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# DC Family Policy Seminar

November 21, 1996

## *Seminar Highlights*

# Feeding our Families: Community Food Security in the District

**Donna Ruane Morrison, Ph.D., Moderator**  
**Professor of Public Policy and Demography**  
**Georgetown University Graduate Public Policy Program**

*As a direct consequence of both increasing poverty and reductions in food assistance programs, the number of American families who are hungry is on the rise.*

- The topic of food security is a timely one for a number of reasons:
  - Next week is a time of plentiful food for many of us because of Thanksgiving;
  - Pending welfare reform changes will impact food security for many DC residents;
  - This week is National Hunger and Homelessness Week.

The topic of food security was recommended by a member of the service community (Colleen Fee, Executive Director, D.C. Hunger Action).

- Some of the goals for the seminar are to:
  - Define food security;
  - Determine what resources are available in the community;
  - Generate networks among providers in the community; and
  - Bring a family-centered perspective to the topic of food security.
- Although hunger is a chronic problem, it is symptomatic of a broader problem involving a community's limited access to food. Steps to eradicate hunger should thus focus on providing families with long-term security in obtaining an adequate food supply.
- Food security is defined as the access, at all times, through normal channels, to enough nutritionally adequate food to live a healthy, productive life. It encompasses the ways communities provide food and the ways community members gain access to that food. Strategies include providing sustainable agriculture, initiating community gardening projects, building affordable and easily accessible grocery stores in low-income neighborhoods, and exploring the efficacy of food and cash benefits. Because of the government's limited role in fully addressing the problem of inadequate food supply, it is important to discuss ways in which communities can secure food for themselves.

- While the consequences of inadequate nutrition are obvious, it is important to identify some of the populations who are particularly at risk, such as pregnant women, infants, growing children, the elderly, and people with disabling conditions.
- The current political atmosphere, which emphasizes reform of entitlement programs and reduction in program administration costs, makes it increasingly important for communities to engage in efforts that promote food security.
- Emergency responses are, of course, part of the solution, but we also have to think more broadly, emphasizing long-term approaches to self-sufficiency. These include job creation, employment training, and education, in conjunction with business partnerships and private sector financing. We should provide the economic framework for communities to advance towards self-reliance. Failure to adopt a comprehensive approach to hunger prevention will widen the gap through which so many families fall when resources become more limited. Successful planning and coordination among the partners involved is a step in the right direction.

**Colleen Fee  
Executive Director  
D.C. Hunger Action**

*Food security is an emerging concept that addresses hunger, access to food, agriculture, and environmental concerns through a comprehensive systems approach.*

- Food security depends upon the efforts of individual community members, private for-profit and nonprofit organizations, and governmental agencies.
- Food security is defined as the access by all people at all times, through nonemergency sources, to enough nutritionally adequate and culturally acceptable food to lead a productive, healthy life.
- Goals of the community food security movement are to:
  - Make available a variety of foods at a reasonable cost
  - Improve ready access to quality grocery stores or other food outlets
  - Ensure that residents have sufficient personal income to afford adequate food
  - Offer the community the freedom to choose personally acceptable foods
  - Ensure that community residents have confidence in the safety of available food
  - Ensure easy access to understandable and accurate information about food, food production, and nutrition
  - Provide a sustainable, nonpolluting, commercially viable agriculture base producing a significant amount of food for the region
  - Ensure availability of sufficient natural resources (e.g., fertile agricultural soils and clean, viable marine fisheries)
  - Provide access to private and public land suitable for household food production
  - Provide effective information and outreach designed to connect people with food programs
  - Develop a nutrition standard that meets individual food intake needs
  - Develop an emergency food system designed to meet short-term personal emergencies and major disruptions in the food supply

- The food security movement involves a broad base of stakeholders:
    - Market-based food suppliers, processors, and manufacturers; wholesale distributors, grocery stores; restaurants; and other retailers.
    - Representatives from publicly supported programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the Thrifty Food Plan (commonly known as the food stamps program), local food policy councils, economic development agencies, health and social service agencies, and schools.
    - Emergency food providers; home, school, and community gardens; community supported farming, nonprofit community developers, and farmer's markets.
    - Urban and town planning officials who make decisions about land use and zoning.
    - Policymakers who fund programs or develop policies that help or hinder food security through funding of federal food assistance programs, decisions about issues such as minimum wage, and action taken to preserve the environment.
    - Community members who define the food security agenda, guide its enactment, and benefit from its products.
  - The food security movement attempts to link everyone involved in the food system in order to find mutually beneficial solutions to problems faced in each sector.
  - Without coordination, the efforts of one stakeholder can undermine the efforts of another. For instance, the food stamp program is considered quite successful, but is undermined by the lack of supermarkets in low-income neighborhoods.
  - Some examples of food security efforts include:
    - Schools that buy their food from local farmers who teach students about farming;
    - Low-income neighborhoods that develop supermarkets, thereby eliminating transportation costs to suburban stores and providing jobs for local residents;
    - Community gardens, which beautify the neighborhood, make productive use of a vacant lot, and build a sense of community; and
    - Urban planners who take food security issues into consideration when selling prime farmland to developers.
  - Although the community food security approach incorporates and builds upon much of the anti-hunger work that has developed over the years, its roots can also be found in the environmental and community development fields.
  - Food security concerns more than just the alleviation of hunger. Food security also addresses the availability of the food production and distribution systems. Food security addresses issues of food availability, the quantity and quality of that food, and the sustainability of the food production system.
  - Food security addresses the needs of the entire community, whereas hunger prevention efforts traditionally focus on an individual's plight. Food security build upon linked systems that provide for entire communities; hunger prevention methodology considers a series of programs affecting individuals.
  - A food security approach is long term as opposed to short term; it examines multiple and interconnected relationships rather than single project needs; it is sustainable, recognizing the limitations of natural resources both locally and globally; and it is community oriented rather than placing the entire onus for problem solving on the government or the individual.
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Ultimately, food security addresses the root causes of hunger and strives for long-term solutions.

- The Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project (CCHIP) is a scientifically valid survey of 342 low-income Washington, DC, families with at least one child under age 12. Although the survey was done in 1993, because of the rigorous methodology used, the data is still accurate today. The CCHIP study revealed that approximately one in four DC children under age 12 is either hungry or at risk for going hungry. Roughly 11,000 of the city's 80,000 children under age 12 are hungry, and another 13,500 are at risk for hunger.
- Hungry children live in families that regularly run out of money for food, and every member in their household has to skip meals or cut back on the size of their meals because of the food shortage.
- At-risk children live in families who sometimes experience food shortages, but the food shortages are not severe enough to affect everyone in the household.
- Hungry families tend to be poor. People go hungry because they do not have enough money to buy food, because their families and friends cannot help them, and because public and private food assistance programs cannot fill the gaps. The average hungry family in the District has an income at 65 percent of the federal poverty level, which is the equivalent of about \$8,000 for a family of three.
- Hungry families tend to be unemployed. The majority of hungry families have no wage earners. Hungry families with wage earners do not earn enough to support their families: 23 percent of the families with one or more full-time workers still went hungry, and 43 percent of them were at risk for hunger.
- Hungry families tend to pay a large portion of their income in rent. Seventy-eight percent of those who spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent go hungry.
- As part of the CCHIP study, we asked families how they coped with hunger, a symptom of food insecurity. The limited options they have—relying on friends, using food assistance programs, or going without food—expose the need for a comprehensive system of food security initiatives.
  - 95 percent of hungry families cope with food insecurity by changing adult eating patterns.
  - 84 percent purchase less nutritious food in order to save money.
  - 83 percent borrow money for food.
  - 74 percent avoid paying bills on time in an effort to conserve money for food.
  - 65 percent of hungry households sometimes get food from friends and relatives.
  - 40 percent of hungry households utilize food pantries.
  - 23 percent of hungry households send their children to eat with friends or relatives.
  - 17 percent dilute their infants' formula to make it last longer.
  - 14 percent of hungry households sometimes eat at community kitchens.
  - 7 percent acquire food discarded by others (stores, restaurants, schools, or other people).

- Low-income families know what it takes to avoid hunger. Many of their responses touch on the need for a community food security strategy.
  - 44 percent of respondents say that a job is the one thing that would help them better feed their families.
  - 12 percent say higher wages would help them avoid hunger.
  - 10 percent say affordable housing would help them afford food.
  - 8.5 percent want an increase in food stamp allotments.
  - 7.4 percent want more education.
  - 7.4 percent say that cheaper food would help them feed their families.
- Although the fastest and most direct way to alleviate hunger is to improve existing food assistance programs, the limited usefulness of these programs, and their recent hobbling by Congress, dictate that we broaden our efforts. Long-term solutions to the problem of food security include increased wages and benefits; improved food production and distribution systems; and more thoughtful use of environmental resources.
- By April 1997, approximately 980 immigrant families will be eliminated from the food stamp program. Countless others will never have the chance to apply because they have been barred by the new welfare bill.
- Between now and 1998, each of the city's 48,000 food stamp households will see the value of their food stamps eroded by an average of \$300 per year, or \$25 per month.
- By 2002, their value will be eroded by \$409 per year, or \$34 per month.
- The new welfare bill permits states to allow 20 percent of their caseloads to receive welfare for more than five years. In the District of Columbia, this means that approximately 14,000 people would continue to receive benefits for more than five years; however, 17,500 (25 percent) of the city's residents actually receive welfare benefits beyond five years.

**Zy Weinberg**  
**Director, Inner City Food Access Program**  
**Public Voice for Food and Health Policy**

*There is a serious shortage of supermarkets in inner cities throughout America. Additional actions are needed by food policy advocates, in conjunction with private sector developers, government at all levels, and the supermarket industry, to address and remedy this situation.*

*Coalition Building*

- There is a nascent national Community Food Security Coalition based in Venice, California, near Los Angeles. I serve on the Steering Committee. Members of this coalition have been successful in getting a Community Food Projects program grant through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The first national competition for the funds (fiscal year 1996) resulted in the funding of 13 organizations across the nation in October 1996. Another competition is anticipated in early 1997. If anyone would like to participate as a coalition member, please complete the enclosed forms. The Coalition also produces the quarterly newsletter *Community Food Security News*.

*Inner-city Supermarket Development in General*

- A good resource on developing inner-city supermarkets is the publication *No Place to Shop: Challenges and Opportunities Facing the Development of Supermarkets in Urban America*. (For information on how to order this publication, see the enclosed flyer.)
  - We should not diminish the efforts of smaller groceries (e.g., "Mom and Pop" stores) that have stayed in the inner cities while some of the larger stores have fled to the suburbs. These smaller stores do a tremendous job of staying in business and keeping people supplied with food. However, our research has found that, in general, larger stores and supermarkets (i.e., stores that do more than \$2 million per year in sales) are able to provide lower prices and a wider variety of products to help construct a healthful diet.
  - Why should supermarkets be developed in low-income neighborhoods?
    - Supermarkets can offer lower prices to consumers, an important factor in an era of declining government benefits. (In 1993, my organization estimated that the food stamp program lost \$1 billion per year in buying power because recipients did not have access to lower prices in the grocery store.)
    - Larger stores can tailor their food selection to the ethnic mix of the neighborhood.
    - Supermarkets and supermarket-anchored shopping centers can revitalize economically distressed neighborhoods.
    - The retail grocery industry can provide entry-level jobs for the community, with excellent opportunities for advancement and decent rates of pay.
    - Supermarkets frequently offer other in-store services for the convenience of consumers, including banking and bill payment, prescriptions and pharmaceuticals, film processing, video rentals, etc.
  - Major obstacles to inner-city supermarket development include:
    - **Finding a developer and an operator.** Collaborative efforts among the public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit sectors are often the most advantageous approach. The Safeway in Marshall Heights is a good example of this: it was developed through joint collaboration between Safeway and the Marshall Heights Community Development Corporation.
    - **Land assembly.** Getting clear title to the acreage needed to build is a challenge and may take up to a decade. On average, a medium-sized grocery store built today covers 40,000 square feet. A store of this size, with parking, requires an average of 4 to 5 acres.
    - **Financing.** A combination of both public and private resources is frequently necessary. Often, local governments are able to provide tax incentives to develop stores. In the District, there may be an additional complication: local government does not always have control since Congress oversees District operations.
    - **Site selection.** Considerations include neighborhood demographics, redevelopment areas for tax advantages, zoning and permit issues, infrastructure (water, sewer, etc.), and transportation concerns including parking, traffic patterns, and public transit.
  - Many factors, both positive and negative, may affect the economic viability of an inner-city supermarket:
    - **Space, utilities, and insurance costs** may be higher in inner cities.
    - **Security expenses** may increase in order to provide adequate safety for customers and employees in the store and parking areas and loading docks around the store.
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- If companies hire employees from the neighborhood, **supplementary training and skills development** may be necessary to boost employee productivity and reliability.
- Finding and retaining **quality management staff** for the store may be problematic.
- **Low-income shopping patterns** include smaller purchases per customer, uneven spending throughout the month, and heavier reliance on food stamps and WIC vouchers.
- **Product selection and merchandising tailored to local consumers** is helpful.
- **Community services and customer relations** can build a store's positive reputation within the community.
- In-store **nutrition education** activities may be useful to customers.
- **Special services for the transit dependent** may be needed to improve access.

*Supermarket Facts in Washington, DC*

- Recent research by Public Voice, in conjunction with the Food Marketing Policy Center at the University of Connecticut, has confirmed that low-income urban neighborhoods have fewer and smaller supermarkets. Washington, DC, is no exception.
- A national study (May 1995) found that zip code areas with the lowest income populations had nearly 30 percent fewer stores per capita than zip code areas with the highest income levels. In the DC metropolitan area, zip code areas with the lowest income levels had 99.8 percent fewer stores than did zip code areas with the highest income levels; furthermore, zip code areas with the largest number of households receiving public assistance had 37.8 percent fewer supermarkets than did those areas with the fewest households receiving public aid. A study the same month by the Capital Area Community Food Bank confirmed similar differences between the western and eastern sides of the District.
- Nationwide, stores in the poorest zip code areas had nearly 60 percent less selling floor space per capita than did stores in the most affluent areas. In the DC area, stores in the poorest zip code areas had 152.8 percent less selling floor space than those in the most affluent zip code areas; stores were 83.4 percent smaller in areas with the largest number of families receiving public assistance.
- As of early 1996, Giant was the region's largest chain, with 45 percent of grocery sales; Safeway was second largest, with 27 percent. However, the share of these two chains is declining with competition from Shoppers Food Warehouse, Fresh Fields, Food Lion, and others.
- In the District, Safeway dominates the market with 58 percent of sales, versus Giant's 16 percent. Safeway has 20 stores in the District (13 in Northwest, 3 in Northeast, 3 in Southeast, and 1 in Southwest); Giant has seven (4 in Northwest, 2 in Northeast— though both may close this year—and 1 in Southeast).
- General trends find Safeway still building new stores in the District (a replacement store will open in SE next month), while Giant is building new stores on the District's periphery; overall, the company seems to be more focused on moving northward into Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

*Future Trends and Concerns for the Supermarket Industry*

- There are ongoing trends in the supermarket industry that will directly and indirectly affect both the structure and operation of the grocery industry in Washington, DC, and the nation. They include:
  - **Consolidation:** Safeway, currently the nation's third largest food retailer, is buying other chains (e.g., Von's in Los Angeles) to consolidate its position. Giant is owned, in part, by J. Sainsbury PLC, one of Britain's largest food retailers. Other national and international food companies are also expanding and buying up smaller chains.
  - **Increasing competition from health-oriented chains:** Fresh Fields, Bread & Circus (both now owned by Whole Foods Market) and other stores are increasing their market share.
  - **Sales emphasis on local produce:** Giant has a local, well-advertised campaign. However, produce quality remains a concern, especially in low-income neighborhoods. Two reports that focus on this subject are: The Capital Area Community Food Bank's *Feeding the City* (May, 1995) and *Washington City Paper's* "The Vegetable Conspiracy" (October 7, 1994).
  - **Food stamp reductions** squeezing operations in low-income neighborhoods: Stores in poorer areas with large numbers of public assistance households may do up to 70 percent of their business in food stamps. District residents received \$86.2 million in food stamp benefits in federal fiscal year 1994, resulting in over \$200 million in estimated economic activity (multiplier effect). Benefits will be cut by over 20 percent during the next six years, affecting stores large and small.
  - **Electronic benefits transfer (EBT)** is rapidly changing the way public benefit programs are delivered. Basically, people will receive benefits on a plastic card similar to a bank card. The District is working with other states in the Mid-Atlantic area to form a regional coalition and is considering bids for implementation of an EBT system.

*Farmers' Markets*

- Farmers' markets offer an alternative means of securing fresh nutritious produce for inner-city residents. These direct marketing mechanisms can be beneficial for both small farmers and consumers.
- The number of farmers' markets is increasing. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently issued a national directory of farmers' markets with over 2,400 listings, a 38 percent increase over the number of markets identified in the 1994 edition.
- In a companion USDA survey, nearly half of the farmers who use farmers' markets responded that these markets are their only sales outlets.
- The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides coupons to low-income households with children, to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables to improve their diets while boosting the income of area growers. In 1996, the FMNP operated in 27 states, the District of Columbia, and three Indian Nations.

- FMNP surveys demonstrate the positive impact of the program on WIC recipients. As a result of the FMNP, 71 percent of WIC participants ate more fresh fruits and vegetables to improve their diets; 40 percent tried fruits and vegetables they had never eaten before; 77 percent plan to eat more fresh produce year-round; and 43 percent learned new ways to prepare or cook fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Farmers were also significantly affected by the FMNP: 84 percent increased their farmers' market sales; 35 percent increased fruit and vegetable production; and 36 percent grew a wider variety of foods to sell at farmers' markets.
- In the District, the FMNP was operated this year by the Capital Area Community Food Bank in conjunction with the WIC State Agency and the University of the District of Columbia. However, the future of the program is in jeopardy, and, at this point, is not planning to operate next year. Community advocacy is needed immediately to maintain the FMNP. Interested parties should contact Lynn Brantley or me [Zy Weinberg].
- Preliminary figures show that, in 1996, the FMNP served over 7,500 WIC participants in the District, providing them with \$25 worth of coupons each. The program included 21 farmers who sold at five farmers' markets and farmstands in the District.

*[The Public Welfare Foundation and Share Our Strength (S.O.S) are the primary funders of Public Voice for Food and Health Policy's Inner City Food Access Program.]*

**Ellen Teller**  
**Senior Attorney for Government Affairs**  
**Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)**

*There is good news and bad news with respect to welfare reform: The good news is that the food stamp and child and nutrition programs were not funded as block grants. The bad news is that every household receiving food stamps will receive a reduced benefit.*

- The food stamp program and the child and nutrition programs escaped being funded as block grants during the 104th Congress, leaving an infrastructure that can be ameliorated during the 105th Congress.
- Of the \$54 billion slated to result from welfare reform cuts, \$27 billion was cut from the food stamp program. Every household now receiving food stamps will feel this cut due to the nature of the across-the-board cuts in the legislation. Food stamp allotments, based on the government's Thrifty Food Plan, were reduced by 3 percent (from 103 percent to 100 percent of the Plan). This reduction will mean cuts for households and will also translate into lower sales for grocery stores.
- Food stamp benefits will be cut by almost 20 percent by the year 2002, with the average food stamp benefit falling from about 80 cents per person per meal to 66 cents per person per meal. Using inflation as an indicator, we estimate that the cost of buying food will increase, while food stamp dollars will decrease.
- Two-thirds of the reductions in food stamps target families with children, who will absorb \$18.4 billion in these cuts over the next six years. Cuts to elderly recipients will amount to \$2 billion dollars in the next six years. Half of the food stamp cuts target the more than 3 million households with incomes below 50 percent of the federal poverty level (\$6,250).

- Most legal immigrants will be ineligible for food stamps.
- Although the child nutrition programs escaped efforts to become funded as block grants, the Child and Adult Care Food Program—a program administered by the USDA that provides food to family day care homes (usually operated by low-income women)—was changed from an open-ended entitlement program to an entitlement program with an area eligibility test similar to the Summer Food Program. This translates as follows: we move women from welfare to work at the same time that we are cutting a subsidy that provides them with licensed, quality child care in their neighborhoods.

*Proactive Efforts*

- "Building Blocks" is an effort to maximize the benefits provided by federal programs. Examples include the Pittston, PA, School Breakfast Program and L.A.'s Best.

*Pittston, PA, School Breakfast Program*

This program provides kids with breakfast before school begins. The principal, teachers, parents, and community decided to capitalize on the fact that they had the children together in the school setting to institute a mentoring program. Fifth graders read to first graders. Parents rotate and talk to students about problems the kids are having. As a result, the kids are energized about going to school. The organizing tool was the breakfast program.

*L.A.'s Best*

Carla Sanger at L.A.'s Best makes use of the fact that children receive after-school snacks in the school gym. Carla brings in the kids to receive snacks through the Child and Adult Care Food Program, then gets them involved in hoop leagues, theater groups, mentoring programs, tutorials—a whole series of activities. The parents like the program because they know their children are in a safe, supervised environment after school. They know where their kids are and that the kids will not be getting into trouble. Gang violence and recruitment have decreased after the institution of Carla's program.

*Congressional Activity—Past and Present*

*104th Congress:*

- The population of 18- to 50-year-old able-bodied adults without children received a big hit. They are now time-limited concerning how long they can receive food stamps. They can now receive food stamps for only three months in a 36-month period unless they are working half time or are involved half time in a state-approved work program. If they do not meet this requirement, they are ineligible for food stamps. The District could request a waiver to get around this restriction. The waiver would stipulate that there is an area where unemployment exceeds 10 percent or that there are just not enough jobs to go around. State legislators and governors are now requesting these waivers. For example, in 11 of 14 counties in Maine, unemployment is over 10 percent. In the remaining counties, there are pockets of unemployment over 10 percent. Advocates there are encouraging the governor to request a statewide waiver in order to maximize the number of people that fall within the waiver. These are federal dollars coming into the state and localities. State and local government officials should therefore be sympathetic to obtaining the best waiver possible. In Pennsylvania, Republican Governor Ridge has stated that he will request a waiver, as has the governor of Louisiana.

- President Clinton, when he signed the welfare reform bill, pledged to improve provisions for 18- to 50-year-olds and legal immigrants who receive food stamps. Improvements will appear in the budget proposals made during the upcoming 105th Congress.

*New Congress:*

- Most important for advocates is to put a face on the recipients of food stamps, to give policymakers a vision of what the hungry in America look like. The traditional myth has been the woman standing in the grocery line buying steak. Members of Congress should receive personal stories and histories of people who are suffering from hunger and homelessness. A national study sponsored by Second Harvest and the Capital Area Community Food Bank is underway to document who is coming to food pantries and emergency food providers: children, veterans, battered and abused women. In fact, many women who are survivors of domestic violence have relied on emergency food assistance and other welfare provisions as a safety net when fleeing abusive situations. Now that these programs are being cut or trimmed back, these women may no longer have a safety net available to them. As a result, we may see an increase in domestic violence in this country—a frightening prospect.
- Projected in the new Congress is a welfare reform "fix-it" bill, although the funding level for this initiative is uncertain. Funding will depend on how much is allocated for tax credits. There may be efforts to include vitamins in the provisions supported by the food stamp program. There may be provisions to support the smart card, or EBT, that Zy Weinberg spoke of earlier. This mechanism may reduce fraud and lessen the stigma attached to using food stamps. It also allows USDA to know what people are buying with the food stamps. This may have a negative impact, in that USDA could then further limit what people are allowed to purchase with food stamps. FRAC has long been a supporter of giving recipients the freedom to choose how they will spend their money.
- Service providers may be reluctant to take on the role of lobbyist to provide policymakers with advice and expertise; however, this kind of information is crucial to get to lawmakers in order to effect changes in policy.

**Lynn Brantley**  
**Executive Director**  
**Capital Area Community Food Bank**

*In America, we are changing the way we do business. As confirmed by the Contract with America and the Welfare Reform Act, we are no longer asking government to redistribute wealth.*

- The *Kids Count Data Book* ranks the District of Columbia last in eight of ten categories.
- The teachings of the *Torah*, the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures containing guidance about religious law and learning, offer some useful guidelines for changing how we can assist needy communities and support food security:
  - Do not charge interest to the poor. *Don't steal their livelihood.*
  - Do not harvest your fields all the way to the edge. *Gleaning is an example of this.*
  - Give hospitality to the stranger. *There should be a common ground and a place where we can all come together for the common, greater good.*
  - Tithe for the poor. *Income—all income—is not entirely our own. It should be shared with others.*
  - Practice the Sabbath.

- Today, 250,000 people are at risk for hunger in the District of Columbia, the nation's capital.

*"These lives had been so beaten down that there was little left to build upon. Although there was certainly more of a life in Washington's ghetto neighborhoods, alcoholism, drug abuse, broken families, and shattered self images abounded. The full impact of what I was experiencing sank in slowly, but I soon began to feel like a medic on the front lines of a particularly bloody war, tending illnesses that were in fact battle wounds. But what war, against whom, and for whose sake? I was both incredulous and furious that our society allowed such unnecessary suffering to exist. I had known that there was poverty in the United States, but I had not been prepared to find poverty as desperate as Calcutta's in Washington, D.C."*

—*The Other Side*, Dr. David Hilfiger, Community of Hope, Washington, DC

- Our cultures, families, and religions are built on food. We come together and break bread together. Food is the essence of life and as such should be considered a basic human right, established within our government and worldwide.
- The Capital Area Community Food Bank (CACFB) is a private, nonprofit organization receiving general public support and foundation support; special events and the agencies we serve also help to keep us going. We get our food from about 400 wholesalers and retailers in the Washington area and from Second Harvest, which is a national organization of food banks across the nation. Second Harvest provides us with almost 2 million pounds of food each year. We operate from a 48,000-square-foot warehouse in Northeast Washington and last year distributed about 15 million pounds of food to 600 feeding programs in the metropolitan Washington area. While 15 million pounds sounds like a lot of food, it doesn't begin to address the community need. Contributions to the food bank network seem to be diminishing, so we are constantly seeking new resources. At the same time, the need for food is growing at even a greater rate.
- The CACFB was founded by the Interfaith Conference and the United Planning Organization in 1980. We began to see that many agencies were inundated with requests, so we developed a program called Food and Skills (formerly, Super Pantries), an eight- to ten-week nutrition education course in which we work with agencies and their clients to provide information and training on nutrition and life skills. The men and women take home a bag of groceries to cook. As a result, the participants bond with each other in support groups to help each other face other poverty-related issues such as finding a job, or confronting an abusive situation, or addressing drug abuse.
- The CACFB has developed the *D.C. People's Resource Guide*, an outline of available services available in the District of Columbia. Note that the information on welfare and food stamps will not be relevant after welfare reform is implemented. Colleen or I will be in charge of updating this information. If you want additional copies, contact the Capital Area Community Food Bank (see local resource list in briefing report).
- Lois Kaufman directs another educational program sponsored by the Food Bank, which operates within the school environment. The program was designed by the Atlanta Food Bank in conjunction with Emory University to teach children what it means to be poor. The program works with junior high school students and places them in a poverty situation so that they know what it is like to face inadequate transportation, inadequate food

supplies—all of the issues facing a person who is struggling to make it out of poverty. CACFB has just begun this project.

- The food project grew out of the farm project and the summer work program. The program works with high-risk, inner-city kids (mostly young males), helping them to develop a variety of skills in different areas of agricultural development. They work at Claggett Farm through a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. They work with Bread for the City and a number of other food programs to learn about the connection between hunger and the environment and its connection to the poor.
- The farm project works with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. On 15 acres of land in Upper Marlboro, we grow fresh organic vegetables. We take folks from low-income neighborhoods in the inner city to grow, harvest, and distribute the food at six small farmstands. It serves as the beginning of an entrepreneurial system whereby people can build a food system in their own communities to gain control over a small, but important, part of their lives. It is a start towards food security. The goal is to move beyond these six farmstands and encourage more farmers to sell their produce at the farmstands and increase community access to fresh produce.
- CACFB conducted a study to determine what kind of access low-income communities had to grocery stores. There are three stores in Northwest Washington for every one store in Southeast Washington; however, there are only 40,000 residents in Northwest, compared to 144,000 in Southeast.
- CACFB has merged with the CSA, the Community Supported Agricultural group. CSA represents a group of people who have come together nationally to create an agricultural group that is self-sufficient. They hope to develop an economy by producing the food. This will increase the cross-cultural contact among people.
- CACFB hopes to continue its sponsorship of the WIC Farm Stand coupon program.
- Hunger begins with us, with me. It is how I eat and how high I eat on the food chain. Hunger is connected to who we are as a consumer society—what we buy and how we live.
- One resource of interest is the *Hunger Action Handbook*, produced by SEEDS. It provides specific ideas for fighting hunger. The United Church of Christ distributes another publication, *Lifting Up the Bottom Line*. It looks at challenges to our economic and political system that have to take place in order to bring about change.

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## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DISCUSSION

*The DC Family Policy Seminar graciously acknowledges the generous space and facilities offered by the Academy for Educational Development, and the help provided by the Center for Youth Development in obtaining the space.*

### Community Announcements

#### Hunger Prevention Programs

Our Americorps program has a 20-member D.C. Anti-Hunger Team. Our mission statement is: "Coming together to better ourselves in our community by serving alongside others in the struggle to end hunger." Americorps staff provide direct services and work with the Capital Area Community Food Bank to support community gardening and life skills education.

*Tim Forbes, Director, D.C. Anti-Hunger Team, Americorps*

The D.C. Anti-Hunger Team is conducting a food security survey in the District's Shaw neighborhood and we need help. We are seeking student volunteers from graduate schools in the District. Survey work will start on Saturday [November 23]. The United Planning Organization has instituted the 7th Street Feeding Program, which feeds 100 people in the Shaw neighborhood. We invite everyone, especially those with connections in the community, to help. For more information, contact Americorps at (202) 547-7022.

We would like to transform the traditional feeding program into an empowering event for disadvantaged groups. On Saturday, December 14, Dr. Andrew Nicholson will speak about the effect of our eating patterns on our health, our environment, and global hunger. Lolita from ISKCON will then demonstrate a small-scale food preparation class on healthier methods of preparing plant-based foods. We will finish the program by serving 50–70 people a nutritious lunch. For details, contact me at (202)547-7022.

*Nada Khader, Member, D.C. Anti-Hunger Team*

Ending Hunger One Classroom At-A-Time is a program designed to educate students about ending hunger. We work with several schools in the District of Columbia to educate junior high students and involve them in local community service projects. To obtain more information about this program or about the Congressional Hunger Center, contact me or Americorps team members.

*Andre Lee, Director for Inside Out Program, Congressional Hunger Center*

I would like to solicit help for a Town Hall forum on food security targeting the African-American and Latino communities. We feel that meetings such as this seminar, while they are very informative and educational, should be directed toward the communities most greatly affected. We need assistance with locating a meeting site and would appreciate donations, such as breakfast items. We would also like information on organizations that would be willing to help. Please contact the Congressional Hunger Center 547-7022.

*Melva Samson, Fellow, Congressional Hunger Center, and graduate student, Howard University*

Tonight [November 21] there will be a vigil from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. at Freedom Plaza to protest cuts to hunger services. (Dinner will be served.) Millions of dollars are being cut from the DC budget for homeless services. This is very relevant to what we are talking about today, because there are many kids and many men and women who will be hungry if these cuts come through.

*Linda Plitt Donaldson, Community Advocate, So Others Might Eat (SOME)*

**Research Centers**

The Center for Food and Nutrition Policy at Georgetown University will hold a conference this summer on the efficiency and effectiveness of the School Meals Program. Elizabeth Terry, a graduate student at the University's Graduate Public Policy Program, is working on this project. The Center will publish analytical papers to help communities decide what programs best fit the populations in their school district. We will also help them to set up a nutrition coalition among local government agencies, the academic community, and the leadership of nutrition societies in this country. In our discussion, I haven't heard mentioned the role of industry. Industry is an untapped resource. Major food companies have foundations that are ready to help, and they are going to join this coalition to encourage health and nutrition in America

The EBT identification cards being developed for use by food stamps recipients are another important consideration. As a nutritionist, I think it is very important to understand what people are eating. Industry has no data on the needs of the poor, and nutritionists don't, either. Larry Hopkins recently published a nutrition article in *The New England Journal of Medicine* that says the blacks in America in the 1960s ate better than the rich white population. As the white population has increased the quality of its nutrition in the past 30 years, the quality of food consumed by the black population has diminished. I think it is very important to understand these trends. We might be paranoid and think that the USDA could use that information to cut back on people's food choices, but this information is vital for the nutrition community to understand.  
*Robin Woo, Center for Food and Nutrition Policy, Georgetown University*

The University of the District of Columbia (UDC) has many programs that are relevant to the issues discussed here today, including the Gerontology Center and the Agricultural Cooperative Extension Service. The Gerontology Center is involved in reduction of infant mortality and related issues. I would also like to call attention to the fact that the future of the university is in jeopardy. I would like to solicit your help in keeping UDC and all its programs operational.  
*Vijaya Melnick, Director, Center for Applied Research and Urban Policy, University of District of Columbia, Gerontology Center.*

**Service Providers**

On December 6, we will hold the third annual Resource Day for case managers and direct service staff that work with people who have HIV and AIDS. People living with HIV/AIDS belong to a large and growing population in the District. There is a need for us to work together because we are realizing more and more that funding in every area is decreasing. On Resource Day we want to include organizations with staff who are working in any capacity with people who have HIV and AIDS to learn about the resources we have available and to speak to the body of people attending about the services they offer at their program. Please call (202) 347-8888, ext. 22, for further information.

*Bruce Weiss, Director for Case Management Services, DC Care Consortium*

Employees from the Department of Human Services are collecting food baskets for families living in different wards. Our goal is to support and educate families about the nutritional value of food. We will also supplement our basket donations with money to buy turkeys. Please call (202) 645-5317 for information.

*Doris Lee, PA Project Coordinator, D.C. Office of Paternity and Child Support Enforcement, Department of Human Services*

### **Education and Training Programs**

Computers 101 offers a way for kids to advance their skills through computer training (Internet, word processing, etc.) We are located near Catholic University.

*Shelton Jewette, Computers 101*

We need to revitalize the Mayor's Commission on Hunger. The Commission originally comprised District residents appointed by the mayor to look at nutrition issues in the city. The commission helped to establish a farmer's market at RFK Stadium. The commission was also very involved in addressing hunger issues; it sponsored annual hunger conferences, worked with advocacy groups, submitted grants to Hands Across America, and developed the Hunger in the Nation's Capital video presentation. We need to revitalize the commission to help the city deal with bureaucratic issues in establishing a farmer's market.

Our company is working with the Safeway located at Branch and Alabama Avenues. We want to develop a project that deals with consumer and nutrition education for low-income residents. We want to work with other organizations to aid grocery stores in teaching residents about unit buying. Stores have many security issues, but in locations where the community feels more involved, these type of problems are reduced. Also, as funding for food stamps decreases, there will be an even greater need to educate the community about how to maximize their limited food stamp dollars. Please call (301) 565-0380 for more information.

*Linda Thompson, L.L. Thompson and Associates (Former Director of Mayor's Commission on Nutrition and Health)*

### **QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION**

#### **Creating Partnerships to Develop Inner-City Supermarkets**

You talked about collaborating to establish supermarkets in low-income communities. How are these collaborations being regulated so that the need to increase profits does not defeat the purpose of providing low-cost food?

*Vicky Rayfield, Family Services Assistant, United Planning Organization*

The best way to approach inner-city supermarket development is a collaboration among local government, private nonprofit community development organizations, and for-profit supermarket chains. This will ensure community involvement from the outset. A prime example is the New Community Corporation in Newark, New Jersey, where a local community-based economic development group worked with the Pathmark chain to develop a grocery store in the community. It took a long time (8 to 10 years) to develop this store, which has joint ownership. Two-thirds of Pathmark's profits go back to the New Community Corporation, which reinvests it in Newark's central ward. It takes a strong community development organization to make this happen. The New Community Corporation has a portfolio in excess of \$200 million dollars and also provides housing for low-income folks.

*Zy Weinberg*

My reason for asking the question is that, as a food stamp recipient, my experience is that stores raise prices around the 1st and 15th of the month. Food stamp recipients are generally the ones who shop at stores during those times.

*Vicky Rayfield, United Planning Organization*

Grocery companies universally deny that they do those things, but, anecdotally, I have heard it over and over again. I personally believe that there are price differentials, particularly in areas

where many residents receive public assistance. Once again, if you have strong community commitment and involvement in the store's development (and hopefully its operation), issues like price inflation will come up before the store's advisory committee, and hopefully the situation will be rectified.

*Zy Weinberg*

Along with a lack of supermarkets, there is also a lack of community agencies in these areas.

*Lynn Brantley*

### **Alternatives to Supermarkets**

The Seeds of Change report affirms a trend in locating alternatives to supermarkets.

*Nada Khader, Americorps*

The crux of the food security movement is to seek alternative sources in the District and nationwide for all people, but particularly for low-income people. There are many diverse programs, such as food cooperatives and buying clubs, where people pool money and food stamps and buy collectively. For example, there are SHARE programs, where people contribute \$14 in cash or food stamps and can get about \$30 in groceries. Cooperatives have long embraced the concept of food for people, not for profit. "Community Food Projects" is a program created from the farm bill, through USDA. So far, 13 grants have been awarded throughout the country and have operationalized many innovative ideas on how communities can be more self-reliant.

*Zy Weinberg*

Can anyone speak to the existence of these programs in the District?

*Donna Ruane Morrison*

Yes. In DC, the Capital Area Community Food Bank operates a farmer's market and Catholic Charities runs the SHARE program.

*Lynn Brantley*

There is a farmer's market in Adams Morgan and a food co-op in Arlington, Virginia.

*Zy Weinberg*

### **School Programs**

You spoke earlier about after-school and before-school programs and activities. Are there any operating in the District? How can we implement these programs?

*Shelton Jewette*

There are many after-school programs in DC, and many utilize the Child and Adult Care Food Care Program. Most work closely with school districts. The goal is to increase by 50 the number of programs utilizing the Child and Adult Care Food Care Program. The success of the Summer Food Service Program spurred the expansion of these programs, and we have identified places (such as churches) would qualify, and have sent them notices that they are potentially eligible to operate Child and Adult Care Food Care Programs.

*Colleen Fee*

Food drives and individual efforts are important during the holiday season, but food banks are in greatest need of support during the summer months. The Child and Adult Care Food Care Program is an incredibly underutilized program, particularly during the summer. Congress is putting a limit on the number of food sites where private, nonprofit organizations can administer

the program. Right now, efforts are underway to get a waiver for the District. FRAC is working with Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton on this.

*Ellen Teller*

I work for Healthy Tomorrows and I am a property owner in Southeast. There are a lot of hungry children in DC. I know of a church in the area that could serve as a site.

*Lily Ross, Healthy Tomorrows*

### **Cultural Considerations**

I want to direct your attention to a report called *Hunger in Latino Communities* (August 1995) that was produced by the Congressional Hunger Center and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute and written by Angel L. Martinez. What can we do to assure that the food security process incorporates current cultural factors?

*Argentina Davila-Luevano, New Community Family Place*

At the Food Bank, we have the Purchase Program, which purchases food to address different cultural backgrounds. When you receive donated food, you can never predict what kind of food you will receive. The farm project in Adams Morgan ensures that the person who operates the farmstand has input about what foods are sold at the stand.

*Lynn Brantley*

We are in constant communication with people in the District of Columbia public schools about the quality of meals served. However, the school system is bound by certain constraints.

*Colleen Fee*

A number of stores have community advisory groups, and you can work with them to ensure that the store carries the types of products that would be most appropriate for the consumer population. Another way to approach the issue is to work with local social service agencies to assure that bilingual information is made available to the population.

*Zy Weinberg*

My concern is the need for more social services that are attuned to the needs of the Latino community. We want to work more closely with the Congressional Hunger Center and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

*Argentina Davila-Luevano, New Community Family Place*

We need to get information directly to the community.

*Rosa Herring, Outreach/Parenting Coordinator, Children's National Medical Center*

### **Government Leadership**

I am concerned that the United States was the only country [during the summit in Rome] to vote against basic human rights for food. The Clinton Administration is supposed to be Democratic. This action reflects the level of concern by the U.S. Lots of work needs to be done, especially in Congress.

*Vijaya Melnick*

Well, when you have a welfare reform bill that allows half of the cuts to come out of food programs, it doesn't strike me that we have an ally in the White House. FRAC is nonpartisan—I will say that up front—but there is a sense in this Congress that charities, food banks, and religious organizations in this country, with the right amount of support, can solve the hunger problem. Congress gave more money to the Emergency Food Assistance Program, of which I am

a big supporter, but it is not the nation's answer to hunger in this country. Somehow we need to communicate this to Congress. Food banks have risen to the occasion to go beyond justice: getting into public policy debates, hiring lobbyists, and trying to educate members of Congress that finding sources of food is a continuing nightmare for food banks. As soon as the food industry makes mistakes, it corrects them—fast. And as the industry becomes more computerized and better able to determine shelf life, the fewer "mistakes" [usable but not marketable food items] will be available to emergency food providers. Second Harvest and others are stepping up to educate members of Congress that emergency food assistance is not the answer to hunger. The mindset in Congress that charity, religion, and food banks can solve the problem is not the answer.

*Ellen Teller*

We need to focus on food security locally. Historically, food security began as a global concept, then came to the U.S. As we continue to build a food security movement in the U.S., we will need to educate policymakers in order to affect our country's attitude on the international scene and to have our government policy take on a more generous attitude.

*Zy Weinberg*

I would add that it is the responsibility of the educational and religious institutions in this nation to get the word out. Preach to people so they can influence political and economic policymakers. Somehow, we are not doing a good job at that.

*Lynn Brantley*

### **Support for the University of the District of Columbia**

How can we support UDC in their efforts?

*Donna Ruane Morrison*

Contact the D.C. Control Board.  
*Vijaya Melnick*

Contact Representative Tom Davis at the U.S. House of Representatives:  
415 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515-4611  
Phone: (202) 225-1492 or Fax: (202) 225-3071  
tomdavis@hr.house.gov

*Zy Weinberg*

Contact the Subcommittee on the District of Columbia:  
Room B-349A, Rayburn House Office Building  
(202) 225-6751

Nonprofit organizations are being muzzled by this Congress. Representative Ishtook says that if you receive any government monies, you have to disclose what percentage of your funds come from government, and that if you receive any funds, you should not be able to lobby Congress or advocate any position on public policy. This means massive constraint for nonprofits. We need to track this.

*Ellen Teller*

### **Welfare Reform Cuts to the Food Stamp Program**

D.C. Hunger Action has received more telephone calls for referrals to emergency food service providers, and what is surprising and disturbing, is that cuts have not fully gone into effect yet.

*Margaret Farrell, D.C. Hunger Action*

This Friday [November 22], 18- to 50-year-old food stamp recipients without dependents will receive notices saying that the clock on their three-month eligibility will start on Friday, November 22. Legal immigrants coming into this country cannot receive food stamps. People who are currently legal immigrants and who are receiving food stamps will receive notices anywhere from April 1 through August 22, 1997, stating that they will be cut off from food stamps unless they can prove that they have worked 40 quarters. The impact has not been felt at all yet.

*Ellen Teller*

While we are sitting at Thanksgiving dinner, these people are receiving their notices.

*Lynn Brantley*

The District of Columbia will ask the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for a waiver on the basis that there aren't enough jobs to go around. We need to write letters to government officials very quickly and get the waiver so that when time is up in three months for people who receive food stamps, the waiver will be put in place and there won't be any gaps. This will require a lot of efficiency on the part of the District government, so we need to push them.

*Colleen Fee*

Be cognizant and collect anecdotes of people who are experiencing these things. If you can isolate how these effects are impacting children and families, I think we can influence the policy debate.

*Zy Weinberg*

People do not realize what is going to happen to them. They don't realize welfare reform is going to affect them.

*Lynn Brantley*

Contact the media and find people for them to interview.

*Ellen Teller*

On December 4-5, 1996, there will be a meeting of a local committee that is working on DC's new welfare plan. The December 5 meeting will be held at Judiciary Square from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. and will include a panel discussion about what the city plans to do. Also, in our next newsletter, we are going to put together a questionnaire on what the District government needs to do.

*Colleen Fee*