

# STRATEGIES TO COMBAT CHILDHOOD HUNGER IN FOUR U.S. CITIES

Case Studies of Boston, New Haven, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.





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# FOREWORD

For more than a quarter-century The U.S. Conference of Mayors has reported to the nation on the status of hunger and homelessness in America's cities. The Conference's annual surveys and reports are the subjects of national news reports, and their contribution to raising national awareness of these problems is widely recognized. Conference members appreciate the fact that, in recent years, this effort has been strengthened substantially by a partnership with Sodexo, a world leader in food and facilities management.

Last year, to supplement and expand upon these annual reports, the Conference and Sodexo determined that a report on programs and practices targeting childhood hunger in cities across the nation would be helpful in moving toward the goal articulated by President Obama during the campaign of ending childhood hunger in America by 2015. Published in November 2009, that report illustrated the wide variety of approaches being taken in 23 cities of all sizes in all regions of the country through its description of 45 programs ranging from mayors' efforts to organize anti-hunger efforts city-wide, to examples of how cities are making national programs fit their unique local situations, to examples of how individual institutions, such as schools and hospitals, are creating innovative solutions to their cities' childhood hunger problems.

This year the Conference and Sodexo decided to produce a publication which goes into greater depth in describing initiatives that are demonstrating success in four cities and that have the potential to serve as models for other cities confronting a childhood hunger problem made significantly worse by the downturn in the U.S. economy. Mayors recognize that the job losses resulting from the current deep economic recession have exacerbated family and childhood hunger problems in cities throughout the nation and will continue to do so for years to come, and that the current pressure on governments and other public and private agencies to provide food to families in need can only grow.

The Conference is working closely with the Obama Administration in its efforts to solve the problem of childhood obesity in a generation and, in particular, with First Lady Michele Obama's Let's Move campaign, which focuses on empowering parents and caregivers, providing healthy food in schools, improving access to healthy affordable foods, and increasing physical activity. The efforts underway in the four cities described in this publication demonstrate what cities can do, and have been doing, to combat childhood hunger and the closely associated problem of childhood obesity.

The Conference of Mayors will continue to pursue public policies that support more adequate federal programs to reduce hunger in America, and will continue to raise national awareness of the severity of the hunger problem. We also will continue to facilitate the exchange of information among mayors on the most effective programs they can employ and strategies they can use to combat hunger in their cities. We offer this publication in support of that goal.



Tom Cochran  
CEO and Executive Director

November 2010



# INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, The U.S. Conference of Mayors and Sodexo have partnered together to shed light on the severity of the problems of hunger and homelessness in U.S. cities, and on the impact and value of investments in anti-hunger programs. Last year, the partnership focused its attention on childhood hunger in particular, producing a report on innovative and successful programs and practices targeting childhood hunger in two dozen cities across the nation. This year, the second phase of this effort goes into greater depth, describing initiatives that have the potential to serve as models for other cities that are confronting the childhood hunger problem that has been made significantly worse by the downturn in the U.S. economy.

Based in part on a review of the programs and practices identified in last year's report, the Conference of Mayors and Sodexo selected four cities to serve as subjects of case studies in effective approaches to alleviating childhood hunger: Boston, Massachusetts; New Haven, Connecticut; San Francisco, California; and Washington, D.C. Each was chosen to illustrate a particularly effective feature within an overall city-wide anti-hunger effort:

## **Boston's case study illustrates the power of leadership in bringing public and private agencies into a collaborative and holistic approach to combating childhood hunger, and the roles played by these agencies.**

- The City of Boston's goal is to connect and enhance the wide range of activities underway to reduce childhood hunger and improve child nutrition.
- Underlying Boston's effort are the many years of leadership in anti-hunger programming provided by Mayor Thomas M. Menino, and the coordinating role of the Food Policy Council which he has established.
- The case study describes the work of the council as well as the work of some of its key partner agencies and organizations, all of whom are represented on the council.
- Of particular importance are efforts to promote urban agriculture, increase participation in federal food programs, improve the nutritional content and increase the consumption of food served to children through the Boston Public Schools meal programs, and provide meals and other assistance to children when they don't receive meals through the schools.

## **New Haven's case study couples the wide-ranging efforts of an experienced school system chef to provide more students more nourishing and appealing meals with community-wide efforts to coordinate other attacks on childhood hunger.**

- New Haven's goal is to increase the number and quality of meals served to all students throughout the school year and summer.
- The case study describes the New Haven Public School's broad-based efforts to increase the nutritional value and the appeal of the meals to the students, increase the use of locally-grown ingredients in those meals, and centralize the procurement and preparation of school food to increase efficiency and lower costs.
- Also described are several organizations that have been created to improve the city's level of food security and quality, coordinate service delivery, promote and increase student wellness, and provide food to all the non-profit agencies serving hungry families

in the city. The contributions to childhood wellness made by Yale University are evident in several initiatives.

**San Francisco's case study illustrates the use of an ordinance to bring public and private agencies together in a concerted effort to eliminate childhood hunger, and describes the roles of individual agencies in the city's attack on childhood hunger.**

- The case study focuses on the role of a task force created through a 2005 ordinance to develop citywide strategies to reduce hunger and increase food security, and to increase participation in federal food assistance programs.
- It describes the role played by the school system, which operates the largest public meal program in the city, and by other city departments that share in the responsibility for the wellbeing of children.
- Also described is a food bank serving more than 100,000 households per month, and a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach effort that uses a web site to assess eligibility for benefits and that provides financial incentives to increase participants' purchase of healthy food.

**Washington, D.C.'s case study focuses on landmark legislation that expands and improves students' access to better quality meals, and on the roles played by other agencies and organizations in that legislation and in other efforts to combat childhood hunger.**

- The case study describes the passage and implementation this year of sweeping legislation designed to expand and improve access by students to better quality meals in the District of Columbia school system.
- Included is the role played by a key hunger policy advocacy organization in the crafting and implementation of the legislation and many other anti-hunger initiatives, and the roles of state and local education agencies in its implementation and operation.
- Beyond the school system, the case study describes additional anti-hunger legislation recently passed by the City Council to strengthen D.C.'s SNAP program.
- Also described are nonprofit organizations that supply large volumes of prepared meals and other food products to agencies serving families and individuals in need.

**The Conference of Mayors and Sodexo believe that, through these case studies, city officials can gain a greater appreciation and understanding of: the relationship of poverty, hunger, and obesity; the ability to secure federal resources to combat childhood hunger despite current economic conditions; the ability to use those federal resources to build local economies, including their agricultural sectors; and, the effectiveness of taking collaborative and holistic approaches to fighting childhood hunger in cities.**

The case studies in this report offer models of mayoral, council, school system, and agency leadership. As a group, they reflect officials' and advocates' views that:

- As poverty increases in a city, the risk of food insecurity increases with it.
- Childhood hunger must be considered both a public health and public education issue.



- Childhood hunger can be decreased if both the nutritional value and the appeal of food served to children in public programs can be increased.
- The movement to more nutritious and appealing food presents an opportunity to support local producers of fruit, vegetables, and other items, and so expand the local food economy.
- Despite the current economic downturn and federal budget constraints, federal funds are still available to connect people in need, especially children, to nutritious food, and the flow of those funds into cities contributes to their local economy.
- Families with little to spend on food often make choices based more on quantities and calories than on nutritional value.
- Financial incentives provided by cities can motivate low income families to purchase fresher, healthier food.
- Recent national efforts to raise awareness of the public health and economic threats posed by obesity are resulting in increased attention to the threats posed by hunger and malnutrition in general.
- The most effective anti-hunger initiatives are frequently collaborations of public and private agencies.
- Service providers and advocates need a mechanism through which they communicate with one another and with policy makers on a regular basis.

## **PERSPECTIVES ON POVERTY AND HUNGER**

Persons experiencing low food security, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), can avoid disrupting their eating patterns by using a variety of coping strategies, such as participating in federal food assistance programs or getting emergency food from community pantries. For those experiencing very low food security, USDA says, regular eating habits will be disrupted and food intake will be reduced at times during the year because they have insufficient money or other resources for food.

USDA reports that nearly 15 percent of all households in the U.S. were food insecure at some point during 2008, and nearly 6 percent experienced very low food security. For low income households, the problem is more serious: About 30 percent of households with children under 18 years of age had low food security; nearly 17 percent had very low food security. Black and Hispanic households experience food insecurity at far higher rates. The number of people in the very low food security category more than doubled between 2000 and 2008, before the nation's economic conditions worsened.

The adverse effects and costs to society of food insecurity have been documented in great detail over many years. There is indisputable evidence that low birth weight resulting from a mother's poor nutrition will have immediate and long term effects on a child's health, development, and performance throughout life, and that poor nutrition during infant and toddler years increases the chances of nutrient deficiencies that can affect learning and behavior dramatically. The lack of nutritious food affects cognitive development which, in turn, affects school performance and, ultimately, the ability to work and earn. Hunger makes children more prone to illness and other health issues that require counseling and treatment, and can even make them more prone to violence and crime. Hunger helps to perpetuate cycles of poverty that can continue from generation to generation, and so perpetuate the societal costs of lost productivity and the need to use public resources to address the wide range of poverty-related problems so familiar to the nation's city, school, and agency leaders.

“Research over the past 12 years shows conclusively that food insecurity and hunger are serious threats to children’s health, growth and development, and may even harm young children’s brain architecture,” John Cook, a noted pediatric researcher at Boston Medical Center, said in a recent “Feeding America” state-by-state report on childhood food insecurity.

At about the time information for the case studies was being assembled by the Conference of Mayors, the U.S. Bureau of the Census published its annual report on income, poverty, and insurance coverage in the nation. The Bureau reported September 16 that the poverty rate in 2009 was the highest since 1994, and the number of people in poverty the largest in the 51 years for which poverty estimates are available. The report put the nation’s official poverty rate in 2009 at 14.3 percent, up from 13.2 percent in 2008 – the second statistically significant annual increase in the poverty rate since 2004 and the third consecutive annual increase.

- There were 43.6 million people in poverty in 2009, up from 39.8 million in 2008. The family poverty rate in 2009 was 11.1 percent, up from 10.3 percent the previous year. The poverty rate and the number in poverty increased across all types of families.
- Both the poverty rate and the number in poverty increased for children under the age of 18 (from 19 percent and 14.1 million in 2008 to 20.7 percent and 15.5 million in 2009).
- The poverty rate for children was higher than the rates for people in older age groups. While comprising only 24.5 percent of the total population, children represented 35.5 percent of people in poverty.
- Both the poverty rate and the number in poverty increased for children under the age of 18 related to householders (from 18.5 percent and 13.5 million in 2008 to 20.1 percent and 14.8 million in 2009). For related children under the age of 18 in families with a female householder, 44.4 percent were in poverty compared with 11 percent of related children in married-couple families.
- Both the poverty rate and the number in poverty increased for related children under the age of six (from 21.3 percent and 5.3 million in 2008 to 23.8 percent and six million in 2009). Of related children under the age of six in families with a female householder, 54.3 percent were in poverty – four times the rate of related children in married-couple families.

A report released by the Census Bureau on September 28, 2010 added more detail to the picture, showing 2008 to 2009 increases in both the number and percentage of people in poverty in 31 states, and no state experiencing a statistically significant decline in poverty numbers or rate. The percentage of Americans falling below half the current poverty line (for a family of four, about \$11,000) rose from 5.6 percent to 6.3 percent.

Many analysts expect poverty problems to worsen in the year ahead as high levels of unemployment persist and the federal government’s stimulus spending and unemployment aid wind down.

## **FEDERAL FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

The case studies in this report frequently reference the federal food assistance programs provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service and generally administered by state agencies that provide funding and commodities to local school systems and service agencies. They are:

- The National School Lunch Program provided nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to more than 31 million children each school day in 2009. Since 1998 it also includes reimbursement for snacks served to children through 18 years of age in afterschool educational and enrichment programs.
- The School Breakfast Program provides nutritious breakfasts in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions.
- The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides payments to sponsors for serving healthy meals and snacks to children and teenagers, 18 years and younger, at approved sites in low-income areas, including schools, public agencies, and private nonprofit organizations. All sponsors receive training before starting the program to learn how to plan, operate, and monitor a successful food service program.
- The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is aimed at improving the quality of day care and making it more affordable for low-income families by providing nutritious meals and snacks to the children who participate. It provides meals to children residing in emergency shelters, and snacks and suppers to youths participating in eligible afterschool care programs. The program also provides meals and snacks to adults who receive care in nonresidential adult day care centers.
- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, provides low-income households with benefits through an Electronic Benefit Card (EBT) that can be used like cash at most grocery stores. Currently, almost 42 million participants receive benefits each month. SNAP is considered to be the cornerstone of the federal food assistance programs, providing crucial support to needy households and to those making the transition from welfare to work.
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) buys, processes, packages, and ships commodity food to states in quantities determined by the size of the state's low-income and unemployed population. States provide the food to local agencies they have selected, usually food banks, which in turn, distribute the food to soup kitchens and food pantries that directly serve the public.
- The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) helps pregnant women, new mothers and children age five and under stay healthy and eat well. It funds states to provide supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk.

**Across the four case study cities, there is consensus among officials contacted that the current reimbursement rates for the child nutrition programs are far too low to permit local agencies and programs to purchase, prepare, and serve the kinds and quantities of the foods children should be eating.**

The case studies also reference the HealthierUS School Challenge, a voluntary initiative established by USDA in 2004 to recognize schools participating in the National School Lunch Program that have created healthier school environments through promotion of nutrition and physical activity. In February of this year, when First Lady Michelle Obama incorporated the HealthierUS School Challenge into her Let's Move! campaign to raise a healthier generation of children, monetary incentive awards became available for each HealthierUS School Challenge award level: \$500 for Bronze, \$1,000 for Silver, \$1,500 for Gold, and \$2,000 for Gold Award of Distinction.

There are also references to food made available to schools by the Department of Defense (DoD). Beginning in 1994, DoD began offering its produce-buying services to institutions other

than military bases and installations, including schools. Several years later, at the request of USDA, DoD established the Farm to School Program (F2SP), which buys farm-grown fruits and vegetables from within the state. Schools can purchase from the DoD “F2SP” using USDA commodity entitlement funds, their federal and state meal reimbursements, and general fund or other food service dollars.

As case study information was being assembled, Congress was considering action on reauthorization of current child nutrition legislation – reauthorization in which the White House has pressed for \$10 billion in additional spending over 10 years. New initiatives to combat hunger and childhood obesity in both school and out-of-school settings would be possible through the reauthorization as proposed, although the Washington-based Food Research and Action Committee (FRAC) and other anti-hunger advocates are strongly opposing the cuts in SNAP/food stamp funding that have been proposed by Congress to fund the initiative.

## **CASE STUDY INFORMATION**

In developing each of the case studies for this report, the overall objective was to provide a picture of the “system” in place to combat childhood hunger – that is, a picture of the major components of the anti-hunger effort and the mechanisms in place through which they communicate with one another and through which movement toward shared goals is coordinated. As appropriate, each case study describes:

- city leaders’ efforts to maintain focus on childhood hunger as a priority issue;
- city government’s role in guiding and funding anti-hunger initiatives;
- the role of ordinances directing actions to be taken;
- the role of task forces and councils created to shape policy and coordinate city-wide efforts;
- the role of school systems as primary providers of food for low income children;
- the major advocacy organizations with roles in policy making and service delivery;
- the major community organizations responsible for food distribution to families with children; and
- efforts to maximize participation in federal food assistance programs benefiting families with children.

Information on the four case studies in this report was obtained from on-site and telephone interviews with officials of the agencies and organizations contacted, from documents they provided, and from their web sites. Most of the information was assembled in September and October and the report was completed in November.

In each city, one official helped to coordinate information collection and contacts with the agencies and organizations involved in the city’s anti-hunger efforts, and provided helpful reviews of the drafts of the case studies. While the Conference of Mayors and Sodexo appreciate the assistance of all who contributed to this report, special thanks are due, in Boston, to Judith Kurland, Chief of Programs and Partnerships, Office of the Mayor; in New Haven, to Timothy Cipriano, Executive Director of Food Services, New Haven Public Schools; in San Francisco, to Paula Jones, Director of Food Systems, Department of Public Health; and in Washington, D.C., to Alexandra Ashbrook, Director, D.C. Hunger Solutions.

# BOSTON: CREATING A FOOD ECONOMY

## SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS

- The Census Bureau estimates that Boston's 2009 population was 645,169; this included 109,156 families, 52,489 of which had related children under 18 years of age. About 12 percent of all families are estimated to have incomes below the poverty level; for families with related children under 18, that figure jumps to 18 percent.
- Kids Count reports that, in 2009, 22 percent of Boston's children (24,000) were living below the poverty level.
- The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics report (September 2010) indicates that the unemployment rate for the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy metropolitan area is 7.3 percent.
- USDA's Economic Research Service reports that between 2007 and 2009, an average of 10 percent of Massachusetts residents experienced low or very low food security; 4.3 percent were in the very low food security category.
- From 2007 to 2009, the average number of people in Massachusetts participating in the SNAP program increased from 456,192 to 627,611. During that same period the portion of the eligible population participating in SNAP increased from 54 percent to 65 percent; among eligible persons who were working it increased from 36 percent to 49 percent.

## MAYORAL LEADERSHIP

Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino's efforts to reduce childhood hunger and improve child nutrition extend back many years to a time when, as a City Councilor, he helped start farmers' markets in Boston neighborhoods. In one of the first conversations he had with key staff after becoming Mayor, he expressed concern about the children he had seen eating chips and drinking soda on Hyde Park Avenue. He views nutrition as a public health issue and has made reducing childhood hunger and promoting healthy eating top priorities of his administration. Among the Mayor's accomplishments in this area over the years:

- Improving residents' access to affordable food by addressing "food deserts" – neighborhoods that do not offer access to supermarkets and other sources of affordable, healthy food – and helping to bring food stores to all city neighborhoods.
- At the start of the current financial crisis, recognizing its potential severity and likely impact on people already hungry, and convening a Food and Fuel Summit in September 2008, which led to a number of additional City initiatives and to a second summit in 2009.
- Ordering that soft drinks and chips be removed from school vending machines – a contentious issue at the time.
- To address increasing food need in the summer, providing grants to pantries and soup kitchens to purchase the kinds of foods that often don't get donated.
- Increasing access to USDA-funded and Boston Public Schools (BPS) -administered summer meal program sites. Boston's summer food program has moved from being an emergency response to a preventative effort, and enrollment in the summer school food program is now increasing.
- Supporting expansion of the Greater Boston Food Bank and working to retain its Boston location. The food bank's facility size has more than doubled and it now provides more fresh food and greater access to food.

- Establishing the Boston Bounty Bucks program, doubling the value of up to \$10 worth of SNAP benefits used at 21 of the city's farmers' markets. These markets now have portable credit card readers so that SNAP recipients can use their EBT cards. By swiping their benefit cards on the card readers at the markets, shoppers spending \$10 worth of food stamps receive vouchers for up to \$20. The effort is funded by the Mayor's Fresh Food Fund and grants from Project Bread, Farm Aid, and the Wholesome Wave Foundation.
- In late August, opening the City's first free-range chicken farm on Long Island in Boston Harbor. Each of the 50 hens is fed organic grains and food scraps, and is expected to produce 250 to 300 brown eggs per year. Starting next summer, the eggs will be sold at local farmers' markets and provided to the Long Island homeless shelter. The Serving Ourselves Farm located on Long Island provides produce to the homeless shelter and training in farming and agricultural practices – skills which can translate into jobs.

## **FOOD POLICY COUNCIL**

Even with the Mayor's strong commitment to reducing hunger and improving nutrition and his record of accomplishment during his more than 17 years in office, officials acknowledge that, at times, some of the city's efforts over the years have been fragmented. The Mayor's creation of a Food Policy Council in December 2008, building on the previous work of the Boston Emergency Shelter Commission's hunger advisory body, was intended to correct this.

The basic goals of the council are to ensure access to healthy food and to expand local food sources for the residents and businesses of Boston and the region. The council works on food-related issues as they affect hunger and health, and as mechanisms for economic opportunity. That work includes several aspects of access to food: economic, and educational, and emotional.

Composed of a continuously changing and growing number of representatives from the public, private, and non-profit sectors of the food industry, the council provides a broad range of expertise and resources to inform a city-wide food agenda. Organizations on the Food Policy Council include:

- From the City of Boston: the Mayor's Office, Department of Neighborhood Development, Boston Public Health Commission, BPS, and Boston Redevelopment Authority;
- From the Commonwealth of Massachusetts: Department of Transitional Assistance, Department of Agricultural Resources, and Executive Office for Administration & Finance;
- From non-governmental organizations: the American Community Gardening Association; Boston Collaborative for Food and Fitness; Boston Natural Area Networks; Boston Public Market Association; Brigham and Women's Hospital; Chefs Collaborative; Children's Health Watch, Boston Medical Center; Community Servings; Eos Foundation; Farm Aid; Greater Boston Local Initiatives Support Corp; Greater Boston Food Bank; Harvard School of Public Health; Health Connection; MIT; Project Bread; The Food Project; United Way of Massachusetts Bay; Victory Programs; and Wholesome Wave Foundation;
- From private industry: City Fresh, Costa Fruit and Produce, HL Consulting, Haley House, Locke-Ober's Restaurant, and Roche Bros. Supermarket.

Council members have been described as a mix of thought leaders and practitioners, representing both “grass tops” and “grass roots,” and as a remarkable network of community partners. A foundation executive commented that the council includes very strong people and institutions in the city, and that it “draws everyone to the table and gets them together to get things done.” The council’s adaptability to new ideas has been described as one of its most exciting characteristics.

At the outset, the council established four goals, each with a related set of initiatives, to address the Mayor’s directive. They are to:

- Increase access to healthy and affordable food;
- Expand Boston’s capacity to produce, distribute, and consume local food;
- Promote food as an economic development strategy; and
- Expand private and public partnerships to advance the food agenda.

One city official described the council as “moving toward creating a real food economy that reduces costs, provides good and local food, and educates people.” That same official commented that because a local food movement and emphasis on healthy eating could be seen as appealing mainly to an “elite,” the council makes sure that they are aimed at all of the city’s residents.

A foundation executive commented that the council is important because access to food is not just a public health issue: creating more community gardens, for example, must involve agencies responsible for zoning, redevelopment, and community affairs, not just those responsible for food programs, and the council can help accomplish this.

The council meets for an hour and a half every other month. Subcommittees meet separately on specific issues, such as expanding the use of EBT cards at farmers’ markets, and report back to the full group. The subcommittees raise issues and set the agenda for council meetings – for example, the USDA Hunger-Free Communities grant application. Sometimes the interests of council members influence the work of the subcommittees, which cover urban agriculture, healthy food, infrastructure development, and the Boston Public Schools.

**Urban Agriculture** – One advocate cited urban agriculture as an example of “cutting edge issues” being addressed by the Food Policy Council. The urban agriculture initiative is intended to develop skills and make farming more accessible to city residents and create a mechanism that encourages this use of available land. The initiatives’ goals are to:

- Increase access to affordable and healthy food, particularly for underserved communities;
- Promote greater economic opportunity and greater self-sufficiency by increasing the capacity of Boston residents and business to grow and distribute local and healthy food;
- Increase education and knowledge around healthy eating and food production, particularly among youth;
- Increase partnerships with and/or between local and regional food producers; and
- Increase healthy food supplies to local schools, organizations, institutions, and corner stores.

The initiative includes an effort to combine adjacent sliver parcels of land in order to create parcels equal to one-fourth to one-half of an acre. The city will then encourage local farmers

and growers to use the land for urban agriculture through a Request for Proposal process. To support this initiative and others throughout the city, the urban agriculture subcommittee is working with the Boston Redevelopment Authority to draft zoning language that will allow farming and agricultural endeavors in the city.

A related project facilitates rooftop food production, and work is underway to examine zoning and safety requirements related to this. While these are primarily commercial endeavors, the urban agricultural subcommittee would also like to increase the ability of residents to plant and use raised beds in neighborhoods where houses have side or backyards. Zoning issues have been examined, and additional funds and project support are being sought to provide residents with additional resources for this and other urban agriculture efforts.

## **DIRECTOR OF FOOD INITIATIVES**

In July, Edith Murnane, a chef and food advocate with a track record of bringing healthy food to local communities, was picked by Mayor Menino to serve as the city's first Director of Food Initiatives. "Our efforts to improve access to fresh, healthy food for Bostonians of all ages and income levels have made significant progress, and Edith is the right person to help move this ambitious agenda forward," the Mayor said at the time of the appointment.

Funding from three foundations contributes to the support of the position. An executive at one of the foundations (Eos, described below) commented that staffing the council out of the Mayor's office provides centrality and makes it possible to draw from the multitude of departments that have to be engaged in the issue, and that having a director dedicated exclusively to the council says something about the city's commitment to the issue.

Murnane has described both her position and the Food Policy Council as "a conversation between the Mayor's initiatives and what's happening on the ground," and as a vehicle to empower "the people on the council who are doing the real work." She said that it is her job to "connect the dots" and bring together the varied initiatives underway, and that one of her tasks is to knit together elements – whether spearheaded by Public Health or Public Schools – taking both birds-eye and ground-level approaches. She described the council as a "matrix where physical, economic, and educational access to food meet hunger, health, and economic opportunity."

Specific projects or areas in which Murnane and council partners are currently working include:

- Strengthening the food system infrastructure, including increasing access to grocery stores, by engaging both city agencies and local communities;
- Through the urban agriculture initiative, making food more accessible by encouraging use of resources, such as land, already within the city, and teaching people how to grow their own food. The council is currently looking for grants to encourage development and use of raised beds in side and back yards, to increase availability of fresh foods at corner stores, and make fresh foods economically feasible for everyone;
- Making fresh food more available and affordable in inner city neighborhoods by subsidizing initiatives such as farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture, and other mechanisms;
- Building a culinary institute within BPS that provides food service workers with basic cooking techniques, and managers with good business techniques;



- Obtaining funding from USDA for a Hunger-Free Communities implementation grant. An application was submitted October 1 that would increase Boston residents' SNAP enrollment rates; support the BPS culinary institute development; and replicate a current pilot program that links adults participating in community nutrition education to farmers' markets through an incentive program;
- Expanding the number of students in the BPS who receive a fresh, nutritious breakfast, lunch, and snack through kitchens that use a "hub and spoke" model in which one school with a large kitchen serves a number of schools in the surrounding community. Currently, 46 schools have cafeterias with food preparation kitchens, and these cafeterias service 56 schools. On average, about 55 percent of the BPS' daily meals are served to children in a cafeteria;
- Increasing the resources available for Boston Bounty Bucks so that the program can reach additional SNAP recipients;
- Providing cooking classes to the parents of BPS students. The cooking class initiative, which is intended to strengthen parents' skills in the kitchen, builds on the success of a series of community dinners that grew out of the city's first Food and Fuel Summit. The community dinners, which were often hosted by celebrity chefs, provided participants with recipes and cooking instructions as well as information about access to food;
- Narrowing the "SNAP gap" to increase the participation rate (currently 72-76 percent of those eligible) in the food stamp program.

## **PARTNERS**

In its efforts to reduce childhood hunger and improve nutrition, the city has engaged a range of public agencies and formed partnerships with numerous community and advocacy organizations. One city official commented that the city works best when it partners with community and other agencies. Following are descriptions of the work being done by some of the largest partners.

### ***BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES***

The school system, which operates as part of city government, serves 56,000 students and is the largest provider of school meals to the city's children (as well as the largest school food service operation in New England). Food & Nutrition Services (FNS) administers the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, After School Snack, and Summer Food Service Programs for the district. There are 135 schools in the BPS system, 48 of which have full-service kitchens in which to prepare and cook student food. The remaining schools are satellite sites, which receive pre-packaged frozen meals from a contracted food services vendor. These meals are reheated at the school and served to students. Some of the students within the satellite schools must eat in their classrooms because there is no cafeteria.

BPS previously operated a central kitchen which prepared meals for the satellite schools but had to close it because the cost of making upgrades to comply with building codes was too great. After the winter vacation, BPS plans to pilot a "hub and spoke" model in which a full-service school with a larger kitchen and storage capacity will prepare meals for several satellite schools. Currently, the cafeteria schools and satellite schools have different menus, although the same foods may be offered, they are prepared in different ways.

On average, in the 2010 fiscal year, BPS served about 22,700 breakfasts, 35,000 lunches and 5,800 snacks on a daily basis. The majority of schools offer Universal Free Breakfast and many

schools also provide Universal Free Lunch. At these schools, all students receive meals at no cost. Seventy-five percent of the children in the system are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

BPS works closely with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), the Boston Public Health Commission, and the Mayor's office to develop nutritional guidelines that exceed the minimum USDA requirements. Sodas and trans fats, for example, have been eliminated, and menus include more whole grains, lower-fat meat and cheese, low-fat and skim milk, and fewer high sugar items such as cereals and pastries. FNS continues to work with manufacturers to purchase food products that are lower in sodium. Additionally, BPS was the first district in the state to develop nutrition standards for competitive food sales of à la carte and beverage options.

BPS officials recognize the importance of a nutritious school breakfast and report that they have seen participation in school breakfast reduce tardiness and improve attendance and concentration in class. Because there are fewer children who participate in School Breakfast than in School Lunch, the district has implemented several alternative breakfast models to increase participation. These include: "Breakfast after the Bell" and "Grab 'n Go" and where possible, "Breakfast in the Classroom." With Breakfast after the Bell, students eat their breakfasts after the school day begins. With Grab 'n Go, students pick up their breakfast on the way into school buildings and eat them either in their classroom or in a cafeteria, where one is available. BPS is considering making Grab 'n Go a requirement in order to increase participation rates. Project Bread, a state-wide anti-hunger organization deeply involved in Boston's anti-hunger efforts (and described later), receives funding from ESE to provide outreach to encourage participation in the school breakfast programs and summer food service programs.

Several initiatives are underway to increase the amount of fresh and local foods served in the schools and the amount of nutritious food that the students consume:

- **USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program:** BPS received a \$482,000 grant from USDA for fiscal 2011 to serve fruits and vegetables as an additional snack in 16 elementary and K-8 schools. Last year, the school district received funding to operate the program in four schools. The Director of Food & Nutrition Services describes it as a "tremendous program" which provides not just fresh fruits and vegetables to young students, but also nutrition education about the foods they are eating.
- **Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DoD):** Through this program, USDA is able to offer schools a wider variety of fresh produce than would normally be available through regular USDA foods purchases. ESE allocates a percentage of BPS's commodity entitlement dollars to Food & Nutrition Services, and this allows for the purchase of produce through DoD to supplement the normal fruit and vegetable purchases. The DoD produce is used in the School Breakfast, School Lunch and After School Snack Programs. The typical allocation is about \$60,000.
- **Farm to School Program (F2SP):** BPS continues to expand the Farm to School Program. This is the third year that Food & Nutrition Services has had a F2SP Coordinator working within the district. F2SP increases the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables to students while supporting local farmers, helping to move toward the development of a regional, sustainable food economy. Currently, there are no local providers large enough to provide BPS with all of the fresh foods it needs. All items

purchased must meet nutritional requirements and be affordable under the meal costs. The district uses two vendors who provide locally grown produce to the schools.

In the 11 schools in which the program is operating this year, BPS conducts taste tests, provides nutrition education, hosts guest chefs, and organizes activities to get students excited about eating healthy overall, and eating local fruits and vegetables in particular.

BPS also has introduced a "Local Thursdays" initiative through which a local fruit or vegetable item is included district-wide on the cafeteria full-service school menu. Among the items included are apples, butternut squash, collard greens, fresh coleslaw, vegetable medley, turnips, pears, and red bliss potatoes. BPS's contract vendor also has purchased locally grown fruit for its satellite school menus.

- ***Chefs in Schools:*** Launched in 2007 as a demonstration in two middle schools by Project Bread in partnership with the Mayor's Office, BPS, and the Boston Public Health Commission, this program helps to put healthy meals in school cafeterias, limiting processed foods and emphasizing the importance of nutritious fruits, vegetables, and whole grains while staying within USDA reimbursement rates. The partnership hired an experienced chef, Kirk Conrad, to work with the schools to design healthy and cost-effective meals that kids would enjoy eating. Much of the food was cooked from scratch or enhanced with fresh ingredients and flavored with herbs by Conrad and the willing kitchen staffs. New foods were taste-tested by the students.

A plate waste study completed in 2009 by the Harvard School of Public Health found a 17 percent higher participation rate in the Chefs program schools compared to traditional cafeteria schools – a higher rate that translates into increased federal reimbursement for the school district. The study also found that food waste in the Chefs schools was reduced to about one-fifth of the food served, compared to about one-third of that served in traditional lunches. Over three times as many students ate vegetables in the Chefs cafeterias; among the students who ate vegetables, those at the Chefs schools ate about 30 percent more of them. The study found that serving white milk instead of chocolate milk did not decrease consumption, and that Chefs school meals contained about half again as much whole grain as traditional meals.

In addition to improving the nutritional value and desirability of the food and cutting waste, the Chefs in Schools program has helped to identify and resolve some systemic problems in the school food system and improve the schools' business practices through mechanisms such as inventory control and centralized ordering, further enabling the schools to make better use of available resources.

The involvement of an experienced chef is crucial to the program; generally, food preparation staff members don't have the training needed to develop and prepare the healthier food without a chef's supervision. School officials commented that the program can generate excitement when a chef prepares a special dish, and that exciting things can be done with fresh foods, even in satellite schools.

Additionally, this year BPS is partnering with Bertucci's restaurants in the Chefs Move Initiative. Their Executive Chef and five local chefs are adopting five schools to implement this program. In January, they will work with three elementary schools to feature a nutritious specialty each week. Chefs will speak to the students and train the food service employees. The program will expand in the spring to a middle school and a

high school. The expectation is that more schools will be added to this initiative in the next few years.

- **The School Food Campaign:** Conducted by the Boston Collaborative for Food and Fitness' Youth Advisory Board, the GO4RESH campaign is intended to increase student trust in school lunch by working with the BPS Food & Nutrition Service to improve the quality of food served, and boost the popularity of the six new lunch items that the board is working to bring to the school lunch menu. The campaign, intended to encourage students to make better food choices and BPS to order fresher foods, has three goals:
  - ❖ Getting more student-requested and fresh foods on the menu, including collard greens, real corn bread, fresh corn on the cob, real mashed potatoes, mixed green salad, and seasonal local fruit;
  - ❖ Providing a longer lunch period so students have adequate time to select and eat their lunch;
  - ❖ Helping students to be change agents for fresher foods and consume more fresh produce.
  
- **Summer Feeding Program:** BPS administers the summer feeding program at a wide range of sites across the city, including schools, community centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, churches, Boston Housing Authority sites, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation pools, and YMCAs. Meals are provided free of charge to all children 18 and under. While BPS administers the program, other organizations are responsible for operating most of the individual sites. During the summer of 2010 – June 29 to September 3 – the program provided meals at 148 sites, serving a total of more than 322,500 lunches, 202,650 breakfasts, and 28,340 snacks.

Flyers describing the Summer Food Service Program are sent home with students in June. Broad awareness of the program, however, is still an issue, and many parents don't know that meals are available to their children when school is out of session for the summer. Project Bread assists with outreach activities, specifically in needy districts, providing summer grants and helping to inform parents about the program. Project Bread staff cautions that children don't come out just for the food, and that the program works best if it's part of a day which offers activities children will enjoy.

- **Other Initiatives:** In June 2010, working in partnership with the American Heart Association and the Bill Clinton Foundation, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation recognized seven BPS schools for transforming themselves into healthier places for students and staff. One school received a silver award and the remainder bronze awards. To earn this award, the schools created healthy eating and physical activity programs that met or exceeded stringent standards set by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Healthy Schools Program, which provides free support and technical assistance to more than 9,000 schools nationwide to help them reverse the national trend in childhood obesity. The Alliance for a Healthier Generation has one more year of funding in the district and plans on recognizing more schools this school year.

BPS is also implementing USDA's HealthierUS Challenge in many of its schools this year. While this initiative is similar to the Alliance's, it is designed and recognized by USDA and tied directly to The First Lady's Let's Move! Campaign. Massachusetts ESE

and the North East Regional Office have strongly urged all Massachusetts school districts to "Meet the Challenge!"

### **BOSTON PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION**

Recognizing that childhood hunger and access to healthy, affordable food are public health issues, the Boston Public Health Commission has been a critical player in the city's efforts to reduce childhood hunger and improve nutrition, and is a member of the Food Policy Council. The commission's annual Health of Boston report includes data on nutrition and hunger that are being used as benchmarks for progress. A Project Bread official commented that the Public Health Commission has shaped the City's response to childhood hunger, playing an important role in its evaluation of how programs are working, and that Mayor Menino looks to its Executive Director, Dr. Barbara Ferrer, for policy advice and help in program implementation.

The Boston Public Health Commission often takes the lead in efforts to secure federal and private funding that supports healthy eating and anti-hunger efforts:

- It is the applicant for Boston's pending citywide USDA Hunger-Free Communities grant.
- It oversees Strategic Alliance for Health, a \$2.4 million grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that is leading Boston's "Healthy on the Block" corner store initiative (described above) and funding Boston Public Schools to improve implementation of its competitive foods policy that limits unhealthy foods and beverages on school grounds.
- It also is the convener for the Boston Collaborative for Food and Fitness, funded through the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. This three-year, \$1.2 million grant's food efforts address school food systems by strengthening the local and regional food system through increasing school markets, and building sustainable infrastructure and community food environments, by increasing markets for local/regional foods, increasing access and affordability of healthy foods in retail outlets, ensuring equity of access to healthy food, and building a sustainable infrastructure;
- In March 2010, the commission received a two-year, \$6.4 million grant for obesity prevention from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Communities Putting Prevention to Work initiative. The food components of this grant include improving access to affordable produce in three low-income neighborhoods by installing 400 backyard garden plots; transforming a vacant 10,000-square-foot greenhouse in the heart of Roxbury into a community growing and education center; doubling the number of community plots in Dorchester, and expanding the Nightingale Garden in Dorchester by 65,000 square-feet. In addition, the grant is being used to decrease consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages through counter-advertising and policy change.

Dr. Ferrer was instrumental in improving nutrition standards in Boston's public schools, and the commission is a partner in the Chefs in Schools initiative. The two agencies operate under a Memorandum of Understanding.

Among other commission programs that contribute to anti-hunger efforts:

- The Mayor's Health Line is the oldest information and referral hotline in Massachusetts. It offers multi-lingual assistance in accessing a wide array of health benefits and resources, including hunger and food resources. MHL assists SNAP and WIC

applicants with direct application through the MA Virtual Gateway System and keeps an extensive resource list of emergency food resources.

- Serving Ourselves Farm, an organic farm operated by the Homeless Bureau, is both a vocational rehabilitation program and a source for healthy, fresh produce for commission residential programs and local farmers' markets.
- Healthy Baby Healthy Child provides home visiting and other services to pregnant women and young families. Services include coordinating access to food assistance programs and nutrition counseling. The program also operates an emergency food pantry.

### ***CHILDREN'S HEALTHWATCH, BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER***

Children's HealthWatch was begun in 1998 by Dr. Deborah A. Frank, a Boston University School of Medicine Professor of Pediatrics, and colleagues who decided that someone needed to monitor the child health effects of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act. It continues to monitor the impact of economic conditions and public policies on the health and well-being of very young children, and has produced original, timely research and analysis linking nutrition, housing, energy, and other policy issues to children's health and development. It is based at Boston Medical Center, and also operates in Baltimore, Little Rock, Minneapolis, and Philadelphia. Recent analyses have linked receipt of SNAP benefits to improved child health and reduced food security and WIC to better child health and growth and decreased risk of developmental delays. As part of its research activities, Children's HealthWatch continuously monitors over 30,000 patient-visits per year for children in emergency departments and acute clinics in the participating medical centers.

Among low income families with children under age three who were interviewed at Boston Medical Center's emergency room by Children's HealthWatch through June 2010: nearly two in five received SNAP, more than four in five received WIC, one in five were food insecure, and nearly one in 10 families had children who were child food insecure, meaning that their parents were no longer able to buffer them from food shortages in the household and had reduced the size of their meals or been forced to have their children skip meals altogether.

Children's HealthWatch is not a direct service provider, but rather, functions as a pediatric research center. The mission of Children's HealthWatch grew out of the stories and struggles of the patient families seen at the Grow Clinic at Boston Medical Center, which provides services to children diagnosed with failure to thrive and referred by their primary care physician. Dr. Frank is the clinic's founder and director. The Grow Clinic treated more than 1,700 children between 1984, when it was founded, and 2009; it served 242 children in 2008 alone.

Each child is treated by a team composed of a doctor, social worker, and nutritionist, and that team develops a plan for the child, including home visits, coordination with primary care physicians, and regular evaluations at the clinic. The children at the Grow Clinic average 18 months from intake to "graduation." In treating failure to thrive, clinic staff works to identify and then fill the gaps in a family's daily or weekly diet. As part of their initial intake, a nutritionist asks about what the child eats in a typical day and about everything the child has eaten in the past 24 hours, and then develops a meal plan for the child. To help the family find and afford healthy food, a social worker makes sure that it is taking advantage of government services such as SNAP and WIC, and sometimes supplements this with prepaid supermarket cards.

In addition, some of the families receive a food prescription that they can take to Boston Medical Center's Preventive Food Pantry as often as every two weeks. The pantry was the first

hospital-based food pantry in the nation. Each visit to the food pantry is meant to supply about three to four days worth of free food for the family. The pantry, which started in 2001, gets the bulk of its food (about 10,000 pounds a week) from the Greater Boston Food Bank (described later). Its three rooms contain palettes and stainless steel shelves filled with fruits, vegetables, dairy products, canned goods, cereals, pasta, and baby formula. Beyond Grow Clinic patients, the pantry serves patients referred by every department at BMC and can provide special diets for those with conditions like diabetes or allergies.

A staff member stressed that efforts to combat childhood hunger must be directed to families with very young children as well as those with school-age children. Young children themselves and families with young children often get lost in the shuffle and their needs don't get the attention they deserve, she commented.

### ***PROJECT BREAD***

For 40 years, Project Bread has focused on Massachusetts' most vulnerable residents and served as a leading policy-maker on childhood hunger. It funds over 400 emergency food programs in the Commonwealth, nearly one-fourth of which are in Boston. It also runs the only statewide hunger hotline, which last year answered over 49,000 calls from families in need. It works with schools to offer breakfast programs, and provides funding to summer programs to help children get a nutritious meal when school is not in session. Each year, on the first Sunday in May, it runs the oldest annually held pledge walk in the country, Project Bread's Walk for Hunger.

Project Bread is an advocate for systemic solutions that prevent hunger and provide food to families in natural, everyday settings, including schools. Over the past four years, the organization has invested over \$2 million in grants to community organizations that feed children. It also has partnered with the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance to enroll people in SNAP using the Commonwealth's online application tool. Project Bread provides application assistance in health centers, WIC offices, senior centers, public housing, and other social service organizations throughout Boston. The online tool and in-person application process gives eligible applicants a convenient, supportive, and secure way to access SNAP benefits.

Project Bread has been an integral part of, and provided support to, most of the initiatives described in this case study, and is represented on the Boston Food Policy Council. It was a founder of the partnership which began the Chefs in Schools program, and provided funding for the Harvard School of Public Health's evaluation of it. Project Bread supports outreach for the school breakfast program and the summer food program, and provides support to Boston Bounty Bucks.

### ***THE GREATER BOSTON FOOD BANK***

Founded in 1981, the Greater Boston Food Bank, a member of the national Feeding America network, feeds more than 394,000 people annually in nine counties in eastern Massachusetts, distributing more than 34 million pounds of food and grocery products each year to a network of nearly 600 member hunger relief agencies which include food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless and residential shelters, youth programs, senior centers, and day care centers. Last year, the food bank moved to a new facility in Boston, the Yawkey Distribution Center, which

roughly doubles the square-footage of its previous facility and greatly increases the amount of freezer and other cold storage space needed to store frozen and perishable foods.

Through the Kids Cafe program, the food bank serves nearly 1,700 at-risk children in Boys and Girls Clubs throughout eastern Massachusetts. Kids Cafes are located in safe, convenient environments, and most of the children served get to them by bike or on foot with friends. Nine are in Boston. Kids Cafe chefs create menus using products from the food bank's inventory and a "wish list" of desired items. The food bank delivers this food – including supplemental purchases of items not in the inventory – to each club once a week. Clubs serve dinner an average of five nights a week during the school year; during the summer, when school is not in session, they serve breakfast and lunch to replace the free or reduced-price school meals that the children are not receiving.

Kids Cafes receive support from a variety of community resources: The Boston Foundation provides \$150,000 for fresh food, nutrition education for chefs, and to increase the number of meals provided. The New England Patriots Charitable Foundation and the Kraft family have partnered with the food bank to expand the Kids Cafe program. The Patriots Kids Cafes currently provide 160,000 meals per year at seven locations. Chefs from area restaurants, including some very prominent ones, often cook at the Cafes.

Working with the Boston Housing Authority, the food bank's perishables program provides fresh dairy, produce, and other perishable items that become available on short notice, to low- and moderate-income families, seniors, and disabled individuals residing in subsidized housing. The food is delivered to 21 sites on a rotating basis. The food bank distributes food twice a month to families with children in the Tobin School in Roxbury and to other neighborhood residents. It operates a backpack program in five jurisdictions, including South Boston, providing 1,790 children at-risk of hunger with food for the weekend or a holiday every other week. In Boston all 780 children at the Condon School receive these bags with healthy, kid-friendly food.

While the food bank, which is represented on the Food Policy Council, provides food to many local programs, including the Boston Medical Center's Preventive Food Pantry, it cannot support school programs. As part of Feeding America, it can provide food only to 501(c)(3) organizations, not public agencies.

### ***THE FOOD PROJECT***

The Food Project, which is represented on the Food Policy Council and is a cosponsor of Boston Bounty Bucks, engages young people in sustainable agriculture, working each year with more than 100 teens and thousands of volunteers to farm 37 acres in Boston and several towns in eastern Massachusetts. Boston sites include three pieces of land in the Dudley neighborhood and the rooftop production garden at the Boston Medical Center, which the Food Project manages. Food from the farms is distributed through the Food Project's Community Supported Agriculture programs, farmers' markets, and to hunger relief organizations. The young people working in the programs participate in all of these distribution streams.

In addition to producing and distributing food, the Food Project helps others grow their own food through its community programs. Since 1998, the Food Project has been working with over 160 backyard gardeners in the Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods. In 2007, the Food Project



started the Build-a-Garden program to help residents and organizations in Boston and Lynn grow their own food in raised bed gardens filled with healthy soil.

### ***THE BOSTON FOUNDATION***

The Boston Foundation has established nine areas of strategic focus for its grant-making activities, including encouraging healthy behaviors among Boston residents, and increasing access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity. It funds both policy and service delivery efforts. The foundation helps to fund the Food Policy Council by providing non-staffing support, and is represented on it. It has funded Project Bread to address underutilization of SNAP, particularly in the Latino community, and has supported other work by Project Bread, the SNAP Coalition, and Massachusetts Law Reform, which has led to reforms in state laws that have extended benefits and simplified the recertification process. It also funds the food bank's Kids Cafe programs. Currently, the foundation is preparing for the winter months, putting aside money for the Food and Fuel Initiative and working with other foundations to address the food and, in some cases, fuel needs of those at risk. Goals are to provide assistance, bring attention to the issue, and influence debate and discussion.

### ***EOS FOUNDATION***

The Eos Foundation is a private family foundation which supports nonprofit organizations, public policies, and systemic solutions aimed at nourishing children's bodies, nurturing their minds, and building family economic security. While not a large funder, the foundation works to leverage larger resources and encourage collaboration. It has provided funding to support Food Policy Council staffing, and is represented on the council. It also funds Children's HealthWatch at Boston Medical Center.

Last year, the foundation provided well over \$500,000 in food assistance, including emergency food assistance, grants. Among these were grants to the Grow Places Garden Project, a two-year effort to teach families to grow raised-bed gardens, and to organizations to do SNAP outreach and assist people with the SNAP application process. It has supported the statewide childhood anti-hunger campaign which is working to influence state policy and decrease rates of childhood hunger.

## **OFFICIALS INTERVIEWED**

### **City of Boston**

Judith Kurland, Chief of Programs and Partnerships, Office of the Mayor

Edith Murnane, Director of Food Initiatives, Office of the Mayor

Jim Greene, Director, Boston Emergency Shelter Commission, Boston Public Health Commission

Laureen Wood, Office of Intergovernmental Relations, Office of the Mayor

### **Boston Public Schools**

Samuel Depina, Assistant Chief Operating Officer

Helen Mont-Ferguson, Director, Food & Nutrition Services

Shamil Mohammed, Strategic Finance and Technology, Deputy Director, Food & Nutrition Services

### **Project Bread**

Elaine Taber, Director of Education Policy

Sarah Cluggish, Director of Programs  
Erika Alvarez Werner, Director of Latino Initiatives  
Justine Kahn, Director of Child Nutrition Outreach

**Children's HealthWatch, Boston Medical Center**  
Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, Research and Policy Director

**Greater Boston Food Bank**  
Kathleen J. Marre, Chief Administrative Officer  
Paul Colligan, Director of Programs

**Eos Foundation**  
Mari Brennan Barrera, Vice President

**Boston Foundation**  
Allison Bauer, Senior Program Officer

# NEW HAVEN: THINKING OUTSIDE THE LUNCH BOX

## SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS

- The Census Bureau estimates that New Haven's 2009 population was 123,330. Three-year estimates (2006-2008) indicate New Haven is had 25,140 families, 14,922 of which had related children under 18 years of age. More than 19 percent of all families are estimated to have incomes below the poverty level; for families with related children under 18, that figure jumps to nearly 27 percent.
- Kids Count reports that, in 2009, 31 percent of New Haven's children (8,000) were living below the poverty level.
- The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics report (September 2010) indicates that the unemployment rate for the New Haven metropolitan area is 9.1 percent.
- USDA's Economic Research Service reports that between 2007 and 2009, an average of 11.4 percent of Connecticut residents experienced low or very low food security; about 4.6 percent were in the very low food security category.
- From 2007 to 2009, the average number of people in Connecticut participating in the SNAP program increased from 212,562 to 258,165. During that same period, the portion of the eligible population participating in SNAP increased from 62 percent to 69 percent; among eligible persons who were working, it increased from 45 percent to 53 percent.

## SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE DEPARTMENT

The New Haven Public Schools (NHPS), a part of city government with board members appointed by Mayor John DeStefano, serve more than 20,750 students in 29 elementary schools, nine middle schools, four transitional schools, and seven high schools. A teaching staff of more than 1,600 serves a student body that is nearly 55 percent African American and 31 percent Hispanic. Eleven percent of the students are White; Asian Americans, Indian Americans, and others make up the balance.

The school system provides nutritionally-balanced, low-cost or free meals to income-eligible students through the federal School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program (which also includes snacks), and Summer Food Service Program. Approximately 80 percent of students qualify for free and reduced-price meals.

While efforts to combat childhood hunger in New Haven are being made by several organizations operating throughout the city, the most far-reaching initiative is found in the schools, where a return to a self-operated school food service program and the hiring of an experienced chef to run it have produced dramatic increases in the number and quality of meals being served to all students.

The chronology of events leading to the school system's current aggressive food service improvement efforts begins in October 2001, when the NHPS and New Haven Health Department created a District-wide Nutrition Committee and charged it with implementing innovative policies and programs to promote healthy behaviors and choices in schools.

The Committee's initial review of the status of nutrition in the schools, including vending machines and food service meals, resulted in the replacement of unhealthy snacks and beverages with healthier options, and with the placement of timers on the vending machines to

limit their use by students during certain hours of the day. Beverages remaining in the schools were limited to water, sports drinks, and juice. The timers on the machines were later centralized for system-wide control.

In August 2003, with the opening of the school system's central kitchen, healthier food became available to students.

In 2004, with the launch of the "Healthy Kids First" program, popular junk food snacks sold during lunch were replaced with healthy snacks; candy, soda, and bake sales during school hours were banned; alternatives to school fundraisers' sale of candy and food were encouraged; and use of food as rewards or incentives was discouraged.

### ***New Approach, New Leadership***

In June 2008, School Superintendent Reginald Mayo and Chief Operating Officer William Clark hired Tim Cipriano, a chef with more than 16 years of culinary experience who had been spearheading improvements in school nutrition in the Bloomfield, Connecticut schools. The hiring of "Chef Tim," who advocates "thinking outside the lunch box," and who was charged with developing and implementing the kind of nutrition model that other school systems would want to follow, was the first step in implementing a decision made by Mayor DeStefano and the Board of Education to return to a self-operated food service program.

Examples of progress made since the hiring of the new Executive Director of Food Services are charted on the school system's web site. These include, in school year 2008-09, Food Services' move to a whole grain model for breads, and USDA's choice of Food Services to participate in a whole grain pilot program.

During 2008-09, chicken nuggets were eliminated from the menu and roasted "on the bone" chicken, always served with fresh vegetables, became a menu staple. À la carte meal offerings and snacks were completely removed from the K-8 schools in an effort to keep the focus on the reimbursable meal. Meals are now accompanied by sauces – including tangy cherry, sweet red pepper, cacciatore, curry, cranberry gravy, and sweet and sour – and new menu items – including shepherd's pie, chicken and broccoli stir fry, chicken pot pie, and jambalaya – are being incorporated.

Since that year, school menus have featured mashed potatoes, roasted sweet potatoes, mashed butternut squash, roasted vegetables, and corn on the cob. A large majority of dishes are produced from scratch using fresh vegetables. Turkey products have been substituted for some beef products. Vegetarian offerings have increased; these include vegetable lasagna, eggplant parmigiana, and pierogies, along with more traditional items such as salads and grilled cheese and whole grain pizza made with reduced-fat cheese.

In 2008-09, Food Services diverted \$50,000 in commodity funds to the Department of Defense produce program to increase access to the fresh fruits and vegetables available through that program. This increased to \$95,000 in 2009-10. The DoD program has also provided the schools with many products from local farms.

Currently, the Food Service Department is comprised of over 250 employees, working in 46 cafeterias, on delivery trucks, and in central kitchen offices. Every school day, Food Services workers produce and serve more than 17,000 lunches and 12,000 breakfasts. Total Food Services revenues increased from about \$9.4 million in school year 2007-08 to \$10.2 million in

2009-10. Over the same period, the total payroll increased from about \$5.15 million to nearly \$5.8 million, total expenses dropped from nearly \$12.6 million to less than \$11.8 million, and total meals served increased from 4.8 million to more than 5.1 million.

This summer, the school system's Summer Food Service Program provided breakfast and lunch at 36 open sites (a site where any child 18 and under can go to receive meals) and seven closed sites (where only the children enrolled in a summer program there have access to the meals). Food Services also provided the meals this summer for children in four of neighboring Hamden's schools.

According to Chef Tim, Food Services is striving to eliminate processed foods from schools to the fullest extent possible. The goal is to move to a model in which the Central Kitchen serves virtually all schools in the system, and kitchens in all K-8 schools are eliminated. Currently, 11 schools, including some K-8 schools, have kitchens. The Central Kitchen currently serves 35 schools, delivering 14,000 meals per day. Expanding Central Kitchen operations would translate into the availability of better quality food and cost savings for the system: As the number of meals produced goes up and the volume of food purchased increases, buying power improves.

### ***Use of Locally-Grown, School-Grown Food***

For school year 2008-09, Chef Tim wrote bid documents for produce that attracted a large produce vendor able to offer very competitive prices for local farm produce. That year, more than 300 cases of apples, 300 cases of pears, 75 cases of peaches, 100 cases of green beans, 100 cases of potatoes, 6,500 pounds of butternut squash, 400 pounds of tomatoes, 135 bags of corn, and many other items were procured from local farms in Connecticut and Massachusetts. In 2009-10, local farm purchases exceeded 50,000 pounds, which is 12 percent of the total produce purchased for the schools.

A major Food Services' goal is for students to produce some of the food that will be used in the preparation of meals for the school system. New Haven's Sound School Regional Vocational Aquaculture Center, one of 19 regional vocational agriculture centers in Connecticut, has a small farm that produces a variety of vegetables and herbs. Chef Tim and NHPS Chief Operating Officer Clark worked with the school to create an initiative that would use produce grown by students there to feed other students in the system, with the result that Sound School vegetables were used in Food Services' meals served at special events in 2009, and use of the school's produce is continuing this year.

Other initiatives at individual schools include one at the Barnard Environmental Studies Interdistrict Magnet School, which has a large school garden. Food Services is developing afterschool enrichment programs involving area chefs who teach both students and parents what to do with the vegetables they grow. At the Edgewood School, a small organic garden produces vegetables which are used in an afterschool cooking program involving local chefs. Gardens and orchards are currently being planned and created on the grounds of several additional schools.

Looking into the future, Chef Tim describes a plan to work with local community groups to create a non-profit company to run two school system farms.

- On a five-acre educational farm, students will learn through experience what will and will not grow in Connecticut, and why. Corn and soybeans will be grown in order to teach

students how these vegetables have a negative effect on the soil and how they can significantly change the food system. The farm will educate the students on the basic preparation of fruits and vegetables to be cooked or eaten raw. Chef Tim envisions the eventual production of honey and maple syrup, and possibly the raising of livestock.

- On a 35- to 40-acre production farm, students will grow vegetables to serve in the schools. One model envisioned would involve growing a wide variety of vegetables that could be blanched/roasted and frozen in bulk for use throughout the school year. Another model would produce the ingredients needed for marinara sauce and salsa and work with a local processor to produce these in bulk for use in the schools. To generate revenue for the farm, the sauce and salsa could also be packaged for sale in local stores.
- The non-profit company would provide a certified agriscience educator/part-time farmer and a full time farmer. To generate additional revenue, the farms will be made available to schools and companies for field trips. Chef Tim envisions that, in the first year, over 2,000 area school students will tour the farm on field trips, and an additional 50 students will complete an agriculture training program.
- Grants to establish the non-profit company and hire a nutritionist for Food Services are actively being sought. The nutritionist would be working with the agriculture educator to ensure that the curriculum meets the requirements set to educate the students on good nutrition habits, in addition to educating them on the sources of their food.
- Also under discussion is the creation of a distribution channel through which the non-profit company could gain direct access to local farms. The concept is that, by eliminating the middleman, the schools can offer farmers a fair price that is below that which is currently offered by produce distributors.

The New Haven schools are also active participants in the state's Farm to School Program, a joint effort of the Connecticut Departments of Education and Agriculture to encourage the use of locally-grown produce in the state's school systems, and the Agriculture Department's Farm to Chef program, which connects Connecticut chefs and food service professionals with growers, producers, and distributors of state-grown products, and helps residents locate restaurants and other dining facilities that use these products. Food is now being supplied to the School District by 14 area farms.

On October 20, 2010, NHPS officially launched two additional health initiatives tied to child nutrition: Health Heroes and Chefs Move to School.

- Health Heroes is a social marketing campaign intended to inspire students and their families to adopt lifelong healthy behaviors. Developed by the District Wellness Committee (described below) and the Yale School of Public Health's Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE) program, it engages students in "challenges" in which they adopt healthy behaviors over time, encourage other students to do the same, and promote a healthy environment in their school, home, and community. For its first year, the program has been given a nutrition focus.
- Chefs Move to Schools, an extension of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign to fight childhood obesity and run through the U.S. Department of Agriculture,

will enable chefs around the country to partner with schools in their community to create healthy meals and teach children about choosing and preparing good food, including fresh fruits and vegetables.

### ***Advocacy and Support for Program***

Since taking the helm at Food Services, Chef Tim has actively and aggressively promoted the program being pursued in the New Haven schools, making presentations at national conferences, participating in White House programs and events (including work on Chefs Move to Schools), working with the USDA, and conferring with hunger relief organizations and other school food executives. Highlights of this effort have been posted on the NHPS web site.

Chef Tim acknowledges the support that Food Services has received from NHPS leaders, the school food service workers, and their food service unions over the past two years – support that has enabled Food Services to move ahead with its current initiatives.

He also acknowledges the assistance received from other food policy and advocacy organizations in the state, including End Hunger Connecticut!, a legislative and administrative advocacy organization engaged in outreach and public education which focuses on ending hunger. The organization operates the statewide Connecticut Campaign to End Childhood Hunger, a three-year effort to increase the reach of the federal food programs in the schools, as well as those targeting families. End Hunger Connecticut! has consulted with Chef Tim on promotion of New Haven's summer food program, enhancement of its breakfast program, and other efforts.

### **FOOD POLICY COUNCIL**

The New Haven Food Policy Council was created in 2005 by City Ordinance Number 1384, 6-6-05. Objectives and scope are described on the page created for the Council on the city's web site. Among these descriptions:

- *The New Haven Food Policy Council is assembled to improve the level of community food security and the quality of the local food system in our city.*
- *A food policy council works to strengthen the local food system by connecting its various sectors. The local food system is the network of entities that encompasses everything about the production and consumption of food, including farms, distributors, retail stores, and emergency service providers.*
- *Since access to and distribution of food is an important part of the food system, the public sector, including...transportation systems and schools, also plays an important role.*
- *A food policy council encourages networking between these sectors and develops methods for greater collaboration on projects and programs related to food issues.*
- *Food policy councils are made up of a diverse group of people representing different sectors of the community food system.*
- *Prior to the creation of the New Haven Food Policy Council, there was no single locus of activity to connect these efforts and encourage collaborative, far-reaching problem solving.*
- *Creating a food policy council as part of local government has the advantage of leveraging additional resources and gaining audience with local policy makers by*

*formalizing a mechanism of communication between them and the council, and demonstrating the commitment of the city to tackle these critical issues.*

The ordinance itself – Section 14-41 of the Municipal Code – consists of a detailed description of the composition of the Council:

*The New Haven Food Policy Council is established and composed of eleven (11) members, ten (10) appointed by the mayor and approved by the board of alderman, and one (1) aldermanic representative elected by the board of alderman. At its initial formation, three (3) members shall serve for a one-year term, four (4) shall serve for a two-year term, and four (4) members shall serve for a three-year term. Subsequent council members, in addition to the aldermanic representative, will be appointed by the mayor and approved by the board of alderman for a three-year term that may be renewed. The council may recommend prospective appointees to the mayor and board of alderman. The ten (10) members of the council appointed by the mayor shall include: one (1) member of the department or organization administering the council; six (6) members of the community personally engaged in the production and distribution of food, or in the effects of food on the local economy and health of city residents. Members may be chosen from the following fields: hunger relief, nutrition, businesses in the food sector, farming, and institutional food management; three (3) of the members of the council shall be selected from the public at large. Additionally, for the council's initial formation, two (2) temporary members will also be appointed by the mayor and approved by the board of alderman for a one-time, three-year term, to participate in the establishment of council goals and objectives. The two (2) temporary members of the council shall include: one (1) member of the community personally engaged in food production, distribution, or in the effects of food on the local economy and health of city residents and one (1) member selected from the public at large. Three (3) years after its initial formation and every three years thereafter, the board of aldermen will evaluate the council on the basis of previous annual reports. As long as the council meets its goals or makes reasonable progress toward them, the council will be reauthorized for another three (3) years.*

The short-term goals established for the council include:

- Creating a strong Food Policy Council of diverse membership;
- Reaching out to various food system experts within the community to help inform the council on the unique landscape of New Haven's food-related resources and how they are connected;
- Engaging and collaborating with community stakeholders on issues relating to the food system and community food security;
- Beginning to develop a network linking different sectors of the food system;
- Identifying policies that affect the local food system;
- Identifying existing resources and programs that strengthen their local food system; and
- Identifying gaps in resources and programs and exploring ways to fill those gaps.

Long-term goals include:

- Educating the public about the New Haven food system and issues that affect the city's security, safety, nutrition and health, and economy;
- Strengthening networks and links between different sectors of the food system;
- Providing policy makers with guidance on how legislation and policy affect the food system; and



- Seeking funding for projects, project partners, and possible collaborators for priority projects to fill in resource and program gaps.

Nominations for the council were requested shortly after its creation. Within a year, a group of nominees believed to bring together the interests needed to meet the city's goals began the confirmation process, beginning with the Mayor's approval. In December 2006, following a lengthy process involving a hearing and final approval by the Board of Aldermen, the majority of the council members were appointed. The first monthly meeting was held in January 2007. CitySeed, a nonprofit organization that operates weekly farmers' markets in five New Haven neighborhoods and promotes the consumption of locally grown and organic food, was designated by the city to provide administrative support to the council. This included setting up meetings, taking and posting meeting minutes, maintaining the Council's web site, conducting community outreach, providing the council with informational resources, and generally assisting the work of the council. The organization also serves as the vehicle through which the council's grant applications are submitted. In-kind services and grant funding, covering expenses for resource building activities, administrative staff salary, meeting space, and photocopying, were provided by the city and the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. The position of council director is unpaid, but the city currently provides an annual stipend of \$3,500.

Much of the council's first year was devoted to learning about the food-related resources and needs of the community, and about the roles and positions of the individual council members. Several experts briefed the members on organizational formation and consensus-building, objectives and accomplishments of other food policy councils, data collecting and analysis, and other topics.

From the beginning, the council focused on school food and proper childhood nutrition. Many of the experts and community resources that the council engaged in its first year supported this focus. Early efforts to promote healthier school food and better childhood nutrition involved working directly with community organizations such as CitySeed, the Law Clinic Organization at Yale Law School, Common Ground High School, Yale's Sustainable Food Project, and Yale's Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity.

Working with the Community and Economic Development Clinic of Yale Law School, the council developed a publication detailing the federal, state, and local policies that impact school food for presentation at the Greater New Haven Childhood Obesity Summit held May 22, 2008. The event was organized by Leadership Greater New Haven, a project of the Chamber of Commerce, and Yale's Rudd Center.

The council's director, also an experienced chef, reports that invitations to meetings now are being extended to many more community organizations – an effort to draw more community interests into the development and support of food policy. The meetings are open to the public, she says, and are well attended.

## **DISTRICT WELLNESS COMMITTEE**

In 2005, in response to the state's implementation of the 2004 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act's mandate to establish a wellness policy for schools in the National School Lunch Program – including a requirement that children have 15 minutes of activity each day in addition to gym classes, the Districtwide Nutrition Committee created in 2001 was transformed into a District Wellness Committee with the addition of new board members and formal student members.

In October 2006, with \$400,000 in funding from the Connecticut Health Foundation, the new committee began creating wellness committees in six pilot schools through an initiative entitled Physical Activity and Wellness (PAW). PAW established teams to promote student health and wellness; the concept includes a healthy food service program and includes Food Services representatives along with parents, students, school staff, and school administrators on the committees. PAW schools receive intensive training, support, materials and resources from the Wellness Committee and community partners. Choosing healthy foods and keeping a healthy body weight are two of the program's five "desired healthy behaviors."

PAW is currently in 18 K-8 schools and has undertaken a collaborative effort with the Yale Griffin Prevention and Research Center to expand the program to the remaining 11 schools in the district. The director of the PAW program, a Senior Program Director for Yale's CARE program who also serves as the co-chair of the Wellness Committee, credits the nation's greatly-increased awareness of the threats posed by obesity for the heightened interest in programs like PAW, which combine healthy food and increased physical activity.

The Wellness Committee, judged to be the most effective in the state by the Connecticut Department of Education and Yale's Rudd Center for Policy and Obesity, strongly supports the school system's movement toward centralized preparation of school meals and purchasing of fresh fruits and vegetables.

While the school system does not currently have a separate nutrition education program, a new PAW partnership with the Yale Griffin Center, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Community Health Network, and other community organizations is bringing nutrition education to New Haven's classrooms.

Following the 2008 citywide summit on school food referenced earlier, CitySeed, the nonprofit organization which pioneered the development and operation of the city's farmers' markets, joined with the Food Policy Council and the District Wellness Committee to create a working group on school food which focuses on decreasing reliance on processed foods and increasing use of fresh fruits and vegetables, particularly those grown locally, in school food programs.

With funding from the Department of Public Health, CitySeed and the Wellness Committee collaborated on a community cookbook that promotes healthy meals to New Haven families, particularly those with children in the schools. Since its publication, the cookbook has been widely distributed in the community.

## **COMMUNITY FOOD ASSISTANCE**

### ***CONNECTICUT FOOD BANK***

Food providers in New Haven are served by the Connecticut Food Bank (CFB), an affiliate of the food bank network Feeding America (formerly America's Harvest). Across six of Connecticut's eight counties, CFB provides food products to more than 650 soup kitchens, shelters, food pantries and child and adult day programs, and promotes public awareness of hunger problems. The food provided comes from the food industry, through community member and corporate donations, and via government programs such as The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provide funds to cover costs of warehousing and distributing USDA commodities and to

purchase high protein food. Funding is also coming from foundations, the faith community, businesses, and civic groups.

Most of the food comes from the food industry and includes products that are wholesome but might have some cosmetic flaw in the packaging – e.g., dented cans, crumpled boxes, expired sell dates. CFB’s Chief Executive Office says that the type of food they receive has shifted over the past few years, away from damaged nonperishable items to a larger percentage of frozen and fresh foods, which are more difficult to handle and store.

Most food provided by CFB to its member agencies passes through its three warehouses. Community-based organizations are now invited to come to the warehouses on Friday afternoons to obtain perishables, and a mobile pantry truck has been added to deliver six refrigerated pallets and four dry pallets of perishable food directly to New Haven’s underserved neighborhoods where volunteers distribute it to residents. The value of the mobile pantry has increased recently with the decision by Shaws to end operations in Connecticut and New Hampshire, according to the CEO. Further, New Haven’s other large outlet, Stop and Shop, is located on the edge of the city and requires a bus trip for many central-city residents.

CFB participates in the Food Policy Council and is a member of the Greater New Haven Emergency Food Council, a long-established group which coordinates the efforts of private agencies and the public and private sectors in the distribution of emergency food in the greater New Haven area. Goals are to reduce duplication and competition among members and distribute limited resources equitably and efficiently. The group, which includes CFB member organizations such as food pantries, homeless shelters, residential programs, and soup kitchens, meets several times each year in an informal setting to discuss common problems and issues. It also serves meals to residents through a Community Dining Room and a Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen.

CFB is providing backpack programs in six New Haven schools, enabling at-risk students to take home backpacks containing enough nutritious food to get through the weekend, at a cost of about \$5 each. (Statewide, CFB provides 60 school districts with 60,000 backpacks per year.) It also provides snacks for the city’s summer day camp program, using food left over from the backpack program, and contributes food to the NHPS free summer meals program, which operates in 43 sites.

### ***SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM***

A range of anti-hunger and anti-poverty outreach and advocacy services are provided in Connecticut by the Connecticut Association for Human Services. In New Haven and other cities, the organization operates a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment outreach program, which is funded by the state using USDA funds. A staff of four works with community-based organizations that serve potentially-eligible clients; these include WIC offices, community health centers, soup kitchens, food pantries, and schools. Outreach workers distribute information on assistance available, make presentations to groups, pre-screen potential clients for eligibility, and assist in completing applications.

Actual enrollment in SNAP and other assistance programs is handled by the Connecticut Department of Social Services. In New Haven, during the state fiscal year ending in June 2010, an average of just under 30,000 residents were receiving food stamps each month – the second-highest SNAP participation level in the state.

## **OFFICIALS INTERVIEWED**

### **New Haven Public Schools**

Chef Timothy Cipriano, Executive Director of Food Services  
Sue Peters, Director, PAW Program, and Co-Chair, District Wellness Committee

### **New Haven Food Policy Council**

Tagan Engel, Director

### **Connecticut Food Bank**

Nancy Carrington, Chief Executive Officer

### **End Hunger Connecticut!**

Dawn Crayco, Child Nutrition Director

### **Connecticut Association for Human Services**

Tracy Helin, Program Director

# **SAN FRANCISCO: FOCUSING ON FOOD SECURITY**

## **SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS**

- The Census Bureau estimates that San Francisco's 2009 population was 815,358. Three-year averages (2006-2008) indicate San Francisco had 141,406 families, 60,731 of which had related children under 18 years of age. Among all families, 6.5 percent are estimated to have incomes below the poverty level; for families with related children under 18, that figure is more than 9 percent.
- Kids Count reports that, in 2009, 12 percent of San Francisco's children (14,000) were living below the poverty level.
- The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics report (September 2010) indicates that the unemployment rate for the San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont metropolitan area is 10.5 percent.
- USDA's Economic Research Service reports that between 2007 and 2009, an average of 14.1 percent of California residents experienced low or very low food security; 5.1 percent were in the very low food security category.
- From 2007 to 2009, the average number of people in California participating in the SNAP program increased from 2,048,185 to 2,670,341. During that same period, the portion of the eligible population participating in SNAP declined from 50 percent to 48 percent; among eligible persons who were working, it declined from 34 percent to 33 percent.

## **POLICY DIRECTION AND COORDINATION**

### ***FOOD SECURITY TASK FORCE***

In August 2005, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed and Mayor Gavin Newsome signed Ordinance 206-05 amending the San Francisco Health Code by establishing a Food Security Task Force "charged with creating a strategic plan to address hunger, enhancing food security, and increasing participation in federally funded programs; requiring preparation of reports and a strategic plan; and including a sunset provision." Food security is defined in the ordinance as "the state in which all persons obtain a nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable diet at all times through local non-emergency sources."

The ordinance states that the task force will "recommend to the Board of Supervisors legislative action and city-wide strategies that would increase participation in federally funded programs such as the Food Stamp Program, Summer Food Service, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the Homeless Children Nutrition Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. The Task Force shall also provide general advice and assistance to the Board of Supervisors with regard to funding priorities, legislative action, and city policies on addressing hunger and enhancing food security of San Francisco residents in addition to any other issues within the Task Force's expertise."

The ordinance directed the task force to submit a strategic plan to the Board of Supervisors within a year of its first meeting and to follow that report with bi-annual progress reports. The task force, representing both the City and County of San Francisco, consists of 11 members which, with the exception of a School District representative, are appointed by the

Board of Supervisors. Their appointments include one voting member from the Human Service Agency; the Department of Public Health; the Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families (DCYF); the Mayor's Office on Community Development; the Recreation and Park Department; and up to four representatives of "community-based organizations that provide nutritional support and increase the food security of San Francisco residents," such as the San Francisco Food Bank (SFFB) and St. Anthony's Foundation.

Federal agencies such as the Agriculture Department's Food and Nutrition Services may be invited to send representatives to serve as non-voting members of the task force. The ordinance calls for the Department of Public Health's Nutrition Services to provide clerical and logistical support to the task force and its committees.

In February, the Board of Supervisors passed, and the Mayor signed, an ordinance enlarging and amending the composition of the task force and directing it to prepare an annual assessment of the state of hunger and food insecurity in the city which contains recommendations for funding, programs, and policy. This ordinance also extends the task force through January 30, 2012.

Currently, task force members represent:

- San Francisco Department of Public Health, Office of Food Systems
- San Francisco Department of Aging and Adult Services
- San Francisco Department of Public Health, Nutrition Services
- San Francisco Human Services Agency, Food Stamp Program
- San Francisco Unified School District, Student Nutrition Services
- San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Their Families
- Community Living Campaign
- St. Anthony's Foundation
- Meals on Wheels
- Project Open Hand
- San Francisco Food Bank
- Glide Foundation
- Bayview Hunters Point YMCA
- Episcopal Community Services

Several current projects of the task force and its individual members specifically address childhood hunger. Among these are projects that involve working with the school system to expand breakfast participation, and working with the schools to develop a strategic plan for improving several aspects of the school lunch program – participation, appeal of the food, operations, maximizing federal reimbursements, and others. In addition, the WIC program is partnering with a doctor from San Francisco General Hospital and the University of California to pilot a fruit and vegetable prescription program.

The task force is staffed by Paula Jones, Director of Food Systems for the Department of Public Health, who is also a member. She reports that, since its establishment, the group has generally met on a monthly basis, and that members have been actively involved in helping it meet its mandate. The third in a series of reports on food insecurity and hunger in the city is now being completed by the task force, based on information supplied by its members, and is expected to be published November 30. (Much of the information contained in this case study appeared in drafts of this report.)

## **MAYOR'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE ON HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD**

On July 9, 2009, Mayor Newsome issued an executive directive aimed at creating a food system that promotes public health, environmental sustainability, and social responsibility. It states: "Eliminating hunger and ensuring access to healthy and nutritious food for all residents, regardless of economic means, is a concern of all city departments. Investments should be allocated to ensure no San Franciscan goes hungry. San Francisco's neighborhood food environments must allow residents the opportunity to make healthy food choices and reduce environmental causes of diet related illnesses."

The sweeping directive states, among many other things, that: city resources will be used to purchase and promote regionally produced and sustainably certified food; food production and horticulture education will be encouraged; creation of food sector jobs and food businesses will be promoted; and conservation of the region's prime agricultural land will be supported.

The directive specified roles for virtually every city agency and deadlines by which plans to meet the goals stated in the directive would be submitted to the Mayor and other relevant parties. A Food Policy Council consisting of representatives of city agencies and key stakeholder groups was formed to assist in implementing the directive. This council was also coordinated by the Public Health Department's Paula Jones.

### **SFFOOD.GOV**

The official web site of the City and County of San Francisco contains a page ([www.sffood.gov](http://www.sffood.gov)) which links to a wide range of information on healthy and sustainable food policy, the sourcing and serving of sustainable and healthy food, sources of free and affordable food, organizations working on food issues, and other resources.

## **SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

### **STUDENT NUTRITION POLICIES**

In January 2003, San Francisco's Board of Education, after working with a committee of parents, students, health professionals, and district staff, passed a resolution calling for the removal of high-calorie, low-nutrient junk food and soda from the schools, beginning with the 2003-04 school year. The focus of the policy was "no empty calories." New standards set maximum allowable levels for fat and sugar content in foods and beverages and minimum targets for eight essential nutrients, and also set limits on portion size. Because foods meeting the standards for nutrients were not readily available from manufacturers, the new policy recognized that it would take time for manufacturers to achieve the nutrient goals, and some exceptions to the policy would have to be made in the meantime. Juice and water drinks containing added ingredients and sweeteners were not allowed, but juice drinks with naturally-occurring sugar were acceptable.

The same Student Nutrition and Physical Activity Committee created the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) Wellness Policy which was required by the 2004 reauthorization of the federal Child Nutrition Act, and is responsible for monitoring its implementation. The policy consisted primarily of nutrition-related requirements, which included:

- Improving the meal eligibility process at each school;
- Phasing in nutrition standards more rigid than those required by the federal government;
- Improving menu choices by including foods that students like, and incorporating more fresh fruits and vegetables;
- Integrating nutrition education into the comprehensive education program;
- Controlling students' access to vending machines and ensuring that their contents comply with the nutrition standards established by the committee;
- Developing pilot programs to increase participation in food programs;
- Phasing out food and beverage sales to students that do not meet the system's nutrition standards;
- Ensuring that food and drink provided for classroom parties, celebrations, and other activities meet the system's nutrition standards.

In March 2009, the board adopted a resolution, "Feeding Every Hungry Child in the San Francisco Unified School District," that codified the longstanding practice of feeding all children regardless of their ability to pay or their status under the National School Lunch Program. This policy also mandated that all schools take several specific steps to minimize the financial impact of feeding all children, including collecting meal applications from all students. The annual cost of the policy of feeding all children had grown to \$725,000.

### ***STUDENT NUTRITION SERVICES***

The SFUSD's Student Nutrition Services (SNS) Department is the largest public meal service program in the City. During the 2008-09 school year, on average, about 22,000 students were eating school lunch each day, 6,000 were eating school breakfast, and 7,000 were getting snacks. In the 2009-10 school year, an additional 1,500 students ate breakfast, and an additional 500 got lunch and snacks. Slightly more than 30,000 students were eligible for free and reduced-price lunches.

In an effort to increase participation in the lunch program, at the beginning of this school year SNS implemented in all middle and high schools a new model for lunch in which all food is sold as balanced meals that include fruit, vegetables, and milk. The new model, which features expanded meal choices and multiple points of service to speed up lines, was pilot tested last year in three schools, with technical assistance and funding provided by the city's Department of Public Health. In all the pilot schools, participation in the lunch program increased, as did federal reimbursements to the school meals program. The new model replaces a competitive à la carte food program which was cash based, offered different food choices than the National School Lunch Program, was not eligible for federal reimbursements, and was seen as stigmatizing students accessing lunch through the federal program.

Beginning this school year, all lunches served in the district meet the Gold Standard of the USDA's HealthierUS School Challenge and include a greater variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and leaner proteins.

The school district also has introduced MealpayPlus, a program through which families can prepay for students' cafeteria meals online, by phone, by mail, or at the school, thereby eliminating the need for students to carry lunch money to school, and enabling families to view their students' history of cafeteria purchases.



## **Salad Bars**

Adding more fresh produce to school lunches had long been a goal of the SFUSD, but finding funds to purchase the produce and equipment needed had always been a challenge. In the 2007-08 school year, however, an initial \$500,000 investment made by the Mayor's Office and the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families made it possible to add salad bars to the standard school lunch in more than a third of the system's 102 schools, including all middle and high schools. The funds were allocated to the purchase of refrigerators, mobile salad bars, and additional produce. DCYF allocates \$234,000 each year for additional produce for the bars.

An assessment of program operations in 13 schools by DCYF and the Department of Public Health found that about half of all students took items from the salad bar, over two-thirds of these students took an additional serving of produce, and one-third took two servings. Most students ate all of the salad that they took, and overall participation in the school lunch program increased across the schools.

While plans for the current year are not yet final, DCYF anticipates that salad bars will continue to operate this year in about 37 of the district's schools.

## **SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM**

The Department of Children, Youth and Their Families sponsors and administers the Summer Lunch Program and the Afternoon Snack Program, contracting with the school system's Student Nutrition Services for lunches and the San Francisco Food Bank for snacks. In 2009, DCYF provided more than 160,000 lunches and 120,000 snacks over eight weeks at 91 sites, including community centers, housing developments, recreation centers, faith-based programs, and schools in low-income neighborhoods. This summer, the number of lunches increased by 24 percent and the number of snacks increased by 43 percent. An average of nearly 6,400 meals was served each day – lunches at 105 sites, snacks at 82.

Because USDA reimbursement for meals served in the summer to income-eligible students (about \$850,000) does not cover actual costs, DCYF invests about \$250,000 of its funds in these programs – funds which are used to hire temporary, part-time staff to comply with USDA program requirements, to cover food delivery costs, and to purchase the food itself.

Officials say that DCYF's funding and coordination of the SFSP have become critical as school budget cuts have reduced the number of schools offering summer sessions. The "difficult fiscal situation" now facing the city and county, they say, is limiting the ability of both the lunch and snack programs to serve those needing food and to make healthy food a more appealing option to the children who participate.

DCYF acknowledges the difficulty the agency has faced in diversifying menus to meet cultural preferences of children, serving more warm meals, and purchasing larger shares of locally-grown food – all because of the much higher costs involved.

DCYF also funds the two sponsors of the city's Child and Adult Care Food Program. The agency's commitment of \$75,000 to this program for day care providers results in their receiving more than \$3 million in state and federal funds.

## COMMUNITY FOOD ASSISTANCE

### **SAN FRANCISCO FOOD BANK**

With around 400 human service agencies and public schools distributing 39 million pounds of groceries and fresh produce from the San Francisco Food Bank, this year, it is clearly the hub of community-based food distribution in the city. Some of the city's largest meal programs, including the Glide Foundation, St. Anthony's Foundation, and Project Open Hand, receive the bulk of the food they provide to clients from the food bank, which is a member of the Feeding America network.

About 200 agencies regularly select packaged food from the SFFB warehouse. In addition, the food bank operates a network of over 200 pantry sites at which clients select the foods that best meet their families' needs. Pantries are located in high-need neighborhoods throughout the city, in public schools, day care centers, senior centers, supportive housing sites for the formerly homeless, public housing projects, churches, and community centers. Food is presented in farmers'-market style, with each household receiving 25 to 30 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables, beans, bread, juice, and a variety of staple items each week.

Some pantries target particularly vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations. The Community Food Partners pantries, for example, are operated in public housing buildings where families with children reside. The food bank delivers to 14 of the largest housing developments in San Francisco providing produce and dry groceries to over 1,000 families on a weekly basis.

Food bank officials describe clients who visit the pantries as being either ineligible for federal assistance or unable to survive on the assistance they receive. The food bank's annual report for 2009 indicates that 20,000 low-income households were served on a weekly basis last year. Twenty-six new pantry sites were opened, with pantries accounting for 70 percent of the food bank's total food distribution.

Data included in the task force's annual report show that the monthly average number of households served by the food bank in 2010 has more than doubled since 2006. During this period, all indicators have increased dramatically: Average pounds of food served per month as well as average meals per day increased by around 40 percent. From 2009 to 2010 alone, the food bank has seen an increase of over 25 percent in the number of households accessing pantries weekly – now averaging around 23,000 households in San Francisco. In 2010, the food bank increased food distribution by 15 percent.

**Healthy Children Pantries** – Responding to a 2002 pantry participant survey which indicated that the food bank was not effectively reaching children and their families, the organization determined that it would increase its efforts to meet children and families where they are – primarily at schools. The result was Healthy Children (HC) pantries, a weekly grocery distribution program offered at elementary, middle, and high schools that have a high percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch. Of the 52 HC sites established in the city, 31 are in public schools. Other locations include day care centers, youth centers, family housing, and after-school programs, such as the YMCA. Officials stress that it is important to empower families, not just individual members of families, to have access to the nutritious food needed to prepare meals for the entire family. Currently, the Healthy Children pantry program serves fresh produce and groceries to an average of 4,000 households with children in San Francisco per week.

**Morning Snack Program** – Through its operation of the Healthy Children program, food bank officials learned that students were often hungry in their morning classes – the result of not eating breakfast at home, or not participating in the breakfast program offered at school. In 2009, the food bank responded with a Morning Snack program, an expansion of its model of bringing food to where low-income children live and learn. The program was piloted in high-need K-5 schools – schools in which over 70 percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch. Within months of program inception, officials report, every child in every classroom of the pilot schools was receiving a healthy morning snack that included fresh oranges, apples, juice, pretzels, milk, and other items, such as crackers with cheese and granola. In 2010, the food bank expanded the program into 21 schools and is planning to reach 25 sites, both in schools and in other child-centered organizations, by the end of the current school year.

**DCYF Snacks** – The food bank also serves as the distributor for the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families program, DCYF Snacks (described above). The Morning Snack and DCYF Snack programs are offered at the same kinds of sites that host HC pantries.

### ***SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM***

San Francisco has seen what the task force describes as a “dramatic” increase in the number of people qualifying for assistance under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), especially children. The Human Services Agency of San Francisco, which runs the city’s SNAP program, reported in September that, over the past two years, the food stamp caseload had grown by 53 percent, with 24 percent of that growth occurring over the past year. The number of individuals who receive food stamps increased by 61 percent. The number of cases with children is approaching one-fourth of the total caseload – a nearly 90 percent increase over two years.

In 2009, an average of more than 36,000 individuals received benefits each month, and more than 8,200 cases included children. Through June of this year, an average of nearly 44,200 received monthly benefits, and more than 10,300 of the cases included children. SNAP benefits are heavily concentrated in two of the city’s zip codes: 94112 and 94124 account for more than 22 percent of the grant dollars and have the largest numbers of cases and the largest numbers of children receiving food stamps.

As part of a 2006 food stamp access and participation grant, the agency set up a customer-focused call and service center, imaged its case files, and moved from a caseload to a task-based system. It also did extensive community organizing around food stamps and developed a network of community agencies that refer applications. All are viewed as steps that have contributed to the dramatic increase in SNAP participation in the city.

### ***Online Enrollment***

In June 2009, the Human Services Agency activated BenefitsSF, a web site designed to be used by residents to determine their eligibility for food stamps. During that month, 100 people used the site to enroll in SNAP; by June 2010, the online enrollment had increased significantly, to 559 people. The Food Security Task Force reports that this modernized approach to food stamp enrollment is now being replicated in numerous California counties.

## ***Farmers' Market Pilot***

Launched in June, a pilot program aimed at encouraging SNAP participants to purchase fresh and healthy food at farmers' markets offers \$5 in additional funding to purchase produce for every \$10 spent using Electronic Benefits Transfer cards, which all farmers markets must accept under city ordinance. In the first few months of the pilot's operation, which is being coordinated by the Campaign for Better Nutrition, combined SNAP transactions at the three pilot markets (in Alemany, Fillmore, and Divisadero neighborhoods) have increased by more than 500 percent. The success of this effort is seen both in the impact on SNAP participants and in the added support it provides to the local farm economy.

## **COST OF LIVING - FEDERAL BENEFIT IMBALANCE**

Officials in San Francisco argue that because there is a significant gap between federal poverty guidelines and the income that is actually required to live in their city, thousands of people who do not officially qualify for federal benefits nevertheless need food assistance. Many residents, they say, earn too much to receive federal nutrition benefits, but not enough to meet their own or their family's food needs, because the federal poverty level measures of family size and income do not take into account regional differences in cost of living.

The task force report cites as an example: "Even though a family living in San Francisco spends over 2.5 times as much on housing as a family in Topeka, they are both evaluated by the same poverty measure when they apply for food stamps or other federally funded nutrition assistance programs."

The report also cites three organizations' efforts to calculate more realistic measures of income and poverty based on San Francisco's high cost of living:

- The Public Policy Institute of California, using conservative adjustments for rental costs, estimates that the adjusted poverty rate in San Francisco is 19 percent, compared to the federal estimate of 11 percent.
- The INSIGHT Center for Community Economic Development's Self-Sufficiency Standard shows that a family in San Francisco composed of one adult, one infant, and one school-age child needs to earn nearly \$58,200 a year to cover basic costs such as housing, food, health care, transportation, child care, and taxes.
- The California Budget Project estimated that, in order to achieve a modest standard of living in San Francisco County without assistance from public programs, the same family would need to earn about \$76,200 annually.

The San Francisco Food Bank estimates that 150,000 residents struggle each day to feed themselves and their families. Officials say that when people with limited incomes must choose between paying a fixed expense, like rent, and buying food, they will likely pay the fixed expense. For them, food often becomes a "nonessential" item.

The high cost of goods and services in San Francisco affects provider agencies as well. For the schools, the cost of meeting the nutrition needs of students currently exceeds the budget of the Student Nutrition Services Department. As a result of "skyrocketing" food, supply, labor, and transportation costs, combined with minimal increases in federal food program reimbursement rates, SNS's services during the 2009-10 school year produced a deficit of more than \$3 million.

## **OFFICIALS INTERVIEWED**

### **City of San Francisco**

Paula Jones, Director of Food Systems, Department of Public Health

Leo O'Farrell, Food Stamp Program Director, Human Services Agency

Max Rocha, Deputy Director, Department of Children, Youth and Their Families

### **San Francisco Food Bank**

Deanna Sverdlov, Data Analyst and Monitoring Consultant



# WASHINGTON, D.C.: ADVOCATING AND IMPLEMENTING HUNGER SOLUTIONS

## SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS

- The Census Bureau estimates that Washington, D.C.'s 2009 population was 599,657. Three-year averages (2006-2008) indicate Washington had 107,697 families, 53,032 of which had related children under 18 years of age. Among all families, 14.5 percent are estimated to have incomes below the poverty level; for families with related children under 18, that figure is 22.5 percent.
- Kids Count reports that, in 2008, 32 percent of Washington's children (nearly 36,000) were living below the poverty level.
- The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics report (September 2010) indicates that the unemployment rate for the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria metropolitan area is 5.9 percent.
- USDA's Economic Research Service reports that between 2007 and 2009, an average of 12.9 percent of Washington's residents experienced low or very low food security; 4.5 percent were in the very low food security category.
- From 2007 to 2009, the average number of people in the District of Columbia participating in the SNAP program increased from 86,519 to 103,311. During that same period, the portion of the eligible population participating in SNAP increased from 71 percent to 78 percent; among eligible persons who were working, it increased from 36 percent to 39 percent. In June 2010, there were 121,340 participants.

## HEALTHY SCHOOLS ACT

Efforts to combat hunger and obesity among children in D.C. have been propelled forward with the passage and implementation of the Healthy Schools Act (HCA), legislation passed by the D.C. City Council and fully funded in May of this year. This landmark legislation, signed by Mayor Adrian Fenty on May 21, is designed to improve health, wellness, and nutrition in D.C.'s public and public charter schools. Effective at the start of the current school year, it expands access to school meals; raises the nutrition standards and improves the quality of school meals; eventually triples the amount of physical and health education students receive; and expands school-based health and wellness programs.

As summarized by D.C. Councilmember Mary Cheh, who, with Council Chairman, now Mayor-elect, Vincent Gray, led the effort to draft and pass the legislation, the act:

- Requires all schools to provide free breakfast to all students;
- Requires breakfast to be served in the classroom in schools with high poverty rates;
- Eliminates the reduced-price co-payment for lunch;
- Strongly encourages schools to become a USDA HealthierUS School at the Gold Level;
- Requires all school meals to meet the USDA's Gold Level standards;
- Requires all competitive foods sold in schools to meet the USDA's Gold Level standards;
- Requires all school meals to meet the Institute of Medicine's nutritional standards for saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium;
- Improves the quality of school meals by providing an additional 10 cents for each breakfast and lunch meal served;

- Establishes a farm-to-school program and provides an additional five cents for each lunch meal that includes local foods;
- Sets a goal of 60 minutes of physical activity for students each day;
- Triples the amount of physical and health education by adopting the national standards;
- Establishes recycling, energy-reduction, lead water and paint testing, and other environmental programs;
- Establishes a school gardens program and competitive grants;
- Strengthens local wellness policies, creates school health profiles, and expands school health centers;
- Establishes the Healthy Schools and Youth Commission; and
- Requires public disclosure about school nutrition, environmental testing, and health programs.

More than 350 stakeholders, including 100 students, participated in the process that helped shape the final legislation, which began in December 2009 with its introduction. Working group meetings were held in January and February and a public hearing was held on March 26. Unanimous committee approvals were received on April 19 and 20; the full City Council approved it unanimously on its first reading on April 20 and its final reading on May 4. The intervening period was devoted to securing full funding for the legislation – a four-year budget of \$23.4 million.

The Healthy Schools Act meal requirement consists of five component parts designed to enable the school system to 1) enhance nutrition of school meals; 2) expand access to school meals; 3) promote healthy eating; 4) provide information about school meals; and 5) serve fresh, locally grown foods.

Schools must comply with Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4, and Part 5 is encouraged whenever possible. For complying with all of Parts 1, 2, and 3, schools and public charter schools will receive 10 cents extra for each breakfast served, 10 cents extra for each lunch served, and 40 cents extra for each lunch served to students who qualify for reduced-price meals. They can also receive five cents extra for each lunch served that contains at least one locally-grown, unprocessed meal component.

Schools and public charter schools with more than 40 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals will receive \$7 per student (only in school year 2010-11) to launch breakfast in the classroom and other alternative service models.

Public charter schools only will receive 30 cents extra for each breakfast served to students who qualify for reduced-price meals. In severe-need schools (as defined by USDA), they will receive the difference between the paid and free rates for students who do not qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

The Healthy Schools Act calls for annual reports and recommendations to the Healthy Schools and Youth Commission, the Mayor, and the City Council for: farm-to-school initiatives; school gardens program; compliance with physical education and health requirements; student achievement with respect to health and physical education standards; and status of health, wellness, and nutrition of youth. The commission is established in the act to advise the Mayor and Council on health, wellness, and nutrition issues concerning youth and schools in D.C.



## **STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION**

As the state agency for the USDA Food and Nutrition Services' Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Programs, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education's (OSSE) Wellness and Nutrition Services Department is responsible for children and families receiving year-round access to well-balanced meals, providing program participants with federal reimbursements, training, and nutrition education. The department assists stakeholders in maintaining compliance with USDA rules and regulations and provides cash reimbursement and donated commodity foods to schools, organizations, and child and adult care facilities that participate in the Child Nutrition Programs.

The Healthy Schools Act authorizes OSSE to monitor both District public schools' and public charter schools' compliance and withhold monies and levy fines for designated violations of the act. Under the Act, OSSE will receive approximately \$2.1 million in FY 2011.

In implementing the act, OSSE's primary responsibilities include reimbursing the public schools and charter schools for implementing the provisions of the act; monitoring the schools based on the act's provisions; maintaining the Healthy Schools Fund; developing a school gardens program and a farm-to-school program; and assessing student achievement with respect to the health and physical education standards.

By January 15 of each year, each school must complete its school health profile for posting on OSSE's web site. Schools must also post their profile on the web site and make them available to parents in the school office.

### **D.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

The mission of the D.C. Public Schools' (DCPS) Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) is to support student health and achievement by ensuring that all DCPS students receive nutritious meals and acquire the resources to make healthy choices; provide appetizing school meals made from fresh, locally-produced ingredients; and strive to engage the entire D.C. community in implementing programs that encourage healthy decision-making and promote sustainable practices.

USDA reports that an average of more than 20,300 students participated each day in the School Breakfast Program in 2008; nearly 15,900 were low income students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals. About 91 percent of the schools serving lunch participated in the breakfast program. In the National School Lunch Program that year, average daily student participation was more than 44,200 across 215 schools. About 33,700 of the students qualified for free or reduced-price meals.

DCPS officials view the Healthy Schools Act as reinforcing the system's goals for food programs, and report that each provision of the Act is being met or exceeded. This year, DCPS has set higher nutritional standards for its menus and food service. The new standards include:

- Serving only minimally processed foods;
- Serving only hormone and antibiotic free skim or 1% milk that is free of artificial colors and flavors;
- Eliminating artificial trans fats, high fructose corn syrup, and fried food from the menu;
- Using more whole grain products; and

- Using seasonal, local fruits and vegetables when available.

Beginning this school year, menu information for all school meals is available on the DCPS web site.

A significant response to the Healthy Schools Act by DCPS is the addition of a third meal – a dinner – for students participating in its after-school enrichment programs. Aware that students whose school days begin at 8:00 a.m. in early-care programs and extend to the end of after-care at 6:30 p.m. often experience hunger during the last few hours of the day, the school system this year started serving full dinners consisting of fresh, nutritious, and appealing items, including locally-grown fruit. The program was described in a front-page *Washington Post* story on October 19.

Approximately 10,000 students in after-school programs are currently taking advantage of the dinner offerings in about 100 schools and 12 recreation centers operated by the D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation. The dinners act as magnets to draw children and teens to the after-school programs where they are safe and engaged, often while their parents are working.

The dinner program was pilot tested last year in a small group of schools. DCPS is reimbursed \$2.92 for each meal through the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program. With the help of advocates such as D.C. Hunger Solutions, D.C. was added to the group of 14 states selected by USDA for this program.

OFNS is currently pilot testing two approaches to delivering meals to schools. In a “From Scratch Meals” program, D.C. Central Kitchen’s Fresh Start Catering Company is creating made-from-scratch meals from fresh, local and nutritious ingredients and distributing them to seven pilot schools. In a separate contracted “Portable Meals” program, appealing, high-quality meals are packed in biodegradable or recyclable portable containers and distributed to students at seven schools with limited kitchen facilities.

## **SUMMER PROGRAMS**

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education administers the D.C. Free Summer Meals Program in partnership with local sponsors of sites in schools, recreation centers, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and camps. The D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation is the major sponsor of the program. About 220 sites were involved during the past summer, and about 21,000 children were served each day.

According to the Food Research and Action Center, for six consecutive summers, D.C. has ranked number one nationally on the percentage of low income children served in its summer meals program.

In December 2009, thanks to the new after-school meals program, the agency expanded its food programs, offering nutritious meals in all its centers. The food program has an educational component to foster awareness of the importance of a balanced diet. In addition, the agency has launched a community gardens initiative with an educational component that complements the food program.

## **LOCAL WELLNESS POLICY**

In D.C., the Local Wellness Policy which public school systems in the National School Lunch Program were required to develop by 2006 under the 2004 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act was the product of a collaborative partnership involving DCPS, D.C. Hunger Solutions, and D.C. Action for Healthy Kids, the D.C. component of a national nonprofit volunteer network that partners with schools to improve nutrition and physical activity.

A “Local Wellness Policy Progress Update” published in April 2009 included food in schools and reported:

- All DCPS schools continuing to operate a Universal “Free for All” School Breakfast Program;
- Almost 80 percent of schools participating in the afterschool snack program;
- More students qualifying for free lunch through improved data matching between the food stamp office and DCPS;
- DCPS’ new food service management company taking key steps to improve nutrition in school meals, including reducing the fat content in milk and re-opening kitchens in secondary schools to offer freshly-cooked options;
- 95 percent of vending machines available to students complying with the Healthy Vending Policy.

Provisions in the new Healthy Schools Act greatly enhance and strengthen the existing wellness policies in the schools. The act requires DCPS and each charter school to collaborate with parents, students, food service providers, and community organizations to develop, adopt, and update a comprehensive local wellness policy. The policies now must reflect D.C.’s enhanced nutrition, health, and physical activity requirements, and must be revised at least once every three years.

## **OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY ACTION PLAN**

The District of Columbia estimates that more than 55 percent of residents are overweight or obese – including nearly half of all children – and that, in some wards, the rate of overweight and obesity exceeds 70 percent. A five-year strategic plan to combat overweight and obesity in D.C. released in early May by the Mayor and Health Department Director Pierre Vigilance contains a major component of activity on childhood nutrition and health. The group that worked with the department to develop the plan included executives representing D.C. Hunger Solutions, the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, and several other major national and community organizations, and obtained input from D.C. agencies and the community.

The first of the plan’s six major goals is that “District of Columbia children and young adults are able to maintain healthy eating and physical activity to support a healthy weight while in schools, child care facilities, and after-school programs.” Among the objectives it sets out:

- Each year, an increasing number of schools, child care facilities, and after-school programs will implement and regularly evaluate a comprehensive wellness policy that meets or exceeds that developed by D.C. Public Schools.
- Each year, an increasing number of children will have access to and select healthy meals and integrated, evidence-based nutrition education in schools, child care facilities, and after-school programs.

- Each year, an increasing number of children and young adults from high-need neighborhoods will gain and use the knowledge needed to purchase and prepare healthy, affordable food through expanded educational opportunities.

## **SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

More than 120,000 residents of the District of Columbia – one in five – receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Within the District of Columbia’s Department of Human Services, the Income Maintenance Administration (IMA) determines eligibility for a wide range of federal assistance programs, including SNAP, and performs the monitoring, quality control, and reporting functions required by federal law and court orders for these programs. IMA accepts applications and determines or re-certifies the eligibility of families and individuals for benefits through five decentralized service centers.

In 2009, an average of more than 103,300 individuals participated in SNAP on a monthly basis; this represented 78 percent of all persons eligible for the program and 39 percent of all eligible working poor persons. That year, D.C. received more than \$159.5 million in federal funding for the program. It is estimated that every dollar spent by a SNAP recipient generates \$1.81 in local economic activity.

Several advocacy organizations and direct food providers partner with IMA to perform SNAP outreach: D.C. Hunger Solutions, The D.C. Central Kitchen, and the Capital Area Food Bank (all of which are described in this case study) are among them. Other major outreach organizations include:

- Bread for the City, a community organization whose services to low income families and individuals include a food pantry program which provides groceries to an average of 5,000 households each month. Grocery bags distributed by pantries at the organizations two service centers contain a three-day supply of food, adjusted to family size.
- SOME (So Others Might Eat), an interfaith, community-based organization that provides food, clothing, and health care to D.C.’s poor and homeless population. It operates medical, dental, and mental health programs, and dining rooms that serve breakfast and lunch every day of the year.
- The SHARE (Self Help And Resource Exchange) Food Network, which distributes high quality, affordable, and nutritious food to low income families and individuals. Working through a network of 320 churches and community groups, participants perform two hours of volunteer service and pay \$20 monthly to purchase groceries worth approximately \$40 to \$45. The network provides approximately 13,500 food packages each month.

While difficult economic conditions have increased national program demands, D.C. has continued to work with USDA to improve the reach and efficiency of its SNAP program. In 2009, IMA received bonus awards totaling nearly \$900,000 from USDA for both timeliness in processing SNAP applications and overall program access during the 2009 fiscal year – money to be reinvested to further improve the city’s effort to reach all eligible for the program. This was the second consecutive year that the agency had honored D.C. for its timeliness.

### ***Food Stamp/SNAP Expansion Act of 2009***

In August 2009, the D.C. Council adopted the "Food Stamp/SNAP Expansion Act of 2009," which includes two policy improvements aimed at expanding eligibility among low-income residents and raising benefits for current recipients:

- A new categorical eligibility policy raised the gross income limit for targeted families in need in the District from 130 percent of the federal poverty level to 200 percent and also removed the asset cap.
- By coordinating information between the District's energy assistance program and the food stamp agency, D.C. triggers larger deductions from gross income for heating and cooling costs in food stamp benefit calculations, thereby raising select households' benefits by an average of \$30 to \$60 per month and bringing an additional estimated \$15 million into the city each year.

### ***Food Stamp/SNAP Expansion Act of 2010***

Building on the success of the Food Stamp/SNAP Expansion Act of 2009, Councilmembers Michael Brown and Mary Cheh led the Council's efforts to introduce and pass a second food stamp/SNAP act containing two key provisions:

- Families leaving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families will receive an automatic five-month increase in food stamp benefits ("transitional benefits") to help ease their transition to work. This option could bring an additional \$12 million a year in federal funding into the District.
- For self-employed residents applying for food stamps, the process of identifying and thereby deducting all the costs of doing business to determine net income is often prohibitively burdensome. A standardized self-employment deduction will simplify the process by establishing a set deduction, encouraging participation and boosting benefit levels among the self-employed.

## **ADDITIONAL ANTI-HUNGER LEGISLATION**

### ***FEED DC Act of 2010***

The presence of "food deserts" was documented in D.C. Hunger Solutions' and Social Compact's 2010 "Grocery Gap" report. This report showed that, in these areas, low income D.C. residents find few places to purchase the fresh produce and unprocessed foods essential to healthy diets. On July 13, Council members Mary Cheh, David Catania, Kwame Brown, and Tommy Wells introduced the Food, Environmental, and Economic Development in the District of Columbia Act of 2010, a bill "to establish a program to attract grocery stores to and renovate grocery stores in Enterprise Zones in the District; to require participating grocery stores to employ District residents, accept SNAP Benefits, and accept WIC benefits; to designate a grocery ambassador to assist grocery retailers; to establish a program to expand access to healthy foods in Enterprise Zones in the District by providing assistance to corner stores; to develop a plan for establishing a commercial distribution system for fresh produce and healthy foods to corner stores; to assist corner stores in becoming more energy efficient; and to establish a rebate program for the installation of energy-efficient commercial refrigeration and freezer systems in the District."

The proposed act, modeled on successful initiatives in Pennsylvania and New York City, will create a public-private partnership to attract and renovate grocery stores in existing “food deserts” and will designate a “grocery ambassador” in the Deputy Mayor’s office to help grocers navigate the bureaucratic hurdles of opening new stores.

The first hearing on the bill was held October 18. Committee markup is expected in November and passage is targeted for December.

## **D.C. HUNGER SOLUTIONS**

D.C. Hunger Solutions, founded in 2002 as an initiative of the Washington-based Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), is a non-profit organization that has played major roles in most of the major anti-hunger initiatives that have been undertaken in the District over the past several years. It pursues three strategies to end hunger and improve the nutrition, health, economic security, and well-being of low-income District residents, devoting its staff and resources to:

- Improving public policies to end hunger, reduce poverty, promote nutrition, and curb obesity, and working to increase the availability of healthy, affordable food in low-income areas;
- Maximizing participation in all federal nutrition programs through a combination of vigorous outreach, removal of obstacles to participation, and close work with social service agencies; and
- Educating the public and key audiences both to the stark reality of hunger’s existence in the midst of plenty and to solutions that are already at hand.

In the view of the organization’s director, federal nutrition programs are “proven, readily-available solutions to combat food insecurity and hunger in good times and bad. By providing federal money for food or meals, these programs not only reduce food insecurity and hunger, but improve nutrition, health, economic security, early childhood development, school achievement, and overall well-being. In the current recession, the federal nutrition programs provide stimulus not only for low-income households, but the District as well. When families spend their benefits at local businesses, the federal nutrition programs draw federal dollars into the city, stimulating the local economy and generating jobs.”

In all aspects of its work, D.C. Hunger Solutions engages a diverse set of stakeholders – city and federal government agencies, community-based and faith-based organizations, businesses, students and families, and anti-hunger and anti-poverty advocates. Funding comes from a large number of foundations, public agencies, private companies, and individuals.

***Healthy Schools Act*** – From the outset, D.C. Hunger Solutions worked closely with Councilmember Cheh’s office to shape the Healthy Schools Act and ensure its inclusion of anti-hunger provisions that would improve access to and consumption of school meals for low-income families. In particular, it championed the act’s inclusion and funding for:

- Free breakfast for all students;
- Breakfast in the classroom for high-need elementary schools and innovative serving models like “Grab and Go” carts for high-need middle and high schools;
- Elimination of the reduced-price co-pay that families pay for lunch;
- Higher nutrition standards to improve the quality of school meals;

- Improved nutrition guidelines for competitive foods (i.e., foods that are not federally reimbursable components of the National School Lunch Program but compete with school meals, such as foods served in vending machines, as à la carte offerings in the cafeteria, or in school stores).

To aid in the implementation of the act, D.C. Hunger Solutions and its partners created an appealing and informative web site (<http://dchealthyschools.org>) which provides detailed information on the objectives and scope of each of the titles of the act, including what individual schools must do to comply with each title.

**SNAP Outreach** – D.C. Hunger Solutions is engaged in some direct outreach activities at community events such as health fairs, but the most effort is devoted to training the outreach staff of other social service agencies and organizations. A major outreach initiative involves working with the Earned Income Tax Credit campaign (EITC), which provides volunteer assistance to low income taxpayers at several sites across the city during “tax season.” D.C. Hunger Solutions recruits additional volunteers to work with EITC clients, helping them to assess their SNAP eligibility and complete applications. The volunteers can collect the applications and submit them to the Income Maintenance Administration, but applicants must complete interviews in person at IMA.

**Healthy Corner Store Program** – With funding from the D.C. Department of Health, D.C. Hunger Solutions operated for two years the D.C. Healthy Corner Store Program in neighborhoods that do not have adequate supermarkets and other sources of affordable healthy food – the city’s “food deserts.” Goals were to increase residents’ access to fresh produce, low-fat snacks, nutritious beverages, and other healthy foods, and to help corner grocery stores expand their capacity to sell healthy foods and increase their profits from healthy foods. Typically, corner stores in these neighborhoods sell only packaged foods high in fat, sodium, and sugar.

During the first year of the program the organization surveyed about half the corner stores in the two highest-poverty wards in the city – Wards 7 and 8, which are east of the Anacostia River – and interviewed the stores’ owners to learn about barriers to and possibilities for increasing their inventory of fresh produce and other healthy foods. Working with the Department of Health, D.C. Hunger Solutions developed healthy food marketing materials and a guide to selling healthy food for store owners. A September 2008 pilot of the materials in three stores which were also supplied with two weeks’ worth of fresh fruit and a colorful display stand showed that many customers want to buy fresh fruit and vegetables if they are available, affordable and advertised.

The results of the research in Wards 7 and 8 are summarized in an October 2008 report that also contains strategies and opportunities for corner store operators, District agencies, and the community to increase the availability of healthy foods in low-income neighborhoods, and incorporates the insights of 50 representatives from various District agencies, businesses and nonprofit organizations who participated in a Healthy Corner Store Summit in March 2008.

The second phase of the program involved developing corner store standards, recruiting stores to participate as members of the program, and providing technical assistance to member stores. Also included was nutrition education on healthy snacking at corner stores, engaging youth in advocating for healthy food in their communities, and working to connect corner stores with sources of quality, affordable fresh fruits and vegetables.

**Farmers' Markets** – A Farmers' Market Collaborative composed of market managers, advocates, and city agency staff was reconvened by D.C. Hunger Solutions in the fall of 2007. In October that year it held an “Eat and Greet” reception to introduce the City Council and staff to farmers' market stakeholders.

After studying and monitoring the permitting process for farmers' markets for several years, the collaborative currently is working with D.C.'s Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, the city's permitting and licensing agency, to make that agency's proposed new vending regulations work well for farmers' markets, and so help to ease the market start-up process.

In 2008, with funding from USDA's Farmers' Market Promotion Program, D.C. Hunger Solutions launched a program designed to enable farmers' markets in the city to accept food stamps. With the help of the collaborative, training, application assistance, wireless Electronic Benefit Transfer machines, stipends, and outreach materials were provided to four markets. By the end of 2008, four markets began accepting food stamps; in 2010, half of the city's 30 markets are accepting them, and nearly all markets, including farmers' markets, are accepting WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program money vouchers.

In 2009, using space donated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the collaborative ran an advertising campaign in 15 bus shelters aimed at raising awareness of farmers' markets in the city and highlighting the markets that accepted food stamps.

## **D.C. CENTRAL KITCHEN**

The non-profit D.C. Central Kitchen (DCCK) is responsible for providing about 4,500 meals each day to hungry families and individuals across the City – many more during “hypothermia season.” A continuum of care strategy includes seven interconnected programs:

1. First Helping, a city-wide street-level outreach program, uses warm breakfasts to start conversations and build relationships with homeless individuals. These initial connections are used to identify client needs, provide critical counseling, and refer them to appropriate social service agencies.
2. Food Recycling collects more than three tons of surplus food each day from area food service businesses and converts it into thousands of meals.
3. Meal Distribution loads these breakfasts, lunches, and dinners onto a fleet of 20 trucks and vans for delivery to more than 100 area shelters, rehabilitation clinics, and other nonprofit agencies.
4. Culinary Job Training enrolls unemployed adults overcoming homelessness, addiction, and incarceration in a 12-week professional education program.
5. Fresh Start Catering offers full-service catering as DCCK's flagship revenue-generating social enterprise. Fresh Start also provides transitional employment opportunities for Culinary Job Training program graduates.
6. Healthy Returns offers balanced meals, quality snacks, and nutritional education to low-income youth and adults through partnerships with D.C.-area social service agencies.
7. The Campus Kitchens Project replicates DCCK's community kitchen model on college campuses, using student energy and recovered cafeteria food to serve 26 communities across the country

In 2009, D.C. Central Kitchen recovered nearly 763,000 pounds of food and distributed approximately 1.75 million meals to its partner agencies in the metropolitan area.



Fresh Start Catering operates three social enterprise ventures that generate revenue for the programs of DCCK and provide employment opportunities for students in the Culinary Job Training program. All three use local, seasonal, and sustainable foods whenever possible in order to help support regional farms and minimize environmental impact.

The D.C. school system selected Fresh Start to provide meals for the seven elementary schools in its “From Scratch Meals” pilot program, referenced above.

Through its Healthy Returns program, DCCK provides two-component (grain and fruit) snacks to up to 40 child service agencies – those certified by the District as well as those unable to qualify for certification. Lunch is also provided to one all-day child care program. Currently, about 140 suppers with milk are going each day to after-school programs operating in sites outside of schools.

## **CAPITAL AREA FOOD BANK**

Each year, through its network of 700 nonprofit partner agencies, the Capital Area Food Bank, a member of Feeding America, distributes 27 million pounds of donated and low-cost purchased food, including more than 10 million pounds of fresh produce, to approximately 500,000 people in the Washington area. The largest nonprofit hunger and nutrition education resource in the Washington metropolitan area, the food bank serves a network of 700 community service organizations – emergency food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and youth centers, among them – and operates its own direct service programs, including after-school and weekend food bag programs for children.

Trained food bank staff members and volunteers also conduct SNAP outreach, helping clients to determine eligibility, navigate the application process, and submit required documents.

The food bank currently distributes more than two million meals each month. It operates mobile pantries that deliver produce directly into low income communities on a daily basis, and “garden to table” programs that engage communities in cultivating and sharing produce with their neighbors; introduce children to new fresh foods and to making their own healthy snacks with the food they harvest; and enable partner organizations to offer fresh produce in the meals they provide. Grocers are partnered directly with local pantries, shelters, and soup kitchens. The food bank calculates that these types of initiatives bring 11 million pounds of fresh produce a year to at-risk populations in the region.

During the city’s 2009-10 fiscal year, the food bank’s D.C. warehouse distributed 2.85 million pounds of fresh produce to 265 agencies which made a total of nearly 6,600 visits to the warehouse. Mobile pantries served an average of nearly 5,800 households per month through its deliveries of fresh produce to public housing sites and community centers.

Kids Cafe, the food bank’s largest program targeting children, provides meals on a year-round basis at after-school sites during the school year and during the summer at those same sites if they operate summer programs. During the last fiscal year, the program distributed more than 251,700 meals to an average of 1,800 children per day at 61 sites, including recreation centers, community centers, schools, and churches.

Through the Weekend Bag program, children who receive free or reduced breakfast and lunch throughout the week at school take home these nutritious, kid-friendly food bags for the

weekend. The bags are packed by volunteers and delivered by food bank trucks to be distributed each week at community-based sites. During the last fiscal year, the program delivered well over 29,000 bags of food to 930 children.

Programs for children also include farm visits, urban gardening, and after-school programs designed to help them prepare healthy snacks and to encourage nutrition awareness.

## **OFFICIALS INTERVIEWED**

### **D.C. Hunger Solutions**

Alexandra Ashbrook, Director

Kristin Roberts, Community Nutrition Associate

Katie Vinopal, Nutrition Associate

### **Office of the State Superintendent of Education**

Sandra Schlicker, Director, Wellness and Nutrition Services Department

### **D.C. Central Kitchen,**

Robert L. E. Egger, Founder and President

Chrystal Nicholas, Agency Relations Coordinator

### **Capital Area Food Bank**

Lynn Brantley, President and CEO

Susan Kincaid, Senior Director of Programs



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