hunger Action Network supports a universal health care system to provide quality, comprehensive health care service to all New Yorkers.

The most cost-effective, common sense solution is a single payer financing system, similar to Medicare for All.

Assuming that the State legislature is not yet ready to take this obvious step, for 2007-08, we support including \$500,000 in the state budget to support the Commission on Universal Health Care as has been introduced by Assemblymember Gottfried. The legislation passed the Assembly 135 to 1 last year. The Commission would oversee independent cost-benefit

analysis of the various approaches to providing health care to all New Yorkers.

Universal health care has long been the elephant in the room that too many legislative lawmakers and stakeholders have pretended not to see. The lack of universal health care drives up costs throughout the health care system, starting with forcing expensive hospital emergency rooms to provide care to the uninsured. If one looks at a 12-month span, nearly one out of three New Yorkers go without health insurance for some period of time.

Even for those lucky enough to be insured, ever-skipper private policies helped push an estimated 38,645 New Yorkers into medical bankruptcy in 2004.

New York needs a universal health care system to improve the quality of our health care system; to save money for taxpayers, consumers, businesses and government; and to solve a myriad of other problems. A universal health care system would also help the state resolve other health-related problems such as the high cost of workers compensation, automobile insurance and medical malpractice premiums.

In proposing to freeze the trend factor for the hospital reimbursement rate for Medicaid, Governor Spitzer states that hospitals are using Medicaid to subsidize deep discounts for the private health insurance companies. He correctly argues that we need to ensure that Medicaid dollars are targeted to those assisting our most vulnerable citizens. While we support the Governor's goals, we would prefer a more comprehensive approach to resolving the related

problems of the costs of private health insurance and providing medical care to the uninsured. Hospitals provide a critical role in our health system and they need both adequate financial support and strong public policy direction and oversight.

In particular, we support more targeted efforts to eliminate the excessive costs, paperwork, confusion and bureaucracy foisted on our health care system by our present system of private health insurance. Reigning in or eliminating the costs associated with private health insurance is central of any effort to create a cost-effective universal health care system.

Faces...from p. 1

leased, while providing a stable and nurturing environment for their children.

Originally a residential program for children made homeless by their mother's incarceration, Hour Children has grown into a multifaceted family service provider. Today, Hour Children is a community of five residences, housing 45 families, with children from infancy to 21 years. More than 200 housing alumnae who have successfully transitioned to independent living return for special events and attend monthly support groups. Hour Children is also a work release site, and opened a Community Outreach Center and a thrift shop with three locations.

Whether you have extra time, clothing or furniture to donate, or financial resources, Hour Children gratefully accepts your help. For more information contact Hour Children at www.hourchildren.org or 718-433-4724.

Hour Children is also located in Hunger Action's target outreach area in Queens for the Summer Food Program for children. (see the summer food article)

Emergency Food Programs Need More State Funds

by Gabriel Tomasula

Gov. Spitzer earned praise from anti-hunger activist groups for a proposed \$5.15 million increase in funding for emergency food programs (EFPs).

The Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) provides emergency food programs with funding to obtain nutritional food through the regional Food Banks. It also awards EFPs up to \$3,000 for operations and equipment expenditures.

HPNAP funding has always been a small fraction (e.g., 10%) of the cost of running the state's 3000 EFPs, which help feed more than 2 million New Yorkers. However, HPNAP has always been important in providing food of higher nutritional value than what comes via private donations.

HPNAP was funded at \$22.8 million in 2006-07, a 7 percent decrease from the FY 2002 funding level of \$24.44 million. Despite these recent funding

cuts, the need has increased throughout New York State. Between 2002 and 2004, poverty increased by 9 percent in New York.

Hunger Action Network and other anti-hunger groups support increasing funding for HNPAP by 147 percent over the next five years to a FY 2012 funding level of \$56.3 million. This would keep pace with inflation and the increase incidence of poverty. For 2007-08, this means a funding level of \$32.19 million.

While saying that the proposal is a sign that the governor 'is leading both with his head and his heart', Joel Berg, Executive Director of the NYC Coalition Against Hunger, stressed the fact that EFPs, while necessary, are not the long-term solution to New York's hunger problem.

"We continue to make the point that food pantries and kitchens should not be the State's primary, long-term response to hunger and poor nutrition. Rather, we hope the State adopts a plan

to ensure that more low-income New Yorkers are able to obtain and keep living-wage jobs that enable them to purchase all the food they need," Berg said Wednesday.

"While the Governor's proposal offsets the cuts that were made in funding in recent years, it still falls short of keeping pace with the increased demand for emergency food," said Mark Dunlea of Hunger Action.

His sentiments were echoed by Rev. Deborah Jameson of the Focus Churches food pantry in downtown Albany, who said that although "the increase is long overdue, there would need to be more money put into EFPs in order for them to keep up".

Jameson concurred with Berg, pointing out that poverty was the root cause of the need for EFPs, and that living-wage and work-supplement programs such as food stamps and the earned-income tax credit provide a better means to combat it than EFPs do.

Farm Bill Signons Needed

The 110th Congress will reauthorize the "Farm Bill." That important legislation has a breadth and reach far beyond American agricultural policy.

The Farm Bill also will reauthorize a number of nutrition assistance programs, including the Food Stamp Program, which is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. It is vital that lawmakers address shortfalls in benefit adequacy and improve access for vulnerable people. The competition for resources in the Farm Bill will be stiff. In a context in which there may be few or no new dollars to expand Farm Bill programs, other stakeholders are seeking added investments

in the commodities, conservation, energy, research and other titles of the Farm Bill.

FRAC. Bread for the World, World Hunger Year and other national anti-hunger organizations have developed a sign on letter (deadline: Jan. 25th) www.frac.org/pdf/NAHO.pdf. There is a link at www.frac.org to sign on.

The Farm and Food Policy Project is also pulling together a diverse coalition of family farm, sustainable agriculture, rural, public health, anti-hunger, environmental, faith-based, and other groups to shape the 2007 Farm Bill. Issues include

supporting family farms and local communities, improving health and nutrition, ending hunger, and increasing biodiversity and improving the quality of our soil, water and air.

Go to www.farmandfoodproject.org to learn more about farm and food policy and read the specific recommendations of allied organizations. To sign on, contact Jessie Dowling at info@farmandfoodproject.org or 202-543-1300.

Or contact Allen Hance, Coordinator, Farm and Food Policy Project, at ahance@nemw.org or 202-464-4015.

Restore funding for State Community Gardens Office

In 1987 the Legislature mandated the establishment of an Office of Community Gardens within the Department of Agriculture and Markets. However, towards the end of Governor Cuomo's term, all state agencies were required to layoff a substantial number of staff and the Community Gardens staff position was eliminated.

However, the statute that created the office, Article 2-C of the Agriculture and Markets Law remains on the books. The Hunger Action Network feels this office should receive funding once again so it can return to operation. Given Gov. Spitzer's previous commitment to protecting community gardens in NYC, we feel this is an excellent opportunity to support community gardens in NY State.

The Office of Community Gardens filled several key roles in the development and maintenance of successful community gardens. These roles included identifying vacant public land available for community garden use; providing technical and organizational assistance for gardens in the form of tools, land, and expertise to the residents; working with communities to develop urban agricultural projects; and, identifying funding sources and helping community groups apply for grants.

Since this office has not been operating, these community garden groups have been left on their own to perform these developmental tasks.

Community gardens provide benefits to the residents who operate them, as well as the community in general.

There are health benefits from eating fresh and nutritious foods, and getting outdoor recreation and exercise. Community gardens also promote self-sufficiency. The neighborhood also benefits from the presence of these gardens. The advantages range from neighborhood beautification and open space preservation to improving air quality.

Also, having citizens run public gardens reduces the burden on the local government while allowing the residents to gain skills and to network in the community.

Community gardens provided for a better environment and at the same improve the health and social capital of



(Chelsea CSA Transport Frame)

the citizens. This is particularly true in low income areas. Community gardens provide for another food source to families in need, thus relieving some of the burden on the state as a provider.

New and Renewing Members of Hunger Action

Thanks to our New and Renewing Members

Albany: Elizabeth Allard, St. John the Baptist; Edward & Claire Nolan; **Brooklyn:** Robert E. Jackson, Brooklyn Rescue Mission, Inc.; Leigh Seymour; William DiFazio, St. John's University; **Buffalo:** Sisters of Social Service U.S. District; Clarence: Frances Roberts, Srs. of St. Joseph; **Clifton Park:** Harold Prince, Peace Lutheran Church; **Cropseyville:** Michael Keenan; **Delmar:** Joseph Mascarenhas; **Jackson Heights:** Robert W. Teller; **New York:** Inez Sieben; Lila Braine; Henry Freedman, National Center for Law and Economic Justice; Raquel Granda, Cathedral Community Cares; **Rochester:** Marjean Hart, Trinity Emmanuel Lutheran Church; **Saratoga Springs:** Lillian McCarthy, Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.; **Schenectady:** Douglas Brown, First Reformed Church Schenectady; Mark & Megan Brown; Bob and Pat Obrecht, Bellevue Reformed; Joyce Gould, First Presbyterian Church; **Scotia:** David Rowell, St. Vincent De Paul; **Troy:** Joan Maney; Wells: Charlotte Palmer Randal

**Sign On Form: Strengthen Welfare-to-Work Programs under TANF Implementation
- Raise the Welfare Grant**

I. A TANF Implementation Agenda

Last year Congress enacted changes in the federal welfare (TANF) program. In 2007, New York is facing key choices. The federal regulations substantially increase the proportion of assistance recipients who must participate in work activities. We will need an additional 7,000 to 10,000 TANF recipients monthly in federally countable activities or else the State will face possible federal penalties. We want the state to meet its increased work participation rates by improving the quality of its welfare-to-work programs, increasing engagement in those programs, and extending supports to low-income working families. Below is an outline of some of the reforms we are proposing.

Expand access to education and training programs for welfare recipients. Many public assistance participants need education and vocational training in order to get jobs paying family-sustaining wages and benefits. NY should maximize participation in programs like GED, adult literacy and ESL, while allowing qualified individuals to complete two-year Associates degree programs.

Create income supports and transitional jobs. Enact a wage supplement program which provides cash payments on top of earnings from wages. Increase the Earned Income Disregard to allow welfare participants who work to keep more of their wages.

Address the needs of people with disabilities and other barriers to employment. A significant percentage of public assistance recipients struggle with disabilities – particularly mental disabilities – and other barriers to employment. The State should develop a screening tool to identify clients with disabilities and mandate that localities offer screening to their clients. More intensive case services should be provided.

II. Raise the Welfare Grant

Welfare helps poor children and their parents obtain basic necessities such as heat, housing, food and clothing. Unless a welfare recipient is unable to work because they are elderly, a child, or suffers from a disability, there are strict work requirements that they must comply with or face losing their assistance. The Governor and the State Legislature have **not raised the welfare grant since 1990**. The value of welfare benefits has fallen to only half of the federal poverty level. 577,000 New Yorkers are on Temporary Assistance including 333,000 children. For more than a decade the courts have repeatedly ruled that welfare payments for housing are illegally low. In 1975 public assistance for a three-person family was equal to 110% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Proposal: Increase the non-shelter portion of the public assistance grant from \$291 to \$450 for a family of three to reflect increase in the cost of living since the last adjustment in 1990. Fuel for Heating Allowances should be increased to account for inflationary increases since the last adjustments in 1987. A commission should be established to investigate the adequacy of all public assistance allowances and to recommend mechanisms to provide for annual cost adjustments.

Sign On Form

- My organization supports the TANF Implementation Agenda
- My organization supports Raise the Welfare Grant.

Organization _____ Contact _____
Address _____ Town / City _____ Zip _____
Phone (_____) _____ Email _____

Return to: HANNYS, 260 W. 360 St. #504, NY NY 10018. Fax: 212 741-7236.



Rally in Albany with HANNYS/ ES2 March 13

Come rally and lobby with the Hunger Action on Tuesday March 13th.

We will be lobbying with the Empire State Economic Security Campaign. The issues raised are income security for all families through a higher minimum wage, raising the welfare benefits and Earned Income Disregard; universal health care for all NYers; developing a strong and educated workforce for NY; and job creation for low-income NYers.

This legislative action day will come at a crucial time as the State begins to finalize the 2007-2008 budget. The budget needs to be finalized by April 1st.

The day will begin with a briefing at 10 AM at the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut St, Albany. Followed by a rally at noon at the Capitol Building, and finally, lobby visits with key state legislators from 1 to 4 PM.

Between 250 and 300 people are expected to attend, with many being from low-income households. A majority of those in attendance will be from NYC. Buses are also expected from NYC, Rochester, and Westchester.

We need about 12 volunteers for logistics including food preparation, sound set up for the rally and other logistical needs. Please contact Mark Dunlea at the Albany HANNYS office to sign up as a volunteer.

For more information, contact the Hunger Action Network of NYS: <http://www.hungeractionnys.org/> 275 State Street, Albany, NY 12210 (518) 434-7371 • Fax (518) 434-7390

Feast For Famine
Wed. May 23rd at the Egg

HUNGER ACTION NETWORK OF NEW YORK STATE MEMBERSHIP AND DONATION COUPON

- Yes, I want to help end the root causes of hunger by becoming a member:
- \$30 Individual \$5(low/fixed income) \$35small organization
 - \$60 mediumorganization \$120 large organization
- Here is my donation of _____ in support of the Winter Appeal.
- Please send me information about volunteer opportunities

Name _____ Organization _____
Address _____ City _____ Zip _____
Phone (day) _____ (eve.) _____ (FAX) _____ (E-Mail) _____
Credit care info: MC VISA Card No. _____ Exp Date. _____
signature _____

Please make checks payable to and return to Hunger Action Network of NYS, 260 W. 36th St., #504, NY NY 10018

**Hunger Action Network
OF NEW YORK STATE**

**275 State St.
Albany NY 12210**

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