



Food Notes

The Newsletter of Food For People • The Food Bank of Humboldt County

Special Holiday Issue 2012

Local Hunger is still a Challenge

Our food bank continues to serve record numbers of people in 2012. The circumstances that lead to hunger and poverty in our community vary widely, but in reality, it is hard to cope with even the simplest of life's daily challenges when you are hungry.



Bob Lazelle has been volunteering with us since our early years and is shown here helping at our People's Produce Market in Eureka.

For many working families, seniors on fixed incomes and those living with a disability, the food we provide represents a life line and a glimmer of hope. Thanks to the support of our generous community, we've been able to help when needed most, but we've also been forced to stretch our resources to the limit in order to reach a greater number of people. In this special edition of *Food Notes*, we invite you to learn more about our programs and the people we serve, and to consider one of the many ways you can

work alongside us in our mission to eliminate hunger and improve the health of our community.

We started out 33 years ago as a food pantry in a small house in Eureka, providing food to local households in need. Today we operate out

of a large warehouse and work hard to meet the increasing need through our 14 programs. These programs include a network of emergency food pantries across the county, food distribution programs for children and seniors, nutrition education and outreach activities, food drives and gleaning efforts, as well as our many partnerships throughout the community. This is the heart of Food for People. We work side by side with the community and for the community to help Humboldt County be its strongest and healthiest.

The People We Serve

Times are still tough for many in our community. Last year, Food for People partnered with the California Center for Rural Policy (CCRP) to conduct a client survey at each of our 15 pantry sites



Good friends enjoy our Children's Summer Lunch at Carson Park lunch site during the City of Eureka's camp program.

countywide in order to learn why so many people are still struggling and to gain greater insight into the challenges they face on a daily basis. What we learned was sobering. A staggering 59% of clients report having very low food security. We learned about the 71% of single parent families who reported skipping meals in order to feed their children. 22% of clients reported they or someone in their household has diabetes. 40% have no health insurance at all and 30% reported feeling sad or depressed all or most of the time. In response

Continued on page 2

The People We Serve

Continued from page 1

to questions about additional information they would like to see at their pantry site, many indicated the need for information on housing, CalFresh (formerly the Food Stamp Program), health insurance programs, child care and other resources that would help them stabilize a household deeply impacted by financial challenges.

We also learned that these households often need more food than we are able to provide, and the foods most desired are meat, fresh fruits and vegetables and dairy products. This is why we are constantly seeking food donations and new sources of funding – to make it possible for us to purchase healthy, supplemental foods. But



Summer Lunch is popular with the kids at our Carson Park lunch site which is run by the City of Eureka's summer camp program.

despite all of the challenges noted, there was also an overwhelming spirit of gratitude – gratitude for the food we are able to provide, for the atmosphere of dignity and respect we strive to foster at each site and for the support provided by our caring community. We know that many of those we've helped in the past have been able to turn their lives around and are now able to give back.

Feeding Our Kids

There are still thousands of children in our community going to sleep hungry. We know our Child Nutrition Programs make a positive difference, but we can't do it alone. Providing good food to children helps them to grow strong bones, aids their ability to

focus and behave appropriately in the classroom, increases their resistance to illness and helps prevent future diet related health problems. It does take a village to raise a child, and these days, even to feed a child. Thanks to the support of our community, our Backpacks



When asked "Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm 64?" we are pleased to say "yes we can!"

for Kids Program provided local school children with 7,635 weekly backpacks during the school year, while our After School Snack Program distributed 51,352 healthy after school snacks and our Children's Summer Lunch Program served 15,761 nutritious summer lunches. These school children know they are part of a caring community that wants them to succeed. For more information on our child nutrition programs contact Niki Gribi at (707) 445-3166 ext. 309 or by email at

ngribi@foodforpeople.org.

Happy Birthday Senior Brown Bag!

Do you remember seeing a 15-foot-high version of this mock grocery bag on the corner of West 14th and Broadway, where Walgreen's now stands? In 2006, Food for People staff and Board members erected the bag to call attention to the efforts to save state funding for the Senior Brown Bag program. That initial effort succeeded, but we were not so fortunate in 2008 when the Legislature voted to cut all funding. The good news is that thanks to a

few successful grant applications and lots of local support, we are now celebrating 25 years of service to Humboldt County seniors. This program represents a real lifeline to an average of 300 seniors each month who are living on low, fixed monthly incomes, and helps them maintain their health and ultimately, their independence.

Each bag includes a variety of USDA and locally donated foods, bread and up to 10 lbs. of fresh produce. Thanks to funds provided

Continued on page 3

Senior Brown Bag

Continued from page 2

by the authors of the *Locally Delicious Cookbook*, St. Joseph Health System Humboldt County and individual donors, we are able to contract with local farmers to grow fresh fruits and vegetables specifically for our programs, with the majority of the local and often organic produce prioritized for the households served by our Senior and Homebound programs. A cadre of dedicated volunteers delivers the monthly bags to seniors who are homebound and serve as our eyes and ears in the community, checking on each person's well being and taking a few minutes to visit and provide cherished moments of social contact.

Services are currently provided at 17 sites countywide which can be found on our website at www.foodforpeople.org. We don't want any of our seniors to question whether they will be needed or fed when they turn 64! For more information on our Senior and Homebound programs, contact Argelia Muñoz at (707) 445-3166 ext. 303 or by email at amunoz@foodforpeople.org.

What Are Those Long Lines All About?

If you pass by Food for People during the months of May through October, you might wonder why there is a very long line of people extending around the block, sometimes waiting for hours. If

you look closely, you will see many seniors, families with very young children and people with disabilities, waiting to take advantage of the free produce at our monthly People's Produce Markets. It's always a festive atmosphere, complete with live music from local musicians and representatives from partner organizations who provide useful information about their services or tasty samples from the recipes we provide.

Many of our clients eat less fresh produce than they would like, and less than what is needed to maintain their health, due to cost and availability. Food for People sponsors monthly, seasonal free produce markets from May through

October in Redway, Garberville, Fortuna and Eureka. Maryann, who is 85 years young and has diabetes and heart disease, tells us that she can't afford the fresh fruits and vegetables her doctor recommends because her monthly social security check of \$985 barely covers her other expenses. She is "thrilled" to be able to take home the 15 to 20 lbs. of apples, plums, lettuce, broccoli, peppers, squash and other produce from the market. Maryann especially loves the fresh tomatoes.

This year, thanks to special funding from the Department of Health and Human Services, we were able to extend the "healthy eating" message to some of the more rural and remote parts of the county with the launch of our new Mobile Produce Pantry, a refrigerated truck full of fresh fruits and vegetables that travels to selected locations throughout the county. We set up the free, farm stand-style distributions next to the county's Mobile Engagement Vehicle (MEV) in places identified as "food deserts," where low-income residents struggle to access affordable fresh fruits and vegetables. They are able to choose from a variety of free produce, select recipes and then meet with the county representatives

Continued on page 4



Our free People's Produce Markets run monthly, May through October, in four locations around the county. Schedules for the market can be found on our website at www.foodforpeople.org, as well as information on our Mobile Produce Pantry, Gleaning and Plant-a-Row programs.

Those Long Lines

Continued from page 3

to determine what other services might be available to assist them. One client told us, "It helps everybody out and it is all the healthy produce we can't afford in our stores or would have to drive all the way to Eureka to get." Sometimes the selection is a new experience, and sometimes the onions, potatoes, corn or zucchini offer a tried and true menu item.

Gleaning from local orchards and farms, *Plant a Row for the Hungry* produce or even the occasional donation from people who don't know what to do with the extra from their gardens are also excellent sources of fresh produce for people struggling to put food on their table. If you have a little extra to share, give us a call!

800 Ways to End Hunger

The 800 Club is our regular giving program comprised of community members who donate monthly or quarterly. Having money we can depend upon is a powerful tool in accomplishing our goals. It allows us to make long term plans, while building strong foundations for our programs, and helps us to make a direct impact locally. One of our

800 Club members told us she donates a comfortable monthly amount which adds up at the end of the year and isn't so hard on the pocketbook. She was amazed at how far her donations reached to help local school children, provide nutritious food for seniors and be a safety net for struggling families. Your commitment to donate regularly can make a big difference and allows us to help when needed most. For more information about the 800 Club, contact Harriet Pecot at (707) 445-3166 ext. 306 or email at harriet@foodforpeople.org.

Holiday Spirit Food & Fund Drive

Our custom-printed grocery bags have been distributed throughout the county and list the various drop-sites for your convenience. These donations help our most vulnerable community members during these challenging times and also provide supplies of food to carry us through the coming months. Consider participating this year in our Hunger Fighter Challenge by organizing your local business or group to donate all they can to help ensure everyone in Humboldt County has a holiday season free from

hunger. This drive will collect food and financial donations through a variety of methods, with donations going to support Food for People's anti-hunger operations throughout Humboldt County. This is your opportunity to participate in one of the biggest food drives of the year. Some of the most needed items are:

- **Peanut butter**
- **Canned meat and fish**
- **Beans and hearty stews**
- **Canned fruits in 100% juice**
- **Whole grains (including pasta, rice, cold and hot cereals)**

To take the Hunger Fighter Challenge or for more information about our Holiday Spirit Food & Fund Drive, please contact Laura Hughes at (707) 445-3166 ext. 312 or email at lhughes@foodforpeople.org.

Volunteer!

Do you want to make a difference in our community? Volunteers are the heart of Food for People. It takes a community of volunteers to make our programs' services successful. Last year local volunteers gave us a total of 36,151 hours sorting and distributing food,

harvesting produce, interviewing and assisting clients, assisting with clerical tasks and much, much more. That's equivalent to 19 full-time staff positions! At Food for People, the time volunteers give us is golden. Our volunteers are essential in helping us make sure that people in need have enough to eat. Each month we have approximately 380 volunteers help us accomplish our mission by means of a variety of volunteer jobs to suit all types of skills and interests. Our volunteer coordinator, Randy Weaver, would love to hear from you and match your skills and talents with our volunteer needs. Contact Randy by calling (707) 445-3166 ext. 310 or by email at RWeaver@foodforpeople.org.



For a suggested donation of \$30, we'll send this holiday greeting card to a friend or loved one of your choice and let them know you made a donation to Food for People in their name!