

Food Programs Respond to Flood Losses

In the recent past only Hurricane Agnes in 1972 surpassed the widespread destruction of Ivan over the third weekend of September. From both the private and public sectors, food programs responded during this time of need.

In Harrisburg the same building that houses the Ecumenical Food Pantry became a shelter for flood displaced residents. The Central Pennsylvania Food Bank stretched to distribute additional food at home while also sending a truckload of juices and granola bars to hard-hit Floridians.

Jennifer Canada, Director of the Fayette County Food Bank, whose own family's residence was damaged by the flood, spoke of seeing an unaffected family of five order 600 hoagies to share with their less fortunate neighbors. Canada spoke with cracking voice, "To see the community coming together like this, the community outpouring, it was overwhelming."

Calvary Bible Church Food Pantry in Lewistown lost some of its food supply. Bob Partchey described a flooded basement that ruined boxes of food ready for distribution later



that day. He credits hard-working volunteers for cleaning up, "On Saturday the volunteers came in and cleaned up everything and got more boxes ready." The distribution happened the following Monday.

The Pine Creek near Pittsburgh swelled over its banks and inundated the communities of Glenshaw and Etna. Local restaurants, including T.G.I. Friday's, Monticello's and Olive Garden, responded with truckloads of food for flood-ravaged families. And retail giants K-Mart and Walmart came through with \$300 coupons to help affected families get the essentials that would carry them through their immediate difficulties.

The Food Stamp Program (FSP), our nation's first line of defense against hunger, includes special disaster provisions that went into effect in designated areas of the State. Enrolled participants who lost food because of the storm qualified for replacement benefits; those who

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Wages Decline in PA

According to a Labor Day report issued by the Keystone Research Center (KRC), the inflation-adjusted median hourly wage in Pennsylvania during 2003 was \$13.59, down 4 cents per hour from 2002. Female workers as a group beat the overall average as their hourly rate increased from \$12.10 to \$12.16 an hour. But among male workers hourly wages dropped to \$15.21, down from \$15.34 in 2002 and \$15.67 in 2001, and only those with at least a college degree saw an increase in pay.

Low-wage workers – those who earn more than 10 percent but less than 90 percent of workers – saw their wages fall to \$7.07 an hour, down two cents from 2002.

KRC attributes the poor wage report to the slow economic recovery. Compared to March 2001 when the recession started, in July Pennsylvania had 1.4 percent fewer jobs but a working age population that had grown by 1.7 percent. These two trends left the State 181,000 jobs short of where it had been when the recession started. The loss is particularly severe in manufacturing where

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TANF Reform Failing Poorest Families

According to an August Census report, the number of people living in extreme poverty – those with incomes below half of the poverty line – has jumped sharply to the highest level on record. Among children, the increase from 2000 to 2003 was 21 percent. Yet according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, during that same 3-year period the number of people receiving TANF cash assistance fell by 9 percent.

The health and well-being of children living at below half the poverty line is a grave concern because they are at such high risk of health problems and educational failure. Everyone wants their numbers to decrease. And during tough economic times, the TANF Program is supposed to help in this regard by providing a measure of stability until the very poor can again begin moving back toward self-sufficiency. Obviously, on the national level, that did not happen from 2000 – 2003.

Here in Pennsylvania, the number of persons supported by TANF fell from about 240,000 in 2000 to about 235,000 in 2003. This decline (2 percent) is somewhat better than the national average. Nevertheless it reflects the same fundamental problem: the last line of defense – TANF – is increasingly unavailable to the most needy. For the sake of the children, this is not how we want the system to work.

Inter-Agency Council on Food and Nutrition

Having met four times in four months, the Inter-Agency Council on Food and Nutrition is now ready to begin interacting with private stakeholders. The first meeting with the enlarged group is scheduled for November 9th at the PA Department of Agriculture office in Harrisburg.

Reconstituted by the Governor's Policy Director, Donna Cooper, and led by the Agriculture Deputy Secretary Cheryl Cook, the Council brings together senior staff and policy specialists from the six state agencies that administer food and nutrition programs: Aging, Agriculture, Community and Economic Development, Education, Health, and Public Welfare. To date the Council has focused on goal setting, the preparation of a strategic plan and the identification of common programmatic concerns. After adding private sector stakeholders to the mix, the Council will begin to focus on gaps in the food security safety net, barriers to full utilization of available federal programs, and the development of policy recommendations for the 2006-07 budget.

The Council also will need to address administrative concerns. To date the Rendell Administration has not provided staff or other resources that would enable the Council to succeed in its task of ending hunger and improving food security in Pennsylvania. Addressing this gap in coming months is a necessary next step in empowering the Council for effective planning.

Updates

The official unemployment rate measures the number of individuals who are actively looking for work. It does not include those who are discouraged by failure and have stopped looking. Nor does it include those unable to work or those who don't want or need a job. Overall, as of June just over 62 percent of American adults had jobs. That's down from 64.5 percent four years ago.

The effort to make the Food Stamp Program more accessible to the working poor is making progress. In May 90,595 households with earnings and not on welfare received food stamps, up from 62,892 in May 2003. This increase (44 percent) far exceeded the overall caseload increase over that time period (14 percent). During the fiscal year that ended June 30th, Pennsylvanians received \$900 million in food stamp benefits to help pay the grocery bill.

Senator Arlen Specter continues to go to bat for the Nutrition Education Program (NEP). During September he added a paragraph to the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Report encouraging the USDA to continue supporting the existing NEP in Pennsylvania's food pantries and shelters. By letter dated September 29th, Specter asked USDA Secretary Venneman to indicate whether the language in the Report is sufficient to allow the USDA to continue reimbursing for the cost of food when that food is appropriately integrated with other nutrition education activities.



PA Legislative Session Calendar

November – 8, 9, 10, 15, 16**, 17**, 22, 23, 24*, 29*, and 30*

House only *

Senate only **

2005-06 Budget Prep Underway

This is the time of year when state agencies prepare budget requests for the fiscal year that begins next July. Hunger Action has submitted the following recommendations.

- \$2.5 million for the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, an increase of \$500,000. This would enable the Department of Agriculture to serve all of the low-income seniors who are requesting help.
- \$550,000 for Food Stamp Program outreach grants, an increase of \$100,000. This would enable the Department of Public Welfare to include more low-participation counties in its outreach plan.
- \$400,000 for Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) start-up grants. This would enable the Department of Education to spur the success of the new, 2-year federal SFSP pilot in rural Pennsylvania.
- \$18.5 million for the State Food Purchase Program, an increase of \$1.0 million. This would enable the Department of Agriculture to increase by 6 percent the grants it makes to counties to buy food for emergency pantries and kitchens.

Hunger Action also supports an increase in the reimbursement rates for school breakfast and lunch to 11 cents. This has an estimated cost of \$2.5 million. Currently the State pays 10 cents per breakfast and - depending on a school's practice in regard to breakfast - 10, 12 or 14 cents per lunch. Legislation introduced in the General Assembly by Senator James Rhoades (R-Schuylkill) and Rep. Sue Cornell (R-Montgomery) would raise the breakfast rate to 11 cents and the minimum lunch rate to 12 cents.



"In addition to all the wonderful things you do to help hungry people, I hope you all become political activists. Not for a political party and not for a candidate but for a cause and for a way of life. . . . Every time you help an individual or a family, give them a voter registration card and ask them to fill it out. If the people in need in America would stand up and be counted, that would change so many elections."

Governor Edward G. Rendell speaking April 17, 2003 at a reception honoring Pennsylvania's Anti-Hunger Leaders.



The new federal fiscal year began October 1 without a budget for most of the federal government. Until December - or perhaps February - federal food programs will operate under an extension of last year's budget. On September 29th the Congress once again kept the TANF program alive, this time with a 6-month extension. It was a "clean" extension, meaning no new provisions were added to the law.

Director's Column



After my pastor finishes delivering his weekly sermon, I'm occasionally inclined to say, "You left out the most important part!"

I thought of that recently as I read **A Blueprint to End Hunger**, a document circulating among many anti-hunger agencies. It maps out a strategy to address hunger throughout the United States. Thirteen national groups, including America's Second Harvest, FRAC, Share Our Strength, MAZON, and Bread for the World, prepared this document. It recommends nine specific actions to our federal government and five to state and local governments. Nowhere in these fourteen recommendations is any mention of the minimum wage or refundable tax credits.

This is astonishing. If we are serious about preventing hunger, we must tackle the problem of low-paying jobs. We must find our way back to the point where a full-time job provides enough income to buy the groceries. That means raising the minimum wage and/or expanding refundable tax credits.

Leaders of both political parties once understood this (Presidents Nixon, Reagan and Clinton come to mind), but we currently are divided. That is, many politicians - particularly on the Republican side of the aisle - oppose raising the minimum wage and oppose expanding refundable tax credits. Their opposition is a big reason the U.S. is falling badly behind its goal of reducing food insecurity to 6 percent by 2010.

When my pastor leaves out something really important, I'm left to wonder. Did he run out of time? Are his beliefs different than mine? Is someone in the congregation twisting his arm? Rather than carry these nagging questions into my week, I usually ask. So that's what I plan to do: ask the national organizations why the minimum wage and refundable tax credits failed to make it into the **Blueprint**. In a future issue, I'll let you know the answer.

Flood...from Page 1

suffered additional non-food losses also qualified for a supplemental September allotment. People not enrolled in the FSP, including those who do not qualify for food stamps under normal conditions, became newly eligible under special rules that subtract the value of uninsured losses from September's income.

Unfortunately, information about the availability of disaster food stamps did not reach County Assistance Offices until September 29th and was not made available to the media until October 1st, nearly two weeks after Ivan's ravages. By then the time period for FSP applications under the special rules had only five days left. This may have caused some eligible flood victims to not apply. However, the PA Department of Public Welfare has continued to lobby for a longer time frame and was able to convince the federal government to extend it to October 15.

Thankfully, private sector efforts responded immediately. Food banks in affected areas of the state adjusted their activities to accommodate increased usage and to re-schedule distribution times. In Carnegie, where the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Food Pantry was completely wiped out by the flood, the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank went the extra mile to secure funds for the replacement of freezers and refrigerators and the costs of relocation to St. Ignatius School. Mellon Financial provided the funds (\$10,000) as well as a second \$10,000 grant to assist other pantries that either suffered damage or an extraordinary increase in demand for their services. Pantries affected, in addition to the one in Carnegie, include those in Etna, Millvale, Sharpsburg and Hays.

Hunger Action Questions the Candidates

In September Hunger Action asked Republican and Democratic candidates for federal office in Washington for their positions on four key anti-hunger legislative issues. The chart on the following page records the responses. Here are the four issues.

- **Would you vote for an increase in the federal minimum wage via legislation that does not include any additional tax cuts and/or spending provisions?**

Congress last increased the minimum wage in 1997. The minimum has lost 10 percent of its purchasing power since then. The gap between the inflation-adjusted minimum wage and worker productivity is now at its highest level in nearly 50 years. Because opponents of an increase often try to kill it by bundling it with other "poison pill" provisions, we asked candidates if they support a clean increase in the minimum.

- **Would you vote to make the \$1,000 child tax credit "refundable" via legislation that does not include any additional tax cuts and/or spending provisions?**

Congress made the federal Child Tax Credit partially refundable in 2001. Thus, low-income tax filers who have jobs and children can receive from the IRS a check equal to 15 percent of their earnings in excess of \$10,750. Under this formula, most low-income families qualify for a payment that is only a fraction of the credit. Again, we asked the candidates if they support a clean increase in the amount for which low-income tax filers could qualify.

- **As part of a broader plan to reduce the federal deficit, would you make it a top priority to safeguard key food assistance programs such as food stamps, WIC and child nutrition from funding cuts?**

The federal government is running deficits of nearly one-half trillion dollars a year. As part of correcting this, Congress is virtually certain to cut spending in the next several years. We asked the candidates if they would make it a top priority to avoid cuts in food assistance programs.

- **Would you oppose a provision that penalizes states that do not require single parents of pre-school children to participate in more than 30 hours of job training or work activities each week as a condition of receiving cash assistance?**

President Bush and House leadership have called for an increase to 40 hours per week that TANF parents must participate in out-of-home activities. Such a plan would be expensive because it would require the states to pay for additional hours in childcare. It would add nothing to family income because the additional activities are unpaid. And it would lengthen the time parents are separated from their children without adding significantly to the parents' employability.

Election 2004 Candidate Survey Results

Candidate	Office and/or District	Minimum Wage	Refundable Child Tax Credit	Guard Food Assistance	Oppose Higher TANF Hours
A. Specter (R)	U.S. Senator	S	S	S	S
J. Hoeffel (D)	U.S. Senator	S	S	S	S
R. Brady (D)	U.S. Rep. 1	S	S	S	S
D. Williams (R)	U.S. Rep. 1	S	S	S	S
C. Fattah (D)	U.S. Rep. 2	D	D	D	D
S. Bolno (R)	U.S. Rep. 2	U	O	O	O
P. English (R)	U.S. Rep. 3	S	S	S	O
S. Porter (D)	U.S. Rep. 3	S	S	S	S
M. Hart (R)	U.S. Rep. 4	D	D	D	D
S. Drobac, Jr. (D)	U.S. Rep. 4	S	S	S	S
J. Peterson (R)	U.S. Rep. 5	D	D	D	D
J. Gerlach (R)	U.S. Rep. 6	O	S	S	O
L. Murphy (D)	U.S. Rep. 6	D	D	D	D
C. Weldon (R)	U.S. Rep. 7	D	D	D	D
P. Scoles (D)	U.S. Rep. 7	S	S	S	U
V. Schrader (D)	U.S. Rep. 8	D	D	D	D
M. Fitzpatrick (R)	U.S. Rep. 8	D	U	U	D
V. Shuster (R)	U.S. Rep. 9	D	D	D	D
P. Politis (D)	U.S. Rep. 9	S	S	S	U
D. Sherwood (R)	U.S. Rep. 10	D	D	D	D
P. Kanjorski (D)	U.S. Rep. 11	D	D	D	D
J. Murtha (D)	U.S. Rep. 12	D	D	D	D
A. Schwartz (D)	U.S. Rep. 13	S	S	S	D
M. Brown (R)	U.S. Rep. 13	D	D	D	D
J. Doyle, Jr. (D)	U.S. Rep. 14	S	S	S	S
J. Driscoll (D)	U.S. Rep. 15	S	S	S	U
C. Dent (R)	U.S. Rep. 15	D	D	D	D
J. Pitts (R)	U.S. Rep. 16	D	D	D	D
L. Herr (D)	U.S. Rep. 16	S	S	S	S
T. Holden (D)	U.S. Rep. 17	S	S	S	S
S. Paterno (R)	U.S. Rep. 17	D	D	D	D
T. Murphy (R)	U.S. Rep. 18	D	D	D	D
M. Boles (D)	U.S. Rep. 18	S	S	S	S
T. Platts (R)	U.S. Rep. 19	D	D	D	D

What Did We Learn From This Survey?



KEY

- S = Support
- O = Oppose
- U = Undecided
- D = Declined to Respond

Shading indicates incumbency.

Of the 34 candidates surveyed, 18 responded and 16 did not. Among the 17 incumbents seeking voter reendorsement, only 5 responded. Six of 17 Republican candidates and 12 of 17 Democratic candidates responded.

On the key Senate race, both Arlen Specter and Joe Hoeffel answered in the affirmative to all four questions. On the key question of raising the minimum wage, nearly all who responded indicated support, including Representatives English, Holden, Brady and Doyle. However, eleven incumbants did not respond.

Are Kids Eating Healthy Foods in School?

Some ten years ago the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued guidelines for meals served school children under the National School Lunch Program. These guidelines include caloric allowances: less than 30% of the calories from fat, no more than 10% from saturated fat, and 12-15% of the calories from protein. These guidelines of the School Meals Initiative (SMI) have been monitored by the PA Department of Education (PDE) under a "good faith compliance" policy. However, recently enforcement has become more stringent.

Pat Birkenshaw, PDE's Chief of the Division of Food and Nutrition, stated: "Schools not in compliance have had to write corrective action plans. In these plans they must change menus and recipes to make them healthier and in compliance with the requirements." Ultimately PDE will withhold reimbursements if a district fails to meet the criteria.

Patricia DeGore, school food service director at Norwin School District in Westmoreland County, has worked with PDE to modify her district's food plan. She understands why it is important. "There is a rise in obesity among children and diseases are appearing like hypertension and adult onset diabetes. We even hear predictions of hip replacements for this generation when they are in their 30s due to obesity."

DeGore described ways in which her lunch program is changing. Meals provided under the National School Lunch Program now include less fat and an increased number of entrees, including a wide variety of fruits and vegetables and low fat desserts. Ironically, high-fat items such as pizza, French fries, tacos, nachos, and onion rings are still available; they've just been moved to the *ala carte* menu. And while the price for these foods has been raised \$.25 per item to discourage consumption, the portion sizes also have been increased.

Norwin's one-step-forward, one-step-back approach illustrates the nature of the school food issue. The regulated National School Lunch Program is only one source of school food for children; *a la carte* servings, vending machines and student fundraisers are others. To make a strong impact, all foods available in schools must be regulated. Currently in Pennsylvania, only school boards have that authority.

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, signed by President Bush in June, is a modest attempt to achieve a more holistic approach. It requires each school district that accepts federal nutrition funds to adopt a "wellness policy" that addresses matters such as nutrition, exercise and obesity prevention. Although the details of this requirement have not yet been spelled out, the intent is to avoid piecemeal approaches to obesity prevention.

Will locally-adopted wellness policies make a difference? Only if there is strong advocacy to school boards from parents and other interested members of the community.

State legislation is another way to address this agenda. In the New Jersey Assembly, for example, a bill that would ban the in-school sale of snacks with a high sugar or fat content until thirty minutes before the end of the day has passed its Education Committee. According to legislative staff, no such legislation is under active consideration here in Pennsylvania.

Wages Decline...from Page 1

151,600 jobs were lost. Most of the new jobs created during the past several years are in sectors that pay lower wages.

Other indicators of distress include a jump in the share of children in poverty from 11.6 to 15.5 percent and a 40 percent rise since 1999 in the number of Pennsylvanians without health insurance. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the cost of benefits is going up by 5 percent a year, causing many employers to restrict hiring.

Steve Herzenberg, KRC's executive director and a member of Hunger Action's Board of Directors, highlighted the connection between these trends and the recent decline in food security. "Despite rising productivity, too many workers find their slice of the economic pie shrinking. In some cases, this means families cannot meet their basic needs, including putting food on the table."

The *State of Working Pennsylvania 2004* is available online at a special website (www.stateofworkingpa.org) or via www.keystoneresearch.org.

Save the Date

December 2-3 for the 6th annual **Future of our Food and Farms Summit** in Philadelphia. Included on the morning of the 2nd will be a discussion of the next federal Farm Bill. Michael Jacobson from the Center for Science in the Public Interest and Eric Bost from the Food and Nutrition Service headline the list of Summit speakers.

Summer Food Sites Needed in Rural Areas



Thanks to a recent Act of Congress, next summer the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) will be available to more rural communities than ever before. Many rural children are missing this valuable resource that bridges the gap between school meals in June and their startup again in September. More information will be available in upcoming months on which areas will qualify. Call Sue at 717-233-6705 if you are interested. We'll make sure you are informed.

This and That

Pennsylvania will receive \$1 million this year to support a new Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Pilot for school children. Pat Birkenshaw, Director of Child Nutrition Programs at the PA Department of Education, said 16,000 children in 25 school buildings will benefit. The Pilot will be evaluated by its impact on student eating patterns and student academic achievement.

This past summer was the 7th in a row that the Archdiocese of Philadelphia served over one million meals and snacks to children in the 5-county area of southeastern PA. This year the "millionth meal" was served in Bristol, one of the 30 sites served by the Archdiocese in Bucks County. Statewide, local sponsors served around 7.5 million meals and snacks to needy children this past summer.

Two leaders of Pennsylvania's Nutrition Education Program are moving on to other pursuits. Dorrie Lisle and Dick Poorbaugh, who led the Management Entity and Nutrition Education Network respectively, made their announcements in September. Dicks' final day on the job was September 30th; Dorrie will continue until the last week of October. Both worked across the state with a wide variety of nutrition projects to inspire and support local efforts. We will miss them and wish them every success in future endeavors.

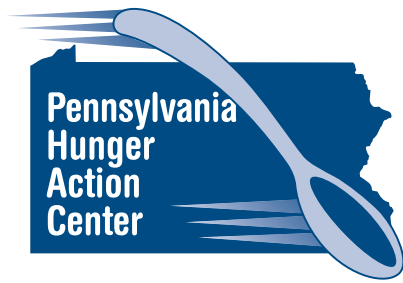
Parts of Pennsylvania are "food deserts" – areas where consumers must travel a long time to shop for reasonably-priced groceries. This lack of access is directly linked to higher rates of obesity and diet-related disease. In September the Rendell Administration announced that The Reinvestment Fund, a Philadelphia nonprofit with ties to financial markets, will be given \$10 million to administer a statewide supermarket initiative. The Fund will raise at least \$30 million in additional private funds to enlarge the effort and is expected to work with the supermarket industry, developers and community advocacy groups to improve access in under-served areas. To contact the Fund call 215.574.5800.

Grow Clinic Coming to Philadelphia

Help is on the way for Philadelphia infants diagnosed as "failing to thrive". Thanks to the efforts of Dr. Mariana Chilton, Assistant Professor at the Drexel University School of Public Health, the University and St. Christopher's Hospital have established the Philadelphia Grow Clinic for at-risk children. The Clinic will utilize a multi-disciplinary treatment approach pioneered by Dr. Deborah Frank at the Boston Medical Center. Dr Angelo P. Giardino, Vice President of Clinical Affairs, is heading the effort at St. Christopher's.

This new initiative, funded by private sources, is part of national research network already active in Boston, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Little Rock and Baltimore. Known as the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C-SNAP), this research effort focuses on the impact of public policy on the health outcomes among at-risk children. Among the issues C-SNAP has addressed is the impact of full-family TANF sanctions on the frequency of emergency room treatment of infants.

Karen Wilson, director of the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger, described the significance of this new development. "We've been working to bring a failure-to-thrive clinic to Philadelphia for the past five years. Children will benefit from the holistic services of this program and Pennsylvania's policy-makers will benefit from the excellent research it provides. We're very pleased and commend Drexel and St. Christopher's for making this commitment."



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DPW Proposes New Child Care Regs

In a September 11th announcement, the PA Department of Public Welfare proposed new rules regarding child care subsidies. According to Cathleen Palm, a lobbyist and children's advocate, the new package is "a significant and progressive step to remove barriers in the subsidized child care system."

There are three key changes.

- The regs propose to return to a 20 hour per week work requirement in place of the current requirement of 25 hours. This would open eligibility to many parents who have part-time jobs and can not get the additional hours from their employers.
- As proposed by DPW, up to 10 hours per week in time spent in training or education programs would count toward the 20 hour requirement. This would enable more parents to qualify for child care subsidies while upgrading their skills.
- The regs would drop the current requirement that single parents commence legal proceedings against the absent parent to establish paternity and support. Some parents decide not to bring legal proceedings because they do not want to disrupt carefully negotiated arrangements with the noncustodial parent. Under current law, that causes the loss of eligibility for the child care subsidy.

As has often been reported here, food insecurity is a significant problem among low-wage working families. Qualifying for a child care subsidy is often the step that enables such parents to stop worrying about how they will give their children enough to eat. The DPW proposal will enable more at-risk families to qualify for the subsidies. Still to be addressed are the financial implications of the change. Currently the child care subsidy system is not fully funded. As more families qualify for subsidies, the waiting list is likely to grow. Resolution of that problem awaits reauthorization by Congress of TANF legislation, in which child care funds are a major component.

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