



Getting to the Root of the Problem GRASSROOTS

The Newsletter of the Hunger Action Network of New York State

November 2006

Faces of Hunger Action Network

Eddie Mesick, the long-time and recently retired Executive Director of the Nutrition Consortium of NYS, has been an important ally in the work to end hunger in New York State. A principal focus of the Nutrition Consortium in helping to expand access to the various federal nutrition programs.

Eddie's late husband Jack was a frequent contributor of his artwork to our annual Feast for Famine fundraising event..



MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger earlier this year awarded Eddie their annual Cramer Award in honor of her outstanding commitment and service to the fight against hunger. "During her tenure, Mesick organized a multi-year

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ES2 Calls for Spitzer to Support Economic Justice

For more than eight years, the Empire State Economic Security Campaign (ES2) has been working to improve the

lives of low and moderate income New Yorkers by challenging our elected officials to make better choices for our families. With our more than 200 partner organizations across the state, we have helped to increase the minimum wage, open access to education and training opportunities for welfare

participants, and fight back potentially devastating cuts to our state's welfare and healthcare programs.

As we move into the next legislative session with a new Governor and a projected budget surplus, ES2 will surely face new opportunities and challenges. We are energized and organized to fight for a fair budget for all. To this end, ES2 presents the following agenda for the coming session.

Our first issue focuses on income security for all families. While much has been written about the decline in welfare caseloads in New York State, there has been no concurrent decline in poverty. As a result, New York's cash assistance programs now provide support to a much smaller percentage of poor families than before welfare reform. Yet there are three groups of New Yorkers who continue to rely on the state to provide income security: low-income workers, public assistance recipients who have not been able to find or keep a job, and New Yorkers who are unable to work. Our policy recommendations include:

Making Work Pay by

Restoring the purchasing power of the minimum wage to 1970 levels (\$8.50 in January 2007 dollars) and indexing it for inflation to prevent future erosion;

Improving the earned income disregard by allowing all earned income to be disregarded until a family's income is equal to the federal poverty guidelines for its

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Hunger Action Network of New York State

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Notes from the Executive Director..

Dear Friends:

Thanksgiving is the one time of the year when the entire community tries to make sure that there is room at the table for all. It is the best time of the year for contributions to anti-hunger organizations. **We certainly appreciate your support.**

Hunger however is a 365 day a year a problem. And while the Hunger Action Network works hard to increase food, funding and volunteers for area food pantries and soup kitchens, we also know that we need long term solutions such as health care for all, living wage jobs, and better access to education and job training.

As we share this holiday season with our families and friend, there is hope in the air with the election of a new Governor. **Our challenge is to convince our state leadership to make the commitment to end hunger.**

In the late seventies in America, hunger had largely disappeared as a major problem through the creation of federal nutrition programs such as food stamps, school meals and WIC. Unfortunately, the pain caused by the federal budget cuts of the early '80s never went away, and a new generation has now grown up where food pantries and soup kitchens are a fact of life just like the corner grocery store.

If America can fly a person to the moon, we should be able to end hunger – especially when countries much poorer than us have been able to accomplish this. Hunger Action continues to expand our efforts to directly provide more food to needy households. We want to increase funding for emergency food programs by \$8 million. We want to make it easier – and faster – for households to get food stamps, especially in emergency situations.

Perhaps our greatest challenge is to finally **raise welfare benefits for the poorest New Yorkers.** The basic grant has not been raised since 1990 and the value of welfare benefits has declined to only half of the federal poverty level.

It is immoral that in the richest nation NY leads in the growing gap between the poor and rich. Nothing illustrates that gap better than the decline in value of welfare benefits to only half of the federal poverty level. The state budget is about our choices and our lawmakers have chosen for too long to keep poor children and their families in abject poverty. For too long we have balanced the state budget on the backs of the poorest and most vulnerable.

We look forward to starting 2007 with hope that our new state administration and legislature will use the opportunity they have to change some policies that are not fair. We hope you will join us in trying to make our voices heard. We appreciate any contribution you can make to keep our doors open and to amplify our message at the state capitol.

In peace and hope,
Bicha Ha Pham, Esq.



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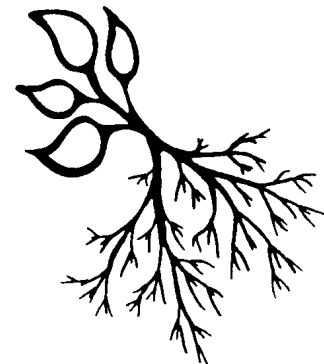
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USDA: Hunger on the Rise

New York had 10.4 percent of people living in households that were considered to be food insecure from 2003-05, according to the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's annual report released. This was an increase of a full percentage point (9.4) from the prior average from 2000-02.

USDA was widely criticized in the media for hiding "hunger" by modifying the term "food insecurity" categories to exclude the word "hunger."

Each year, the Census Bureau measures food insecurity through a series of household survey questions about the ability to obtain enough food for an active, healthy life for all members.

Among the 10.4 percent of New York State households considered to be food insecure, 3.1 percent were living in households that were considered to have "very low food security," a new USDA term that means one or more people in the household were hungry over the course of the year because they couldn't afford enough food.

"The numbers from USDA and the Census Bureau confirm what we have been hearing from our emergency food programs – that the demand for emergency food is increasing annually. Unfortunately, state and federal funds for the state's 3,000 food pantries, soup kitchens and food banks have been cut in recent years. We urge Governor-elect Spitzer and the new majorities in Congress to reverse this trend when they make budget decisions in the new year," said Mark Dunlea, Associate Director of Hunger Action Network. "We hope lawmakers remembered those less fortunate when they sat down for their Thanksgiving dinner."

"Over 2 million New Yorkers use soup

kitchens and food pantries throughout the year," noted Bich Ha Pham, Executive Director of Hunger Action Network. "We are asking for \$32 million this year in state funding to restore the cuts and adjust for inflation and increased demand."

Last year the state provided \$22.8 million in the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program, a 7% cut in the funds for food banks and emergency food programs since 2002. The \$32 million would restore the cuts and keep pace with inflation and the increased demand for emergency food.

The groups also want to streamline the process for receiving food stamps, starting with providing expedited food stamps within one day if the household is an emergency situation. This was the standard used in NY during the Cuomo administration.

Nationally, more than 35 million people live in households that are considered to be food insecure. "It is simply unacceptable that after years of economic growth, 35.1 million people in this country face a constant struggle against hunger," said Jim Weill, president of the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)."

There are a number of key investments that can be made to address hunger, according to FRAC: Strengthen the Food Stamp Program in the upcoming Farm Bill; Connect more children to child nutrition programs, such as school breakfast, summer meals, child care food and afterschool snacks and meals; Boost family incomes through strategies like an increased minimum wage and refundable tax credits for low-income workers.

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Reforms Needed with TANF Changes

The Department of Health and Human Services recently issued interim final rules on TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) which implement the changes to welfare included in the Deficit Reduction Act in 2005.

New York is facing key choices as the state decides the next direction for our TANF programs.

Hunger Action worked with our state-wide colleagues to develop recommendations concerning the choices NY faces. These recommendations will enable the state to meet the increased required work participation rates while meeting the needs of welfare participants.

The federal regs substantially increased the proportion of assistance recipients who must participate in work activities for a specified number of hours each week. It is anticipated that the caseload reduction credit will decrease New York's participation rate from 50% to 44% for FY 2007. It is estimated that we are currently at about a 37% state-wide participation rate. This means that we will need to have a monthly average of 7,000 – 10,000 additional TANF recipients in federally countable activities or else face possible federal penalties.

Meeting the increased requirement will be challenging and will require increased investments in welfare-to-work programs and work supports. We want the state to meet the increased work participation rates in ways that improve families' employment outcomes and well-being by improving the quality of their welfare-to-work programs, increasing engagement in those programs, and extending supports to low-income working families.

This second round of TANF implementation gives NYS a **new opportunity to deliver on the promise of welfare reform**. That promise was that the welfare program would focus more on helping to move families into jobs that allow them to become economically independent.

The promise entails identifying the barriers that individuals face in making that transition to employment and then providing the resources (education, training, child care, etc.) to enable them to be successful. In the years since welfare reform, NY has focused primarily on cutting the welfare rolls, implementing a "work first" policy that strongly discouraged education and job training, providing little post-employment training or education, and doing little to identify barriers that individuals have.

These TANF implementation recommendations will enable the state to take the high road in implementing the next phase of welfare reform so that poverty is ended amongst the poorest of New Yorkers and so that an adequate benefits level is provided for the well-being of those unable to work.

The following are the recommendations to implement TANF under the new regulations:

ALLOCATION OF TANF FUNDS

NY should normalize the funding of the NYS Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) by treating the EITC like other tax expenditures rather than using the TANF block grant. This would free up more than a half million dollars in TANF block grant funds to support expanded benefits and services for low-income families including increased funding for child care and funding some of the recommendations outlined in this letter.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR WELFARE RECIPIENTS:

NY should increase participation in vocational educational training. It is a "win-win" solution: the state and county has a straightforward solution to their increased participation rate requirement, and TANF participants gain access to the education and job training needed to move out of poverty. Recommendations:

NY State should maximize participation in vocational educational training. New York currently has only about 11% of the caseload participating in vocational educational training, despite a federal allowance for up to 30% participation.

NY should allow individuals to complete two-year Associates degree programs, despite the change in federal law. Allowing this will in no way jeopardize its ability to meet federal participation rates.

NY's hourly work requirement for TANF should be no higher than the levels set by Federal law. Currently NY counties enforce a thirty-five hour plus work requirement on recipients despite their right, under Federal and State law, to get full participation credit once these individuals are participating for twenty hours (if the household has a child under six) or thirty hours (for all other households).

NY should establish and fund a Career Pathway program to create a single education – employment continuum that enables NY to maximize credit for participation in TANF activities while providing TANF recipients with targeted skills development linked directly to self-sufficiency wage employment.

INCOME SUPPORTS AND TRANSITIONAL JOBS:

In New York, there are a substantial numbers of welfare participants who are unable to find stable or living wage employment while many of those who leave welfare for work remain poor and/or need to return to welfare after losing their employment or facing other financial difficulties.

Those remaining on welfare are receiving public assistance grants that are less than half of the federal poverty level despite the fact that able-bodied participants are working at work assignments. The State should:

Enact a wage supplement program which provides cash payments on top of earnings from wages to raise the household's income, earnings and employment. TANF funds can be used to fund the supplement. Incorporate access to education and vocational training into the program so as to increase participants' earning potential in the long-term.

Revise the state's Earned Income Disregard level to disregard 100% of earnings from wages up to the poverty level for welfare participants who are working and then a percentage disregard until the family's income reaches 135% of poverty. This would increase the income of households on welfare that are still below the federal poverty level, despite the presence of a working adult.

Enact a Paid Transitional Employment program that combines time-limited, wage-paying jobs with real work, skill development, and supportive services, to enable participants to transition successfully from welfare into the labor market.



Raise the welfare grant. Allocate TANF funds to increase the basic grant, which has not been increased in 16 years. New York should increase the basic allowance and home energy allowances of the public assistance grant by 49% from \$291 to \$450 for a family of three to reflect the increase in the cost of living since the last adjustment in 1990.

Use TANF funds for a state-enhanced **Food Stamp supplement** which would put more food on the table of New York's poor and working poor.

ADDRESSING 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. The failure to detect disabilities leads inevitably to difficulties, including sanctions for alleged noncompliance. The availability of a high quality screening

process is a crucial first step in addressing these barriers.

- Make available a range of intensive case services. Many public assistance recipients will be able to enhance their employability if they have access to appropriate services, including treatment, rehabilitation, counseling and training.

- Adopt measures designed to reduce the rate of sanctions. Inordinate numbers of recipients are at risk of, or are suffering a termination or reduction of their benefits for failing to comply with program requirements. The failure to comply is very frequently caused by the individual's disabilities. Sanctions harm family well-being and make it more difficult for the State to comply with federal work participation requirements. Local agencies should be directed to undertake various preventive and outreach efforts to avoid the imposition of sanctions.

- Ensure welfare program compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. When these programs provide equal and meaningful access to people with disabilities, they will, in many cases, enable those with disabilities to complete and benefit from those programs and become self-sufficient.

Hunger Action Network Green Space



Groups Urge Spitzer to Enact Food Policy Council, Give More \$ for EFPs

Hunger Action has urged Gov.-elect Eliot Spitzer to establish a New York State Food Policy Council to help coordinate efforts to end hunger in the state, which remains at epidemic levels.

The food policy council would help strengthen the state's agriculture system, while seeking to ensure that all New York residents would have access to fresh, nutritious food.



HANNYS also called for the state to make a multi-year commitment to increase funding for the state's emergency food programs.

"The holidays season is the one time during the year when the entire community comes together to make sure no one goes hungry. But hunger is a 365 day a year problem and it continues to grow. We have children, seniors and families throughout the state struggling to feed themselves. Obesity and diet-related health problems are on the rise and small family farms are in decline. We need strong state leadership and support to create a sustainable food system," stated

Mark Dunlea, Associate Director of the Hunger Action Network.

Legislation to create a New York State Food Policy Council (A 10461 / S 7618) was introduced last year by Assemblymember Felix Ortiz (then head of the Assembly Task Force on Food, Farm and Nutrition Policy) and Senate Agriculture Chair Catherine Young. The Council, modeled after existing programs in other states, would work to end hunger, promote a vibrant local food and farm economy, and enhance coordination between government agencies and citizens.

The Council would develop comprehensive state food policies with the goal of providing a plentiful, affordable, and nutritious food supply, comprised of locally produced foods as much as possible. The goal is ensure that all citizens of the State are able to eat a healthy diet and avoid hunger, while supporting a vibrant local farm and food economy.

A Council existed during the Cuomo administration. Re-establishing it has received bipartisan support as well as the endorsement of the NYS Farm Bureau, dietetic groups, anti-hunger organizations and sustainable agriculture groups.

Hunger Action also wants the new Governor to improve state oversight of the local Department of Social Services in

providing food stamps and other benefits to eligible households. It hopes the new administration will go back to the requirement during the Cuomo administration of providing expedited food stamps the day after application;

NYC Mayor Bloomberg and Speaker Quinn Announce NYC Food Policy Task Force

Mayor Bloomberg and City Council Speaker Quinn announced a concerted effort to increase access to healthy foods in low-income communities in NYC by creating a new Food Policy Task Force and the new position of Food Policy Coordinator. They seek to expand the availability of nutritious, affordable food in underserved communities, enhance the nutritional standards followed by City agencies in feeding clients, and improve access to food support programs.

"Increasing access to healthy food and reducing hunger require a specific focus, I am thankful to the Bloomberg administration for working in a close partnership with the Council to develop the position of Food Policy Coordinator. By making this our City's responsibility, we can do more to make sure children go to bed every night fed with nutritious food, our seniors get more access to food stamps, and fewer New Yorkers are at risk of going hungry," stated Quinn.

ES2 Agenda ...from 1

family size and 50% of income until families reach 135% of the federal poverty guidelines;

Giving childless public assistance recipients the same earned income disregard as households with children;

Establishing a wage supplement program for low-income workers and/or a state funded food stamp supplement for working families;

Reforming the Unemployment Insurance system to increase the maximum benefit, and increase benefits at the bottom of the income distribution and

Expanding child care subsidies and taking child care funding out of the Flexible Fund for Family Services.

Addressing Barriers to Work by

Maintaining funding for the state level programs from the TANF block grant; Expanding transportation programs for welfare recipients;

Implementing mandatory screening for all cash assistance applicants and recipients to identify those who are not able to participate in work;

Establishing a \$100 million transitional jobs program to help welfare recipients with multiple employment barriers enter the labor force; and

Fully funding intensive case services programs to reach out to noncompliant households, identify problems and address barriers before these households reach "sanctioned" status. Many of those who are sanctioned for noncompliance with work rules actually have significant barriers to work that also make it more difficult for them to comply.

Strengthening the Safety Net for Those Who Cannot Work by

Immediately increase the nonshelter portion of the welfare grant by 55% from \$291 to \$450 for a family of three. This would reflect the increase in the cost of living since the last adjustment in 1990.

Increase the Fuel for Heating Allowance to be increased to account for inflationary increases since the last adjustments in 1986-1987.

Providing an additional \$170 million state HEAP supplement using proceeds from the REGGI auction of pollution rights;

Establishing a commission to investigate the adequacy of all public assistance allowances;

Establishing a separate state program for those who cannot meet the new federal work participation rate requirements, SSI applicants, parents caring for disabled children, and parents enrolled in vocational education, two-year or four-year postsecondary educational programs not "countable" as work activities under federal TANF definitions.

Our second issue is **healthcare** with a call for NYS to enact Universal Health Care. ES2 continues to support the creation of a Legislative Commission to study the various ways the state could provide universal health care coverage. ES2 supports bulk purchasing of prescription drugs, simplifying Medicaid requirements, and increasing funding for Children Environmental Health Centers as well as community health centers.

Our third issue is developing a **strong and educated workforce** for NY. The campaign will urge the legislature to make accessing the full range of edu-

cation and training programs a priority for people receiving public assistance; make the Work-Study, Internship and Externship Law permanent; and increase funding for education and training programs, CUNY, SUNY and the Tuition Assistance Program.

ES2 will call for a series of **job creation efforts** targeted to low-income individuals seeking family sustaining employment. We are urging New York to create a publicly funded transitional jobs program primarily for individuals transitioning from welfare to work. ES2 New York State should invest at least \$500 million in public jobs creation, including constructing affordable housing and increase state-wide county-by-county Equal Employment Opportunity hiring targets.

We also urge the State to create a Build NY Task Force on Construction Jobs of community-based and labor stakeholders to create strategies and set policy goals to ensure that unemployed and low-income people are prepared for and can gain access to good, permanent jobs in the construction industry. The state should ensure that corporate subsidies result in the creation of jobs in NY, promote the hiring of NY residents and ensure that the jobs created are distributed throughout the state.

ES2 urges NYS to commit \$13 billion over the next ten years to create and preserve 220,000 units of affordable housing; fully fund its commitment to develop and maintain community based supportive housing under the New York / New York III agreement; and repeal the Urstadt Law of 1971 which prevents NYC from creating more stringent rent and eviction protections.

ES2's biggest event, the Legislative Education and Action Day (**LEAD**), is **scheduled for March 13th this year.**

Gov. Spitzer's Health Care Agenda

Health care was the second most important issue for New York State voters, trailing only taxes, according to a recent poll by the Siena Institute.

Governor-elect Spitzer campaigned on the need for a bulk purchasing program for prescription drugs, promising savings of more than a billion for taxpayers.

While Spitzer stated several times that he supported universal health care, he is expected to focus on smaller initiatives initially. One priority is providing universal health care for children, though he hasn't provided details on how he would modify the existing Child Health Plus program. He also wants to cut the number of uninsured in New York State in half by simplifying the application process for health care programs like Medicaid. Spitzer noted that the simplified process for Medicaid after 9/11 was successful in greatly increasing enrollment.

A key early issue for the Spitzer administration will be the recommendations from the hospital restructuring committee, which is expected to recommend the closing of several hospitals. The commission however recently came out in support of the need for universal health care in NY.

Spitzer has not yet endorsed the proposal by Hunger Action Network and hundreds of other organizations to create some form of commission to study the various ways to provide universal health care to all. His campaign however has talked about the need to study expanding health insurance coverage by examining the creation of new risk pools, permitting alternative benefit models and expanding public programs. A key factor for Spitzer in analyzing these options

will be the impact on small and medium sized businesses, particularly upstate.

The United Hospital Fund in NYC has also been studying the costs of various approaches to expanding health care coverage, including looking at the recent Massachusetts health care expansion effort. James Tallon, former Assembly Majority leader and head of UHF, has been cited in the media as Spitzer's key advisor on health care issues.

It is unclear what will happen to the Fair Share proposal made last year to require large employers to provide health care coverage or make a \$3 an hour per employee contribution to the state. Spitzer came out against the proposal at the end of the session.

The basic health initiatives outlined by Spitzer include: 1) restructuring our hospital and nursing home system; 2) using technology to create state-of-the-art health information systems that are the key to containing costs while improving health care quality; and, 3) managing and preventing chronic diseases more effectively. He has made it clear that we must reduce the number of hospital beds (i.e., close hospitals).

Spitzer also campaigned on the need for increased efforts to address fraud in the Medicaid program. The attorney general's office wants to use automated fraud detection systems to identify targets, which we currently are barred from doing under federal regulations. Spitzer has proposed a "Martin Act" that would give the AG more power to investigate fraudulent practices by conducting examinations of Medicaid providers under oath and us-



We're going to run a complete battery of checks, starting with your credit rating.

ing the provider's answers in civil recovery actions, subpoenaing witnesses and requiring the production of documents.

Spitzer notes that 40% of Medicaid costs are for long term care. Spitzer supports making it easier for families save for their long term care; supports better home and community-based living options, increase the role of managed long-term care; and making it easier to access the state's complex web of long-term care programs. He does not think tightening eligibility rules for long term care is a major cost saver.

For example, the state of New York mortgage agency should launch a reverse mortgage product to allow the elderly to tap into the equity in their homes to help finance long-term care. Spitzer wants to increase tax credits for the purchase of long-term care insurance, and allow individuals to make tax-free payroll deductions to pay for their long-term care needs, just as they do now for college and retirement.

Farm Bill Up for Renewal in 2007

The 2002 Farm Bill's nutrition title reauthorized the Food Stamp Program for five years, restored food stamp eligibility for many legal immigrants, and made other program improvements. The farm bill is due for reauthorization in 2007.

Please visit the FRAC web site <http://www.frac.org/Legislative/farmBill2007/06.23.05.html> for updated information on the USDA forums, Congressional Committee hearings and Web-based comment tools, links to testimony, and other resources. We encourage allies to speak out forcefully (in person where possible as well as by mail and e-mail) in support of the Food Stamp Program and important improvements needed.

FRAC Tips for Anti-Hunger Advocates

- 1) Participate in 2007 Farm Bill discussions hosted in your area and/or mount your own "listening sessions;"
- 2) Get out a simple message—ask for a strong nutrition title of the Farm Bill (see

FRAC's ten-point comment letter (http://www.frac.org/news/usda_letter_05.html) or talking points on why food stamps matter (http://www.frac.org/Press_Release/05.20.05.html) for more specific suggestions);

3) Invite lawmakers to visit nutrition program sites, including in conjunction with any hearings or listening sessions;

4) Ask farmers, elected officials, state food stamp directors, and other stakeholders testifying at hearings or listening sessions to include comments about the importance of the Food Stamp Program and the nutrition title;

5) Share your 2007 Farm Bill suggestions and feedback with FRAC.

Framing the Debate

It is important that policymakers hear from diverse stakeholders – participants, parents, anti-hunger leaders, food bankers, state legislators, mayors, food stamp

administrators, urban, suburban, and rural families, grocers, EBT vendors, teachers, health professionals, nutritionists, community-based groups, organizations serving children, elderly and disabled people, immigrant advocates, religious leaders, and others. Program participants may include those served under the Disaster Food Stamp Program as well as the regular program.

It would be most productive to recognize the positive aspects of the Food Stamp Program in addition to suggesting improvements to it. Also, it would be helpful to think about overarching, sweeping reforms to close gaps in coverage and adequacy of benefits as well as seemingly smaller changes that would improve those aspects of the program.

Hunger Action is also working with the Northeast Regional Anti-Hunger Network (NERAHN) and FRAC to develop Farm Bill recommendations – to be posted soon on our web page.

Hunger Still Skyrocketing in NYC

Despite the recent stock market boom, the number of city residents who lack sufficient food, as well as the number forced to use charitable soup kitchens and food pantries, continued to soar, according to a new report by the NYC Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCA).H.

During the most recent three year time period (2003-2005), 1,256,000 of the city's residents — one in six — lived in households that could not afford to purchase an adequate supply of food, according to USDA data analyzed by NYCCA. During this time, 15.4% of city residents lived in those food insecure households, representing an approximately 112,000-person increase over the

2000-2003 time period, when 14.0% of New Yorkers lived in such households.

The number of people served by the city's charitable food pantries and soup kitchens rose by an estimated 11% in 2006, on top of an estimated 6% increase from 2004-2005, according to the Coalition's annual survey of these agencies. Because the agencies were unable to obtain enough food, money, staff, and volunteers to meet their growing need, nearly half (46%) were forced to ration food by turning people away, reducing portion sizes, and/or limiting hours of operations.

"In a year when the stock market went through the roof — and the number of billionaires in the city nearly doubled — it is unconscionable that 1.3 million New Yorkers, including many children, did not have enough to eat," said Joel Berg, executive director of NYCCA.

The Coalition Against Hunger's survey report (available at www.nyccah.org), also concludes that hunger and poverty are increasing because low-wage workers are facing declining wages at the same time costs for housing, food, and other basic necessities are rapidly increasing, while the government safety net has failed to keep up with rising needs.

ANTI-HUNGER PLATFORM FOR NY

In the summer of 2006, a collective of city and state anti-hunger organizations, including representatives from emergency food programs (EFPs), held a series of meetings to collaboratively review and develop a shared anti-hunger policy platform that addresses specific federal, state and city hunger-related policies and funding.

The group identified three focus areas: emergency food funding; access to and availability of government nutrition assistance programs, including the child nutrition programs; and long-term solutions, including the development of city- and statewide offices of food, hunger and nutrition policy to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of nutritious food.

RAISE HPNAP TO \$32.9M

To offset more than five years of cuts or flat funding for government-funded emergency food and in response to the underutilization of government nutrition programs, which has placed a severe strain on EFPs, the platform calls for multi-year funding increases in the USDA's Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), the New York State Department of Health's Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) and the New York City Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP).

At the state level, the groups are looking for \$32.9 million in funding for HPNAP in the 2007-08 budget.

Hunger Action Network's Projects

Departments of Social Services Accountability Project monitors the policies and programs of the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and county DSS offices to ensure adherence to State law and to promote best practices.

Empire State Economic Security Campaign (ES2) statewide organizing, media and policy advocacy to promote income security including affordable housing, universal health care, creation of living-wage jobs, accessible child care, and adequate public assistance benefits.

Community Food and Nutrition Project provides technical assistance to the state's 3,000 emergency food programs, assists local communities in creating community gardens, and connects with farmers to distribute fresh produce to low-income communities. Our Community Food Security Policy Project aims to advocate for improved state food policies, including the establishment of a NYS Food Policy Council.

Faith and Hunger Network increases the advocacy role of the Faith Community in addressing the root causes of hunger. Four regional training conferences are held annually.

The New York Universal Health Care Options Campaign involves over 250 organizations promoting health care for all, starting with the establishment of a Legislative Commission on Health Care Coverage.

MAKE IT EASIER TO GET HELP

The platform prioritizes improving the availability of and access to government nutrition assistance programs, so as to address the low participation rates of eligible individuals and families across all programs. For example, streamlining access to the Food Stamp Program (FSP) by increasing the resource limit and list of exempt savings, eliminating the face-to-face interview and coordinating outreach efforts would increase participation rates among those eligible for the program.

One change would be good back to the rule during the Cuomo administration that in emergencies you could get expedited food stamps the next day, rather than waiting five days. And many times the delay is more than a month, since the

local district processes the household for regular food stamps rather than responding to the emergency.

To increase access to child nutrition programs, the groups want universal lunch and breakfast programs statewide.

LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

The platform supports the creation of a New York State Council on Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy as well as a New York City Office of Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy. The platform further focuses on addressing permanent solutions to hunger as well as lends support to other initiatives that seek long-term socioeconomic sustainability.

Faces of Hunger

...from 1

Campaign to End Hunger; helped establish the Northeast Regional Anti-Hunger Network; and published authoritative hunger research, including a report on NYC's post 9/11 disaster food stamp program. Edie is a selfless and passionate advocate who has served not only as an inspiration for her staff, but many other leaders in the anti-hunger community," said MAZON President Dr. H. Eric Schockman

"One of the most interesting things over my 12 years of work with the Consortium is coming to realize that ending hunger in my lifetime is a possibility," noted Edie. "What it will take is political will, which has to come from an understanding of the reality of hunger in our community. Unfortunately, people disconnect from the issue of hunger in America because they don't see the starvation you see in third world famines. But many Americans have to very much struggle to have three nutritious meals a day."

Edie said that teaching a confirmation class for the Catholic Church helped moved her to become active in the struggle for social justice. "In order to work with the youth, I had to take classes in social justice. I hadn't known before about the reality of hunger, but I have come to understand that if you are not outraged, you are not paying attention," noted Edie. "I first became aware of hunger from my mom who volunteered at our local food pantry. She was surprised by the increasing demand for help and how hard it was for many folks to make end meet."

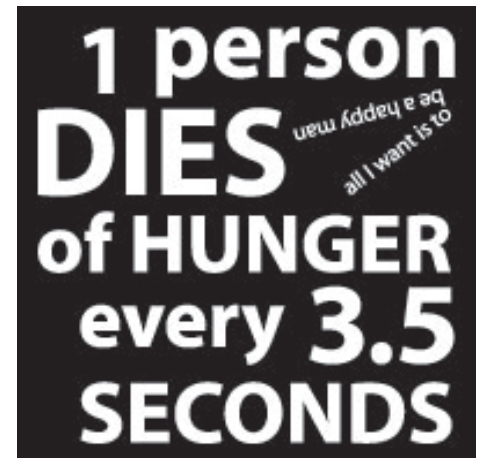
One of the main themes of Hunger Action is the need to move from charity to justice. Edie had the opportunity to hear Jan Poppendieck talk about her book

Sweet Charity. "I was astonished to hear about the unintended effects of charity and emergency food programs. People handing out bags of food is not the solution. If you do the math, you understand that if everyone got food stamps they would be much better off. Some of the best minds in our country have gone to recreate supermarkets for low-income people. Volunteers don't tend to look at the need for government action and social justice responsibilities,"

"The real cure is a live wage and available jobs. Way too often, emergency food programs have been the first stop for people seeking help," she added.

Edie said she appreciated that the "role of Hunger Action is to mobilize the grassroots around the need for government action to end hunger. It really struck

me at your annual membership meeting that both the HANNYS staff and Board walk the talk. I encourage everyone to continue to their great work so that more people realize the inappropriateness of hunger."



New and Renewing Members of Hunger Action

Thanks to all our new and renewing members for their support!!

Albany: Marialyce Hiss; **Brooklyn:** Norma K Canty, Cathedral of Joy; **Jack-son Heights:** Robert W. Teller; **Macedon:** Flora Appleton, St. Patrick's Social Ministry Committee; **Mohegan Lake:** Terry Berardi, The Community Food Pantry at St. Mary's; **New York:** Janet Dorman, St. Mary's Episcopal Church Soup Kitchen; Michael Fuller, Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY; Jose A. Lau Dan & Arlene R. Yang; Tali Shmulovich, MHRA; Nidia Sierra, Cabrini Immigrant Services; Doreen Wohl, West Side Campaign Against Hunger, Church of St. Paul & St. Andrew; **Pelham:** Carol Pasquantonio, **Poughkeepsie:** Nancy Newall, Dutchess County Interfaith Council; **Rochester:** Richard Gilbert, First Unitarian Church; Marjean Hart, Trinity Emmanuel Lutheran Church; **Rome:** Mike and Brenda Henry, Wood Creek Herb Farm; **Saratoga Springs:** Lillian McCarthy, Saratoga County EOC; **Schenectady:** Joyce Gould, First Presbyterian Church; Keith Houghton, Schenectady CAP; **Troy:** Connie LaPorta; **White Plains:** Lisa Buck, The Bridge Fund of Westchester

Hunger Action Turns 25 in 2007

In 2007, Hunger Action Network will observe its 25th anniversary.

Celebrate of course is not the appropriate word, because we would have been dismayed if someone had suggested back in 1982 that we would still need emergency food programs 25 years later. Back in 1980, there were less than 40 food pantries and soup kitchens in all of NYC. Much of the demand for emergency food came after the initial budget cuts during the Reagan administration. We all thought we would soon be out of business once Congress realized the negative impact of what they had done.

We will be holding benefits in NYC in the spring and in Albany in the fall to raise some money for the continuing struggle and to applaud the hard work of so many people in the effort to end hunger.

We hope that our 25th anniversary can also be a time to spur real change. With a new Governor to take office January 1, we want to put hunger back on the political agenda. Particularly in the world's richest country, hunger shouldn't be viewed as some unsolvable problem and EFPs shouldn't be viewed as permanent institutions.

Hunger in America is solely a political and economic problem; we have the ability to grow enough food to feed everyone. What we lack is the political will to address problems like inequality.



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

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