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Jim Stephenson - A Remembrance

I knew of him only through his accomplishments and, from that vantage point, Jim Stephenson left an indelible mark on anti-hunger activism in this state and the organization that was to become the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center. As a founding member and the first Executive Director of the PA Coalition on Food and Nutrition, Jim's ten years of service helped put PCFN on the map for state policy makers and sparked statewide organizing efforts related to school breakfast, food stamps, WIC and charitable food. In his next role as Advisor on Food and Nutrition in the Casey Administration, Jim was a key figure in the start-up of several important nutrition initiatives, including: passage of H.B. 1146, which codified the State Food Purchase Program; the launch of the WIC Farmer's Market Nutrition Program; and, the implementation of an Inter Agency Council on Food and Nutrition. These initiatives distinguished Pennsylvania as a progressive state on matters related to nutrition and food security and remain a lasting testament to Jim's tireless advocacy on behalf of the most vulnerable among us. His leadership set a course the rest of us continue to follow.

Jim and his wife Sally moved to North Carolina in 1997, where he focused his advocacy efforts on the coastal environment and further distinguished himself as an effective lobbyist. He was 57 at the time of his passing.

Joe Quattrocchi, Executive Director

Pennsylvania Legislative Update

On June 8, the House Appropriations Committee voted against reporting **Senate Bill 850** from committee. As reported in the May issue of *The Hunger Advocate*, this legislation was the Republican response to what they perceived as a bloated spending plan presented by Governor Rendell. More directly, their approach to balancing the **state budget** was fully on expenditure side of the ledger – slashing programs – with no room for negotiating on the revenue side, be it in tax increases of any form or use of the Rainy Day Fund. To broach the chasm between the Senate's \$27.3 billion plan (which also relies on

\$2.7 billion in federal stimulus funds) and the Governor's \$29 billion plan, a great deal of compromise is in order. And these negotiations take place amid the reality of a \$3 billion+ shortfall in this year's budget.

For his part, the Governor has already initiated steps to reduce spending by \$400-\$500 million, while the Senate has responded this is too little and offering no indication of tempering its position relative to revenue enhancements. The truth is, there is either give and take at the state level, or the cost burden will be shifted to the local level, with levies (property taxes) plugging the holes left by the Senate's preferred slash and burn philosophy. Also underlying this debate of fiscal responsibility vs. irresponsibility are the social values inherent in decisions regarding funding for pre-school and basic education, health care for those who cannot afford it and safety net services to name a few.

Does the upcoming spending plan really need to be balanced solely on the backs of children, seniors and other vulnerable people?

Realizing the current budget predicament is a result of unrealized revenue – not profligate spending – the road to fiscal balance in the budget now being hammered out must be through a combination of further cuts and higher taxes. The bottom line is that the costs will not go away, it's just a matter of where they are paid. The development and passage of a sane – and humane – budget for the next fiscal year requires we all stay engaged. In this regard, members on both sides of the aisle need to hear from their constituents. Contact them to let them know your views on how to arrive at fair and balanced budget.

Federal Legislative Update

The "AFTERSchool Meals Act of 2009" – **S. 990** – was introduced by Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Richard Lugar (R-IN) on May 6. This bill authorizes the expansion of the Afterschool Meal Program currently operating in ten states (including Pennsylvania) to a nationwide program, allowing children from all states to benefit from a nutritious meal after school. The bill proposes significant change by providing USDA reimbursements for meals served to all children age 18 and under who participate in afterschool programs located in low-income areas, while the program as currently administered in the remaining 40 states receive USDA reimbursements only for snacks and only for children over age 13. Further provisions in the legislation would ease program administration for schools, as well as the authorization of grants to states to encourage schools and institutions to participate. Because parents work longer, non-traditional hours and many more children require after school care, expanding access to after school meals would improve the lives of millions of low-income children. You can urge Senators Casey and Specter to co-sponsor this legislation at the following link:

<http://pahunger.e-actionmax.com/takeaction.asp?aaid=126>

Over the past several months, a long-running school-based meal program operating in the Philadelphia School District was under attack. The USDA informed the district it was discontinuing its Universal Feeding Program, in which all kids could receive free meals at school based on poverty demographics and other economic data, rather than paper applications verifying need as practiced in all other schools. The Philadelphia program was a boon to program participation, as about 120,000 of the district's 167,000 students participate, far outpacing average participation rates nationwide. While the USDA based its decision to terminate the program as a matter of fairness – i.e., the program was available only in Philadelphia – Senators Bob Casey and Arlen Specter, along with U.S. Representatives Chaka Fattah, Allyson Schwartz and Robert Brady countered by introducing legislation to take the program nation wide. Companion bills, **S. 1226** and **H.R. 2803** - “The Paperless Enrollment for School Meals Act” – would use the innovative Philadelphia universal school meals program model as a national program to feed children, reduce bureaucracy and save money. This legislation, which would go a long way in satisfying President Obama's pledge to end childhood hunger by 2015, would serve as the basis for the extension of the program in the upcoming Child Nutrition

Reauthorization. Hunger Action will keep you posted on the progress of this legislation in these pages and on our website.

Hunger Forum Update

“Bridging the Pennsylvania Network: Linking Food Production and Distribution with Food Security” – a forum for emergency food assistance providers, government and NGO food agencies, and anti-hunger advocates – has been rescheduled for Wednesday, September 16. It will be held in the VIP Room at the PA Farm Show beginning at 8:00 a.m. and concluding at 3:00 p.m. The forum is envisioned as the first of a three-part series of meetings convened for the purpose of cultivating an identifiable, interactive and sustainable Pennsylvania Food Network. Registration materials and further details on the September forum will be disseminated throughout the summer, beginning next week.

Farmers Market Nutrition Program

This month marks the beginning of the annual Senior and WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program in Pennsylvania. Seniors (over the age of 60) with household incomes below 185 percent of the poverty guidelines can receive \$20 coupons which can be redeemed to buy fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs at Pennsylvanian farmers markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs. WIC moms and children ages 2 to 5 are also eligible for the coupons which can be used June 1 through November 30. The program is immensely popular among the senior population with many area agencies on aging running out of coupons within the first two

months of the program. Last year, 178,873 seniors participated with a coupon redemption rate of 87 percent. Contributing to this success is the Commonwealth's commitment of state funds which is set at \$2.2 million this year. Pennsylvania is one of only a handful of states that contribute to the program. With 1,025 farmers participating in the program, FMNP is a win-win for both consumer and producer. For this reason, Hunger Action along with the PA Association of Regional Food Banks is asking the legislation to increase funding for this program to \$3.3 million next year.

Seniors lined up for an opening day event at the Harrisburg farmers market in the Farm Show Complex's parking lot Tuesday, June 9. Hunger Action was also on hand to encourage them to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly the Food Stamp Program). Staff was encouraged by the number of seniors who were interested in the program and the number of follow-up calls that resulted. Seniors should contact their local area agency on aging for more information.

Outreach News

Summer Feeding Workshops



Pennsylvania Hunger Action recently held workshops aimed to grow awareness about the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in two local counties. The workshops, held in Centre County and Franklin County (pictured above) gathered together key members of the community in order to educate them about SFSP.

During the Franklin County workshop, Jack Jones of BOPIC (Building Our Pride In Chambersburg) a sponsor in the area, spoke to the audience about his experiences with the Summer Food Program over the nine years he has been involved. BOPIC picked up two more feeding sites as a result of the workshop.

The Summer Food Service Program was created to ensure that children in lower-income areas could continue to receive

nutritious meals during long school vacations, when they do not have access to school lunch or breakfast. But, although millions of children depend on nutritious free and reduced-price meals and snacks at school for 9 months out of the year, just a fraction of that receive the free meals provided by the SFSP during the summer months. More work needs to be done. So for more information on the Summer Food program, please call Chad Newton at (717) 233-6705 or e-mail him at cnewton@pahunger.org.

School Breakfast Update

Hunger Action is continuing to compile the results of a School Breakfast survey recently sent out to all 501 school districts in Pennsylvania. Many districts have asked for assistance expanding their breakfast programs, and Hunger Action, in conjunction with the PA Breakfast Brigade, will be working to provide them assistance.

Additionally, Hunger Action is happy to report that one of the school districts on the Failing List of the 2008 School Breakfast Report Card, Conewago Valley School District, will be starting a breakfast program next year. Special recognition should go to Carolyn Weaver of the Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association for her work with Conewago Valley.

SNAP Update

Participation rates for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly the Food Stamp Program) continue to rise. In May, over 1.3 million individuals received more \$172 million collectively in benefits. The number of individuals participating in the program has risen over 12 percent from just May of last year. The following counties have experienced increases of over 20 percent: Allegheny, Bucks, Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton, Lancaster, Lebanon, Monroe, Northumberland, Pike, and York. Hunger Action conducts outreach in over half of those counties. All but one (Bucks) are serviced by a DPW Food Stamp Participation Project grantee.

Board Update

The PA Hunger Action Center Board of Directors added a new member at its quarterly meeting held on June 8. Chris Kukay, Vice President-Meat and Seafood for GIANT Food Stores, was unanimously elected to serve a three-year term of office on the organization's governing body. Chris comes to Hunger Action with a passion for helping the hungry and food insecure, as well as a demonstrated commitment of service to the communities where he has lived throughout his professional career. His seat on the Board brings the total number of Directors to sixteen.

