

Advocacy Corner: The New Farm Bill – Pros and Cons for Food Bank Participants

After more than two years of negotiations, headlines, and citizen advocacy, the Farm Bill has finally made its way through Congress to the desk of the President who signed it in mid-February. The new Farm Bill has both bad and good news for people who are struggling to put food on the table.

Most disturbing is a cut in the Supplemental Food Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly Food Stamps. The cut is focused on a program called Heat and Eat that enabled some of the families that received as little as \$1 in federal heating assistance to receive increased SNAP benefits. Last month, Congress changed the rules, stipulating in the Farm Bill that a family would have to have at least \$20 in heating assistance before receiving increased SNAP benefits. In a surprise move, Governor Corbett joined the governors of Connecticut and New York in agreeing to increase federal energy aid from \$1 to \$20. No Pennsylvania money will be used.

Most households participating in SNAP have incomes well below the allowable maximum of 130% of poverty (\$19,530 for a family of 3 in 2013). Any loss of SNAP dollars is most devastating to children and elderly or disabled persons. The largest portion of SNAP benefits, about 83% of all benefits, go to people who are unable to work because of age or disability.

Without the Governor's action, Pennsylvania might have lost \$136.6 million each year over the next 10 years. These dollars, spent in local retail food stores, generate about \$1.75 in economic activity, including additional consumer purchases and jobs in the food industry, for every \$1.00 of SNAP. The food industry, especially major food retailers, were on record in opposition to cuts in SNAP.

Become a Hunger Advocate!

Advocacy is critical to fighting hunger. At Second Harvest, we depend on volunteers who want to learn the issues and educate others about local hunger and what we can do to ensure that families in need have access to nutritious food.

Advocacy activities include:

- Contacting elected officials
- Attending public meetings
- Spreading awareness about local hunger
- Planning your own events

If you are interested in becoming a Hunger Advocate or if you have questions, contact Janet Ney, Second Harvest Coordinator of Advocacy and Outreach, at 484-893-1106 or jney@caclv.org.

receiving SNAP.

The new Farm Bill also attempts to provide additional opportunities for purchasing healthful food; retail outlets will be required to stock more perishable food, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, and administrators will include more farmers' markets as SNAP retail participants.

For food banks and the network of emergency food providers, the good news is that The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) will receive substantial increases over the life of the bill. In 2015, TEFAP grants will increase by \$50 million and, in 2016, the grants will increase by \$40 million. In subsequent years, there will be smaller increases on a declining scale.

The Second Harvest Food Bank is planning for increased need for food assistance at the emergency food pantries, some of which have seen significant increases since the beginning of the recession.



Food FOR Thought

Winter 2014

SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK OF LEHIGH VALLEY &

NORTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA

Our Mission to End Hunger

By Ann McManus

“Our mission is to collect and distribute food through area non-profits to people in need and provide resources for education and advocacy to end hunger.” – Second Harvest Food Bank Mission Statement

As part of our relationship with Feeding America, Second Harvest Food Bank has an assigned responsibility to the six counties of the northeast corner of Pennsylvania—Carbon, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, and Wayne counties. As an organization, we are expected to solicit funds and food throughout the region and to make that food (and by extension, the funds) available to people in need in all six counties.

Because of distance and sparse population, reaching all corners of our region is sometimes a challenge. Throughout this newsletter, you will read about both mundane and creative ways that we are working to end hunger all over our territory.



Distributing food and grocery products out of our warehouse facility (pictured) is a huge part of the Second Harvest mission, but we also strive to learn more about the root causes of hunger so we can educate and advocate to end hunger completely.

To collect food: Read about our Retail Grocery Store Donation Programs on page 3. What a boon to the pantries that receive donations through these programs and to their participants! The food and grocery product distributed accounted for a portion of the more than 7 million pounds of food that the Second Harvest network received from all sources in 2013.

To distribute food: In 2013, Second Harvest distributed just over 7 million pounds of food—a record year—through our network of 200 member agencies in six counties. More than 69,000 people, 48% of whom are children and senior citizens, received at least some of the food they consumed from a Second Harvest member agency. Emergency food pantries, shelters, and soup kitchens in Lehigh and Northampton counties alone accounted for more than 36,000 of those participants.

To provide resources for education: We couldn't talk about alleviating hunger without mentioning our Cooking Matters program (page 2). This small, but growing initiative started with fewer than 20 participants. In 2013, nearly 250 individuals were afforded the opportunity to learn about nutrition. We estimate that each of those people shared new-found information with 10 others stimulating a “ripple-effect” of nutrition education.

To advocate: When looking at the “big picture,” we realize that providing a 3-day supply of food to participant families only provides them with a 3-day food supply (about 10% of the food they will consume in thirty days). Other issues, like unemployment and underemployment, illness, lack of affordable housing, and other root causes got them to this place. Currently, we have a person on staff who assists individuals and families with SNAP (food stamp) applications. We work with Community Action Committee of Lehigh Valley (CACLV), of which we are program, and its other programs, as well as various state and national associations (see back cover) on those “big picture” issues that will ultimately lessen our role in Hunger.

As we move forward with our mission, following the guidance of the Strategic Plan that the Second Harvest Advisory Board and staff worked long and hard to develop, our focus will be on continuing to distribute food to people who are hungry now, emphasizing advocacy and nutrition education, and finding a new facility to base our operations. With the help of donors like you, we may not “end hunger” right away, but we will certainly make a dent. Thank you.

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Cooking Matters in 2013

We are pleased to report that Cooking Matters programming at Second Harvest grew by leaps and bounds throughout the Food Bank's six county service area in 2013. We offered 23 Cooking Matters signature courses (once a week classes for a six week period) in Carbon, Lehigh, and Northampton counties. The courses, which aim to empower low-income participants to shop for and prepare healthy, delicious meals on a budget, were offered to all ages: Kids, Teens, Adults, and Families. We were delighted to honor nearly 250 Cooking Matters graduates. Of our 73 Cooking Matters for Adults graduates, 78% reported using what they learned to make a low-cost, delicious recipe from class at home for their families.

"I eat more whole wheat food and I was very surprised that I could feed 4 people on \$10.00."
-Cooking Matters for Adults participant

"I love everything about it, it is fun learning about cooking. I loved making new things. I love just love EVERYTHING."
-Cooking Matters for Kids participant

Additionally, 23 graduates reported that they did not run out of food before they got money to buy more as frequently after participating in Cooking Matters.

In addition to Cooking Matters classes, we offered eight Cooking Matters at the Store tours with the help of Cedar Crest Dietetic interns to benefit 43 participants and their families in Lehigh and Northampton counties.

Cooking Matters at the Store is a one-time, interactive grocery store tour that provides low-income families with hands-on education as they shop for food, giving them skills to compare foods for cost and nutritional value. Participants learn how to plan and budget for healthy, affordable, and delicious meals for their families.



Chef Scott Signorello helps Cooking Matters for Kids participants at Lincoln Elementary School put together Black Bean and Vegetable Quesadillas.



Volunteer Rebecca Pitts leads a Cooking Matters at the Store tour for Head Start parents.

Cooking Matters is a program of Share Our Strength, a national anti-hunger organization that aspires to end hunger and poverty in the United States with the primary goal of ending childhood hunger with its No Kid Hungry Campaign. Second Harvest offers this program in partnership with Share Our Strength.

Second Harvest Receives Increased SUNShine Box Caseload



Volunteers at Gross Towers Senior Center in Allentown, one of Second Harvest's SUNShine Box distribution sites, help Lindsay Fly, SHFB Project Coordinator, hand out the monthly food packages to participants. Gross Towers receives 80-100 SUNShine Boxes each month to distribute to registered, low income senior citizens.

Second Harvest has received an increase in caseload for the SUNShine (Serving UnderNourished Seniors) Box Program, our distribution of the federally-funded Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) for senior citizens. SUNShine Boxes provide a monthly supply of staple foods, including cereal, juice, canned vegetables and fruit, evaporated milk, pasta, peanut butter, protein, and cheese to registered, low-income seniors. Each month, we have packed and distributed 1,865 boxes to seniors in our six county service area, but as of February 2014, we now have the resources to distribute boxes to 1,995 seniors. The additional 130 boxes will allow us to serve some of the more than 400 recipients on the waitlist.

Second Harvest Food Bank received the largest caseload increase in Pennsylvania, and we are very pleased to be able to help the seniors in need in our region. We want to acknowledge our volunteers for the amazing work they do each month and for helping us pack the most boxes we've ever had!

Donor Spotlight: Retail Grocery Store Donation Programs



Ron and Mike, volunteers for the Catasauqua Food Pantry, load up boxes of meat and produce they received through the store donation program at BJ's Wholesale Club in Allentown.

Did you ever wonder what happens to the food at the grocery store that reaches its sell by date unsold? Or to the loaves of bread still sitting at the bakery at the end of the day? Or to those bags of fresh produce with one pesky piece of fruit that is starting to go bad?

At Second Harvest, we are lucky to be surrounded by retailers who are dedicated to the fight to end hunger. Through our relationship with Feeding America, many of these partnerships have been taken a step further and formal store donation programs have been established to give us access to more perishable and nonperishable products like meat, deli, produce, bakery, and dry or canned items, while still ensuring food safety for our participants and inventory control for the retail grocery companies.

For these programs, when product has reached or is close to its sell-by date, it is scanned

by store associates, removed from the shelves, and set aside. In some of the stores, designated Second Harvest member agencies go as often as three times each week to pick up the items that have been set aside. For other stores, the donations are delivered to our facility on a weekly basis.

Last year, the store donation programs resulted in nearly 700,000 pounds of food for the Second Harvest network! The majority of the items donated were meat, fresh fruits and vegetables, and dairy products – items that are usually more expensive and difficult for our participants to purchase on their own.

We are incredibly grateful for the ongoing support of our area grocers. We also sincerely appreciate the hard work of all the store associates who make sure those food donations are secured for our network and who help spread the word to their customers through programs like Check-Out Hunger. Thank you for all you do!!

Show Your School Spirit! Join us for the 3rd Annual College Alumni Club Food Drive Challenge

Are you a member of an alumni club in the Lehigh Valley? We're inviting you and your former classmates to participate in our third annual food drive challenge to benefit Second Harvest Food Bank!

During the months of March and April, club members collect donations, individually or as a group, for Second Harvest. As dona-

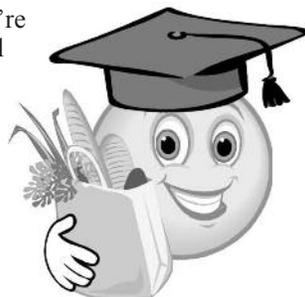
tions are dropped off at our facility, we will keep a running tally of each club's collection. Monetary gifts count, too; for every one dollar we receive, we are able to distribute nine pounds of food. So every dollar your club contributes equals nine pounds towards the competition! Club members can check our website for weekly updates on club standings. At the end of April, we will formally announce the winning club at a friendly happy hour gathering for all participants.

Initiated in 2012 by members of the local chapter of the Purdue University Alumni club, the challenge has generated the equivalent of more than 17,000 meals for people served by Second Harvest! Purdue won in 2012, but was ousted as champ last year by members of the Notre Dame University Alumni Club. We're looking forward to the competition this year to see which club will come out on top and get its name engraved on the winners' plaque on display at Second Harvest.

For more information about the competition, please contact Sharon Alexander, Development Coordinator at Second Harvest, at 610-434-0875 or salexander@caclv.org.



Alumni Clubs will be competing this spring to see which group can collect the most donations for Second Harvest Food Bank. Who will claim the spot as this year's winner?



Second Harvest Food Bank of Lehigh Valley and Northeast Pennsylvania

distributes food and grocery product to more than 69,000 people each month through a network of more than 200 member agencies in Carbon, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, and Wayne Counties. Agencies include emergency food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and child care and rehabilitation centers. Last year, Second Harvest distributed nearly 7 million pounds of food through these agencies.

Second Harvest Food Bank is a program of the Community Action Committee of Lehigh Valley (CACLV) and a member of Feeding America, the nation's Food Bank network and largest hunger relief organization.

A copy of the official registration and financial information for the Community Action Committee of Lehigh Valley, Inc., and its programs and subsidiaries can be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling, toll-free within PA, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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