



Getting to the Root of the Problem GRASSROOTS

The Newsletter of the Hunger Action Network of New York State

September 2004

Faces of Hunger Action Network

Ed Fowler is the Executive Director of Neighbors Together, a soup kitchen and community center committed to ending hunger and poverty in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville community in Brooklyn.

Their mission is deeply grounded in their belief in the dignity and potential of each person. Since 1982 they have been fighting hunger on three levels: through their daily soup kitchen alleviates the immediate crisis by providing hot, nutritious meals to 300 people a day; their range of social services address the struggles which go hand-in-hand with hunger -- unemployment, lack of education, homelessness, addiction, and, inadequate health care; and their neighborhood-directed advocacy and community development efforts strive to transform social structures that result in poverty and hunger.



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Pataki Weilds Vetoes in Latest State Budget Ever

In mid- August, the State Legislature finally passed a state budget, rejecting many of the Governor's proposed cuts in welfare and health care. The budget was late for the 20th year in a row. The budget deal however did not include Governor Pataki.

On Friday, Aug. 20, Pataki vetoed hundreds of budget items involving more than a billion dollars. The Governor stated that he wanted to veto more of the legislative's actions, but was precluded from doing so due to how the budget was written. While he could line item veto any increases enacted by the legislature (such as in the TANF surplus, including \$350,000 extra for HPNAP), he couldn't veto the legislature's decision not to enact the cuts he had proposed.

The Governor also vetoed the minimum wage increase. It is unclear whether Senator Buno and the state Senate will agree to override any of the Governor's vetoes.

The court-ordered increase in education funding resulting from the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit was the main sticking point during budget negotiations this year. New York's highest court ordered the state to resolve the illegal underfunding of the NYC school system by July 30th. That deadline came and went with the court finally appointing three Special Masters to develop a resolution. In the meantime, both houses of the legislature passed a full-year school aid appropriation that is \$740 million above last year's level.

The Economic Security Campaign's (ES2) priorities in this year's state budget included full restoration of proposed welfare and health care cuts in the Governor's Budget that would have devastate tens of thousands of families that are already struggling to make ends meet. The potential impact of these cuts resonated throughout the state allowing ES2 to grow to more than 200 member organizations that were mobilized throughout the session to organize their communities, meet with their legislators in the local district and in Albany, testify at local budget hearings, and to submit letters-to-the-editor and op-ed's to the local newspapers.

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Notes from the Executive Director...

The 2004 State Legislative session has been probably the most unproductive ever – though that is what the press said after the 2003 Legislative session. We saw no movement of job creation legislation for the unemployed despite the fact that NYS has lost over 200,000 net new jobs in the past several years.

As we go to print, hundreds of millions of dollars to fund local programs for the poor, mental health and human services has been vetoed by the Governor - including \$350,000 for emergency food programs. But if you are one of the few ultra-rich, not to worry, your massive tax cuts were maintained.

Politicians are lining up photo opportunities to hand out food to the “hungry” during the NYC convention. But we’ve heard no plans yet as to whether the State Senate will be willing to reconvene after Labor Day to override the vetoes. Nor has Senate Majority Leader Bruno said whether he will override the Governor’s veto of the state minimum wage increase to \$7.15 an hour. The fate of the wages of hundreds of thousands of low-income New Yorkers rest with one man.

Once again the fate of the working poor is being held hostage to Albany’s games. The game with the minimum wage began with Governor Pataki. He first issued what is known as a message of necessity to waive the normal three day waiting period for a new bill so that Senator Bruno could bring up the new compromise immediately. But after it passed by a huge margin in both houses, Pataki decided to veto it.

Meanwhile, new Census data shows nationally an additional 1.2 million people were poor last year - up by 4 million people since 2000. For nearly 36 million Americans, the recession is still on. The numbers are extremely troubling for children. Since 2000, the number of poor children has grown by 1.3 million. There were 5.6 million children living in extreme poverty (less than \$7,500 for a family of three) - up by nearly one million children since 2000.

Our state legislators are all up for election this year. Make sure you let them know how you feel about the minimum wage and the other vetoes. And make sure your program helps register to vote as many of your guests and members as possible so that our voices are stronger.

We also urge you to come to our Annual Meeting on September 27, 2004 to be held in New York City. With increasing attacks on the poor and massive cuts to programs servicing the poor, more than ever we need to work together to strategize and mobilize if we are to defeat hunger and poverty in our midst. You will have the opportunity to learn about exciting new advocacy opportunities and to be trained on upcoming issues of concern. We especially invite emergency food program guests and other low-income individuals to attend and provide your insights and energies to our work.

Bich Ha Pham

Executive Director

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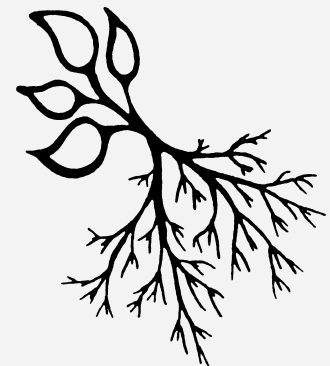
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Voter Registration and Mobilization

It is important that low and moderate income folks are registered to vote, so that lawmakers will pay more attention to hunger – and to what HANNYS says. Hunger Action and other anti-poverty groups do not make campaign contributions to candidates or parties, so elected officials only listen to us if they feel we represent lots of voters.

Applications must be postmarked not later than October 8th and received by a board of elections not later than October 13th to be eligible to vote in the General Election. You can obtain voter registration materials from the local Board of Elections, HANNYS or the State BOE (1-800-FOR-VOTE hotline).

New voters who register by mail this year will be required to provide proof of identity such as a driver's license or utility bill. There will be a need for voter education on how this new system will work.

It is most effective to incorporate voter registration into your day-to-day programming. Offer voter registration during the intake or application process. Voter registration cards set out in waiting rooms all too often just sit there unused. However, when guests are asked to register by someone they trust, such as an agency worker, there is a greater likelihood that they will register to vote.

Follow these steps:

1. Appoint one permanent staff member to oversee voter registration activities.

2. Agency intake forms and procedures should include the question, "If you are not registered to vote where you now live, would you like to register here today?"

3. Always offer to help guests in completing the voter registration form. Check to be sure that the application is properly filled out, and offer to mail it to the elections office.

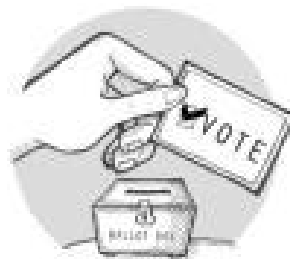
4. Maintain a record of the people who register to vote at your agency. Use this record as a resource to Get Out The Vote (GOTV) on Election Day.

5. Before Election Day, make sure your guests know where their polling place is located. Arrange for rides to the polls for your guests. On Election Day, remind your guests to vote.

While non-profit health and human service agencies can offer voter registration, it must be non-partisan. That is, non-profits cannot endorse a particular candidate or political party. However, you can collect information from the candidates and political groups about their stand on issues and make that available to the public. You can also choose to organize a legislative forum for local candidates to speak on current issues

WHO CAN REGISTER? Any U.S. citizen can register. You must be 18 years of age or older by election day.

DO I NEED A HOME TO REGISTER? No. You do need a mailing address. This can be a shelter, church, or a post office—a place where you can pick up mail.



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It is Time for Universal Health Care

Hunger Action Network, as part of the ES2 campaign, has long advocated to make health care a right. All New Yorkers should have access to affordable, quality health care.

Hunger Action Network also wants to make the health care system more focused on keeping people healthy rather than spending extra money to cure them once they get sick. This would mean greater investment in quality of life programs such as housing, nutrition and clean air and water. The lack of investment in such programs is one reason why the US health care system has fallen to 37th in the World Health Organization rankings.

Many health care groups have retreated from universal health care as being politically undoable, arguing instead for incremental increases in coverage that target “politically attractive populations” such as children and working adults. This has been a debate that has gone on for three decades. But while new programs have been added, health care costs have continued to increase – we now pay nearly double any other country while the number of uninsured have continued to rise (3 million New Yorkers, 43 million Americans).

In recent years, the increasing costs for long term care for senior citizens and the disabled under the state’s Medicaid program has put increasing pressure on local taxes. New York is unusual in that it requires the counties and New York City to pay a portion of the Medicaid bill (about 22%). The counties claim that Medicaid is taking up all of their local property tax revenues and want the state to pick up more of the costs. The Governor proposed that the state, over a 10 year period, pick up the longterm care portion of Medicaid. This however favored upstate, where longterm care represents 75% of the Medicaid bill; in

NYC, it represents only 50%. The Governor also proposed hundreds of millions of dollars in cuts in services in Medicaid and Family Health Plus. The legislature eventually decided to reject most of the cuts.

The issue of rising health care costs is not going away however. The counties will continue to push the state to either pick up most of the local contribution and/or cut services. Since the Governor — and many state legislators — are reluctant to make wealthy taxpayers and corporations pay more of their fair share in taxes, there will be increased pressure on the state legislature to cut services.

Hunger Action Network wants to cut the amount of money spent on health care, while improving services, providing universal health care coverage, ensuring that patients and doctors decide what health services are obtained, and paying for long term care and drug costs. This would actually be possible if New York and/or the federal government would embrace the type of health care systems used by most of the other industrial democracies. The US spends 14% of its Gross National Product (GNP) on health care while leaving tens of millions without coverage; other countries spend 8 to 9 % of GNP on health care while covering everyone and providing better health care services.

A single payer universal health care system saves money while expanding services by eliminating the waste, paperwork and profit margin of the private health insurance system – as much as 30 cents out of every health care dollar. The Physicians National Health Program, representing more than 8,000 doctors, estimates that such a national system would save up to \$200 billion annually, providing the funds needed to expand services. Some call it Medicare for All – noting that we spend only 2% of

the Medicare budget on overhead rather than 30%.

While a single payer system means that one program pays all bills, it also keeps – unlike HMOs – the decision about health care in the hands of consumers and doctors. Consumers would be free to choose their own health care providers.

A major problem with incremental reforms is that it doesn’t address the problem of increasing costs – and corporate control and profit of the health care system. Different populations and constituencies (doctors, consumers, seniors, hospitals) compete for a limited amount of resources. Since it avoids the political fight over cutting the waste of private health insurance, the incremental approach to expanding health care services forces up the cost of the overall health care system.

Hunger Action Network supports the state allocating up to one million dollars to conduct a study of the various approaches to providing universal health care. Almost no one disputes the goal – what they argue about is how to pay for it and the role of private health insurance. A government-funded study would lay out the cost-benefits of the various approaches. This would provide lawmakers and the public with real data rather than relying on the number provided by the health care industry or advocates.

This fall, our state legislators and federal congressional representatives are up for election. HANNYS is developing a series of questions for these candidates. We also encourage local groups to organize health care forums where candidates are asked to attend to hear about universal health care and to share their ideas.

Counties Can Reduce Fingerprinting for Food Stamps

The NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance has issued new rules urging counties to exempt various food stamp applicants from being fingerprinted.

Fingerprinting of food stamp applicants was implemented by Governor Mario Cuomo during his campaign against George Pataki. His staff told HANNYS that they were confident that legal aid groups would get the fingerprinting thrown out in court, and by implementing it during the campaign, they avoided

it becoming a "political issue". Of course the courts did not throw out the rule.

Local Departments of Social Services can now exempt: individuals who have their face-to-face interview waived; group home residents; 18-21 year olds who are not married or head of households; senior citizens; those who work during DSS office hours; and adult who have to travel more than 1 hour to get fingerprinted.

Counties can exempt these groups simply by filling out a check-off form. Counties were notified of the change on July 28th. The memo is posted on the Western New York Law Center's website (www.wnylc.net/ob/docs/o4_LCM-11.pdf). They are supposed to file for exemptions by September 30th. They can also request additional exempt categories of applicants.

Contact your local DSS office to urge them to follow through on the exemptions.

Thanksgiving Action Against Hunger on Mon. Nov. 22



Join hundreds of individuals and groups across the state in calling for an end to hunger and its causes in NYS for the Thanksgiving Action Against Hunger on Monday, November 22nd, 2004. Raise consciousness and the political will to make a fundamental change that ensures the basic human right to food in our state.

Food drives are always needed since they keep hunger in the public eye and raise food for food pantries and soup kitchens during the holiday season. But to demand an end to hunger's causes, please also organize events like rallies, speak-outs, educational forums or even letter writing campaigns about hunger related issues.

Hanging up posters drawn by children, or calling your local legislator is also effective.

Contact Hunger Action to become a sponsor and organize an event, however big or small, near you!

Thanksgiving Action Response Form

Please fill out this form and send back to HANNYS at 275 State Street, Albany New York, 12210, fax 518-434-7390 by Monday, November 8th, 2004.

_____ Yes! I/we will cosponsor the Thanksgiving Action Against Hunger on Monday, November 22nd, 2004

_____ I/we will coordinate an event/activity on the day or week of the Thanksgiving Action.

Contact Name: _____

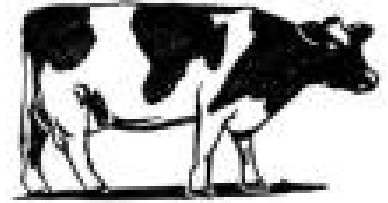
Organization: _____

Address _____

City/Town: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ E-Mail _____

Hunger Action Network Green Space



Hunger Action's Food Justice Policy Agenda

Hunger Action is embarking on a new project to develop a policy agenda that promotes community food justice throughout New York State. Community food justice, also known as Community Food Security, is a different approach to ending hunger that not only seeks to provide people with food, but also examines where the food is coming from, if it is healthy, and how it is grown. Food justice aims to end hunger by uniting regional economies, communities in need, and locally grown food.

Our first task in developing a policy agenda is to hold regional meetings throughout New York that will include listening sessions. Hunger Action will gather grassroots policy recommendations on food justice issues during these listening sessions. Participants will contribute their assessments of regional agriculture and food insecurity, as well as share their ideas on how to bring together local production and consumers of all income levels. We will then generate a Sustainable Food Systems Policy Report for presentation to NYS officials in 2005.

Hunger Action will be cosponsoring the next food justice meeting with Food for All and other groups in Buffalo on October 7, 2004. We will also be holding one in New York City in January. In addition to the listening sessions, the meetings will also help educate people about the concept of community food justice and various food justice projects.

Why Food Justice?

New Yorkers purchase \$43 billion worth of food each year, but only \$2.8 billion goes to the State's farmers. Ironically, New York's farmers are twice as likely to qualify for food assistance programs as the average New Yorker. At the same time, the number of people who must rely on Emergency Food Programs throughout New York continues to increase. In response, Emergency Food Providers and many others who work to end hunger are beginning to explore how we might improve access to healthy food within the context of our "food system."

A food system is essentially a web of connections, from production to consumer, through which food makes it to your table. Our typical food system plays a major role in the hunger crisis in our state. In the case of a person or family that is food insecure, linkages within the food system are weak at some point so that adequate food does not reach their table. For example, an elderly person living alone may be physically unable to access a farmers' market or nearby supermarket; many New York farmers are struggling to find markets alongside community members unable to meet their food needs. These are examples of systemic problems that may involve a range of challenges, such as lack of transportation, limited income, businesses not being willing to open shop in inner cities, or inadequate links between local farmers and their communities. The food jus-

tice movement addresses the root causes of hunger and strives to make a more democratic food system that gives communities greater control in choosing how their food is produced, distributed, and accessed.

School Lunches

Schools nationwide are raising the price of lunch, in some cases for the first time in more than a decade and by as much as \$1. The price hikes are responses to rising food, labor, and transportation costs. While typical annual food inflation is about 3 percent, dairy prices in June were 27 percent higher than a year ago, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Meat and cheese were up 11 percent and poultry 9 percent.

SSI and Food Stamps

Nearly 100,000 New Yorkers who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and live alone will receive a food stamp benefit card in the mail. None of them will have filled out an application, talked to a caseworker or visited an office. The new policy is one of USDA's approved Combined Application Projects (CAPs) aimed at serving more people who are eligible for food stamps. While food stamp participants are expected to top one million this summer, an estimated 700,000 NYers who are eligible for food stamps do not receive them, according to CFRC.

Fun with Tomatoes

Tomato Facts: Tomatoes are made up mostly of water but they are packed with great nutrition. At 35 calories for a medium size tomato, they are a great source of Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Fiber, along with many other nutritional benefits.

Selection: Judge a tomato by its aroma and not by its looks—be sure to smell for a fresh earthy scent. Choose plump tomatoes with smooth skin and avoid tomatoes with deep cracks in its skin.

In the Kitchen: Use fully ripe tomatoes quickly. Tomatoes ripen at room temperature, not in the refrigerator. If you must refrigerate tomatoes, bring them back to room temperature before eating in order to bring back the flavor. Use fresh tomatoes within 3 to 4 days, and if you can't, make a simple sauce or salsa that can be kept in the refrigerator for a few extra days.

Salsa Mexicana

Makes about 2 cups

3 ripe, red tomatoes, stem end removed, chopped into cubes
 1 small white onion, chopped
 2-3 chili peppers, stemmed and minced
 ½ cup cilantro leaves, chopped
 Salt, to taste

In a medium bowl, toss together the tomatoes, onion, peppers, and cilantro. Add salt to taste and let the mixture rest at least 30 minutes before serving.

Serve with tortilla chips, add to tacos, or serve as a side dish for any meal.

Enjoy!

Vegetable Facts and Recipe from the United Way of NYC



Rob Farrow, Penny Flood, Amy Blumsack, Curran Gaughan, Ed Flower, Debbie Watson

Faces...from 1

Ed first came to Neighbors Together in 1992 as a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. He had just graduated from college and wanted to spend a year working full-time for social justice. The people he encountered at Neighbors Together changed his life. "My connections with them opened my eyes to the reality of oppression in our country. I learned how harsh, unfair and unnecessary poverty is, and I learned that overcoming poverty requires a diverse approach," says Ed.

That's what drew him back to Neighbors Together two years ago in the role of Executive Director. Their philosophy is that providing meals is critical, but by itself is not enough. Providing social service support is critical, but not enough. Policy advocacy is critical, but they can't ignore the real and immediate suffering of the many hungry people in our community. So they try to address all three aspects of fighting hunger.

Ed says that, "Hunger Action has been extremely helpful to us in this fight. As a small organization that needs to feed and support a large volume people, we rely on Hunger Action to do the research and organizing necessary to adequately address hunger at a policy level."

"All of the Hunger Action activities we have participated in over the past year, from regional meetings to on-site education about how the state budget works to a lobbying trip to Albany, have inspired a sense of hope that we're not alone in the fight against hunger and that change is possible."

Making the trip to Albany in March to speak out about the unfair state budget was a high point for many at Neighbors Together. Anne Serrano, one of the 13 members of their group, said, "I found going to Albany rewarding. It reminded me of our civil rights – we have them as long as we fight to keep them."

"I'm tired of this administration balancing the budget on the backs of the poor," added Bernice Lovett, another Albany day participant. "People that are needy, we don't have a lot of money to donate to their campaigns. We're just not important to them." Robert Lattimore, who spoke at the Capitol, agreed. "It goes to show that people have to get out and talk to these politicians. You have a voice, and your voice has to be heard."

Ed is proud to work at Neighbors Together with passionate, concerned people like Anne, Bernice and Robert. And he's proud to be a member of Hunger Action because of our strong stance on creating a just New York where everyone has the resources to feed themselves.

Pataki Vetoes Minimum Wage Increase

A few months after he was elected as Senate Majority Leader in 1995, Joe Bruno told HANNYS Board member Fred Pfeiffer that he supported a raise in the state minimum wage. While he has kept repeating this position over the years, Senator Bruno had managed to always find a last minute excuse not to enact a raise. Senator Bruno finally followed through on his 1995 statement and allowed the Senate to pass a three-step increase in the minimum wage to \$7.15 an hour.

Some political observers felt that Senator Bruno's new found resolve was due to the election difficulties facing two Senate Republican candidates. In one case, Guy Vellela (Bronx-Westchester), a long-time incumbent who was Chair of the Senate Labor Committee was forced to resign shortly before pleading guilty in a bribery case. The other election involves Sen. Olga Mendez, who had recently changed her party affiliation from Democratic to Republican, prompting a major challenge by the Democrats to take back her seat. Mendez had been appointed the Chair of the Labor Committee following Vellela's resignation.

Bruno's support of the minimum wage resulted in public threats from Michael Long, the chair of the Conservative Party, who denied the party endorsement to Bruno and another Senate Leader. Bruno publicly remarked that it was illegal for him to trade his vote for such an endorsement.

The minimum wage page overwhelmingly passed in both houses – 57 to 7 in the Senate and 116 to 19 in the Assembly. Both houses easily had the two-thirds majority needed to sustain a veto.

Unfortunately for working New Yorkers, Governor Pataki – who had issued a

message of necessity which waived the normal three day waiting period required before a new bill could be voted upon – decided to veto the bill. Pataki said he favored a minimum wage increase, but on a national level. He argued that raising it in NY would leave local businesses at a “distinct competitive disadvantage” with businessmen in bordering New Jersey and Pennsylvania, where the minimum wage is \$5.15. Pataki forget to mention however that other neighboring states such as Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island have long had higher minimum wages.

According to a recent study by the Fiscal Policy Institute, total employment (as well as the number of small businesses and employment in small businesses) grew faster in recent years in the states with minimum wages above the federal level than in states requiring only the federal minimum. Raising the minimum wage would not harm small businesses in New York State, nor would it drive jobs out of the state.

Some small business people took exception with Pataki's veto. Matt Funicello, owner of Rock Hill Bakehouse which employs 40 people, wrote to local papers: As a small business owner, I wish to express my disgust with Gov. George Pataki's veto of an increase in New York's minimum wage. Pataki cites his concern that “small business” will suffer should the wage be raised even slightly. But where is this small business that pays \$5.15 per hour? I, and many other business owners, are tired of being used as the scapegoat by politicians who serve their big business constitu-



ents by denying some very basic truths about the minimum wage.”

Funicello added: The lowest allowable wage is not usually paid by truly small businesses. It is paid by huge corporations that already benefit from economic development scams, tax discounts, subsidized payroll and other state-provided, tax-based benefit programs.

While the Assembly has overridden the veto, Bruno has stalled on the issue, saying that it was important to focus on the budget first. Some feel that he may wait until after the Republican national convention. Others argue that Pataki's veto allows Republicans facing re-election this fall to tell voters that they voted for a hike – it was the Governor (not up for re-election to 2006) that stopped it – while telling the business community that in the end it was the Republicans who stopped the hike.



The ABCs of School Breakfast

One of the best ways to spark improved health and learning in children is through school breakfast, and serving it in the classroom at no charge to all children is an approach that works, claims the Nutrition Consortium of New York State in an interim report on its Academic & Breakfast Connection (ABC) Pilot project.

At the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year, 19 schools in upstate New York adopted the ABC model to improve academic performance and reduce childhood hunger. The small, medium, and large schools in the pilot are spread across urban, suburban, and rural locations. Breakfasts are served free to all students and are eaten in the classroom. Sixty-five percent of students in the

ABC pilot classrooms are eating breakfast daily, the Consortium reports, up

from 22 percent last year, when breakfast was served in cafeterias.

The breakfast in the classroom model allows schools to adapt their serving methods to local needs and resources. In some schools, carts are set up in the school foyer for students to pick up breakfast as they leave the bus or enter the school. In others, students pick up breakfast in the cafeteria or some other station before going to class. In a few locations, food service staff delivers breakfast directly to the classroom. Breakfast may be served hot or cold.

Four in five teachers agreed that there were fewer complaints of hunger from students and 70 percent of teachers said the pilot does not interfere with their teaching. Other highlights from the first half-year of operations include a majority of schools reporting a decline in ab-

senteism averaging 23 percent; decrease in tardiness of 29 percent; 49 percent reduction in disciplinary referrals to the office; and 24 percent drop in visits to the school nurse.

The Consortium, which receives Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP) funds through the State of New York, emphasizes its results are preliminary. Additional data collection, follow-up with schools, academic evaluations of the pilot, and outreach to more schools will occur this year, supported in part by CFNP. The bottom line is that more children are getting the nutrition they need to do well in school. As one student commented on his drawing of a bagel + his smiling face = an essay paper, "It helps me think better." To view the interim report, go to: http://frac.org/ABC_Report.pdf

Budget...from 1

The budget unfortunately does include the \$400 million increase in the sales tax on clothing and shoes.

Welfare Cuts

Three of the four welfare cuts were rejected by the legislature, including the "full family sanction" proposal that targets children by cutting welfare benefits for the entire family if the head of household is deemed to be out of compliance with work requirements. The other two restored cuts include the proposed reduction of the Earned Income Disregard that allows working families who still qualify for welfare to keep more of their income and the 10 percent cut in the already inadequate welfare grant for families who have received assistance for more than 5 years and for single adults and childless couples on welfare for more than 1 year.

The fourth cut that has been enacted targets families with a disabled member receiving SSI. This cut, made through an Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) regulatory change, reduces the welfare benefits of a household with a disabled family member receiving SSI by an average of \$90 per month. Additional costs associated with caring for family members who are disabled are often substantial.

Health Care

The legislature rejected the Governor's proposed elimination of Medicaid benefits such as podiatry and adult dental services. Proposed increases in Medicaid copayments were rejected. The Legislature did accept requiring managed care recipients to have a co-payment of 50 cents for generic drugs and \$2 for brand name drugs, restoring \$2.9 million for the Medicaid Program.

The Legislature enacted several changes to the Family Health Plus Program including establishing co-payments for prescription drugs, doctor visits, and hospital stays similar to the co-payments made by Medicaid recipients. The Legislature also established an asset and resource test for program eligibility. Individuals with assets and resources higher than 150 % of Poverty Level will no longer be eligible for the Family Health Plus Program. The legislature did reject the Governor's proposed benefit reductions for FHP such as the elimination of vision and dental services.

The legislature rejected the Governor's proposal to absorb – over ten years – the local governments' contribution to Medicaid program, instead agreeing over two years to pick up the local share of FHP. Many county officials dismissed this as a shell game, since cuts in other areas of the budget offset their reduced costs for FHP.

Fit for Food Fundraiser

Hunger Action will host our second annual Fit for Food event during the 2004 Thanksgiving Holiday week. From November 22 -28, we invite health conscious New Yorkers, health club owners and instructors, and select corporate sponsors to join us in our efforts to raise public awareness about hunger in our communities.

We all know that hunger is a year round problem, yet it is during Thanksgiving that hunger is in the forefront of our thoughts. Many New Yorkers want to do something to help – and Fit for Food is a great way to contribute to the fight against hunger.

Fit for Food participants can support our work by committing to exercise during the week of Thanksgiving. They go to the health club or activity that they already belong to and get their friends and family to support their efforts by making a pledge. All proceeds go directly to Hunger Action Network.

This event is a call especially to those who are health conscious and to the health community to learn more about the risk of hunger and of poor nutrition to low-income families. Through this event, we hope to promote our work in creating increased access to nutritious,

locally grown foods for low-income communities.

Last year, we had several gyms and dozens of individuals participate, including Hunger Action Network Board member Bill DiFazio. We even held a press event at a Queens location of the nationwide chain Curves for Women.

Please call 212-741-8192 for more information about Fit for Food. Sign-up now to help end hunger in New York State!

Taking a moment for older adults

National Older Americans' Month this spring emphasized "Aging Well, Living Well." Indeed, our parents and grandparents deserve nothing less.

The federal Administration on Aging chose this year's theme to celebrate older Americans who are living longer, healthier, and more productive lives. An older person's health status most often determines his or her ability to live a productive later life. Numerous studies reveal that staying physically active, eating right, and getting regular health screenings can help prevent or delay many diseases and disease-related disabilities.

However, a NYS Office for the Aging survey estimates that one of every four older New Yorkers (60 or older) is considered nutritionally at risk as a result of varying issues: illness, poverty, isolation, or disability. In fact, tens of thousands are going hungry needlessly every month. When a senior reduces food intake due to a lack of financial resources, they risk their ability to maintain an independent, healthy lifestyle.

If you care about feeding those who are hungry, one of the best things you can do is empower them with information and educate them about what programs are available.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Stamp Program is the main nutritional resource for seniors who are eligible. However, only 17% of seniors in upstate New York and 45% in New York City potentially eligible to receive food stamps are participating in this important anti-hunger program. This is regrettable because the Food Stamp Program is an excellent defense against hunger and provides a boost in income for older adults who sometimes are forced to choose between buying food or paying for medicine, utilities or other needs. Although the average monthly benefit ranges from \$77 to \$164, depending upon the household's size, many seniors do not apply because they are not aware that they may be eligible.

The Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP), available in 41 out of 57 upstate counties and in New York

City, helps to promote awareness about and increase access to the Food Stamp Program. Through community-based agencies, NOEP Coordinators provide free assistance to people with the food stamp application process.

Like Social Security, the Food Stamp program is an entitlement program, which means that everyone who meets the eligibility criteria can receive benefits. Also, the Food Stamp Program eligibility guidelines are more generous for people aged 60 and older.

As the Administration on Aging promotes, let's help *all* New Yorkers age well and live well. Please encourage your family members or neighbors who could benefit from the additional nutritional assistance that food stamps provide to call their local department of social services for more information. You may also contact the Nutrition Consortium of New York State, Inc. at (518) 436-8757 x20 or www.HungerNYS.org to see if there is a NOEP in your county.

Become a Member of Hunger Action

Hunger Action Network of New York State (HANNYS) works to end hunger by addressing its root causes, including poverty. We bring together low-income individuals, communities of faith, food providers and community advocates to increase the amount of food provided to hungry New Yorkers, while building unified statewide advocacy for long-term solutions to hunger, and its root causes, including poverty.

Across the state, HANNYS' non-partisan work includes: legislative advocacy on anti-hunger and economic justice issues; technical assistance for emergency food programs; promotion of community food programs such as Community Support Agriculture (CSA) and community gardens; monitoring the performance of local Departments of Social Services offices. We are working to reduce hunger and poverty in our communities by: Advocating for an increase in the minimum wage and public assistance benefit levels to lift families up and out of poverty; Expanding food security policies, gleaning, grow-an-extra-row, community gardening and community food buying clubs; Advancing a comprehensive Jobs Creation Program; and, Promoting universal health care and universal quality child care.

Member Benefits Include:

- Free quarterly newsletter: The Grassroots newsletter will be mailed to you throughout the year to keep you apprised of what's going on throughout the state, as well as regional information and federal updates.
- Email and fax policy alerts:
- Notification of and Reduced Admission to HANNYS Events: Members are informed about HANNYS events in their areas (such as Food Stamp workshops or budget forums)
- Opportunities to Shape HANNYS' Policy Agenda: HANNYS members meet annually to share with us their insights on current policy issues and problems they see in the community. .

Lower- Income Farmers Markets

Folks are getting involved in setting up farmers markets geared toward lower income New Yorkers. For instance, the Northside Neighborhood Network Association in Ithaca established a "Second Sale Market" that sells farmers' left over or gleaned produce at discount prices in low-income communities. That way, food that would otherwise go to waste is sold at a low price. This makes sure that low-income families can buy low priced veggies and small farmers can still make a profit.

The Northside Neighborhood Network collaborated closely with the farmer's market to make this project possible. A part-time staff person and community volunteers operate the initiative, collecting left over produce from the local farmer's market and selling it at lower prices in their neighborhood.

Others have organized "Fresh From the Farm Sundays" farmer's markets. Coordinators at Schenectady Inner City Ministry identified a local farmer cooperative, called the Farmers' Neighborhood Association, that is interested in selling some of its produce at discount prices to low-income New Yorkers. The produce is sold after service at various churches on Sunday mornings!

Though this initiative is a fairly new project, it has been successful at reaching low-income customers. Charles Abraham, the farmer that represents the farm cooperative, provides transportation of the food. Community volunteers and parishioners run the farm stands located at the churches. Four churches in Schenectady have participated thus far and more are anticipated to participate in September 2004.



If you are interested in duplicating these types of projects and organizing a Lower Income Farmers Market near you, contact Hunger Action Network.

HANNYS Annual Meeting NYC Mon. Sept. 27

For the first time, Hunger Action Network will hold its annual statewide membership meeting in NYC on Monday Sept. 27.

Despite devastating budget cuts and unprecedented attacks on the poor, grassroots groups are working harder every day with fewer resources to meet the growing needs of their communities. In the struggle to end poverty, we find our greatest strength in the voices of grassroots activists and community members.

We invite you to attend to renew your dedication as a Hunger Action member. It's also a perfect opportunity for new

people to learn about Hunger Action and become involved.

Our work combines grassroots organizing with state level research, education and advocacy. Hunger Action brings together emergency food providers, low-income individuals, faith groups and grassroots advocates to increase the amount of food provided to hungry New Yorkers, while building unified statewide advocacy for long-term solutions to hunger, and its root causes, including poverty.

We invite you to join us to: Help develop creative solutions to the issues facing low-income New Yorkers; Strategize

about ways to connect communities with locally grown, fresh nutritious food; Sharpen your advocacy & organizing skills; and, Network with community members and advocates from around the state.

The keynote speaker will be Bernard White, long-time community activist and Program Director for WBAI, New York's peace and justice radio station

Workshop topics include community food initiatives; job creation and a living wage; universal health care; and, defining hunger. There will also be a panel discussion on our revenue campaign and the Empire State Economic Security (ES2) Campaign.

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) \$35small organization
 \$60 mediumorganization \$120 large organization

Please send me information about volunteer opportunities

Name _____ Organization _____
Address _____ City _____ Zip _____
Phone (day) _____ (eve.) _____ (FAX) _____ (E-Mail) _____

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

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