

**Notes from the Stretching Your Food Dollars Lunch and Learn
Thursday, May 27th, 2010**

How are the Children?



Suburban Ramsey
Family Collaborative

Speakers:

Alison Metcalf, Second Harvest SNAP Outreach
Sophia Lenarz-Coy, Fare for All
Greg Sorenson, Nutrition Education Program
Alison Brady, Summer Food Service Program Outreach

SNAP Outreach:

Alison Metcalf works with Second Harvest as a SNAP Outreach worker. SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs which is the federal name of the program formerly known as Food Stamps. In Minnesota, this program is also called Food Support. As an Outreach Worker, she helps people determine whether they are eligible for SNAP, serves as a bridge between potential clients and the County, and provides training about SNAP and how the program works.

Several years ago, Second Harvest researched food needs and participation in food programs and learned that 12% of Minnesotans are regularly missing meals because they don't have enough food. They also learned that about half of the people eligible for SNAP aren't signing up. The details of this study are available on the website: <http://missingmeals.org/>. This website also includes detailed information on Minnesota's under-utilization of the SNAP Program [at http://missingmeals.org/bcg-snap-report/](http://missingmeals.org/bcg-snap-report/).

To increase usage of the SNAP Program, Second Harvest Outreach workers reach out to Food Shelves, WIC clinics, Thrift Stores, Churches and just about anywhere that people who might be eligible gather. They are also available to attend "back to school" or parent nights at school as well as health fairs.

In response to questions, Ali clarified that the SNAP application (<http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfs/legacy/DHS-5223-ENG>) is a Combined Application Form (with financial assistance and health care assistance) although individuals can use the application only to apply for SNAP. Individuals can print the application using the link above or can call 651-266-4444 and ask to have the application sent to them.

After applying, individuals will be interviewed by a county worker before a final determination of eligibility can be made. The application does require documentation of some information that can either be brought with to an appointment with a county worker or sent by mail with the application form. If transportation is an issue, applicants can request a telephone interview with a worker.

Once an application is complete and the individual has been interviewed, it can take as little as 2-3 days or as long as 30 days to receive a final determination of eligibility.

SNAP Outreach workers are available to provide training for individuals and organizations who are interested in learning more detailed information about eligibility requirements, application procedures, etc. They are also available to come out when invited to meet with individuals who are interested in apply. They also maintain a public calendar showing where they will be so interested individuals can come to them. The Ramsey County Outreach calendar is at:

<http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=a6bbh12imbq1vpk0iiri7ent6g%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America/Chicago>

If anyone has individual questions, they can contact Ma Lee by e-mail at Malee@2harvest.org or by telephone at 651-263-6725.

Fare for All:

Sophia Lenarz-Coy works with Fare for All, a program of the Emergency Foodshelf Network. It is a cooperative food purchasing program **open to anyone** who wants to save on food costs. When more people participate, they are able to negotiate better deals with wholesalers so the savings are passed on to purchasers. Food is purchased from the same wholesalers who provide food for grocery stores. Fare for All focuses on the healthy foods that are also often the first foods people cut out of their diet when they are trying to stretch their food budget—meats and fresh fruits and vegetables.

Fare for All operates as a “traveling grocery store”. They partner with a host organization and bring pre-packaged food there where they set up and distribute the food during a two-hour time period. Interested customers have the opportunity to see exactly what they are buying before they buy the food. Food packs range in price from \$10 to \$25 and people can buy as many packages as they would like. Fare for All takes EBT, credit or debit cards and cash. They don’t take personal checks. They also sell gift certificates that people or organizations can buy and give to other people.

Unlike its predecessor “Fair Share,” it does not require pre-ordering, pre-payment, or volunteer documentation and does not distribute government commodities.

Visit the Fare for All website to find local distribution sites:

<http://www.emergencyfoodshelf.org/OurFamilyOfPrograms/ffa/>.

If you have individual questions, contact Sophia Lenarz-Coy by e-mail at slenarzcoy@emergencyfoodshelf.org.

Nutrition Education Program:

Greg Sorenson works with the University of Minnesota Extension Office with “Simple Good Eating”, their nutrition education program. They provide trainers for one-time sessions although they prefer to conduct a series of trainings. Their basic content includes basic nutrition and managing food dollars. Their goals are to increase knowledge about nutrition and changes people’s behavior by hands-on learning about such topics as how to make a healthy snack, how to use leftovers to create healthy meals, etc. The content of sessions are participant driven and based on the skills that participants want to learn.

They are also connected to the SNAP Program and are able to help people get enrolled. They bring application forms to all of their classes.

They have limited availability to provide home visits although they are able to do this for Hmong families. They work with translators to provide classes in multiple languages.

They recently developed “Go Wild” a curriculum geared primarily to upper elementary aged children, offered through schools and community summer programs. This can be done in 30 to 60 minutes sessions and focuses on increasing exposure to fruits and vegetables. They’ve also created newsletters to send home for parents.

If you are interested in scheduling Simply Good Eating classes, contact Greg at Greg.Sorensen@CO.RAMSEY.MN.US. They schedule classes on a first come, first served basis. Classes are participant focused and include lots of resources including recipes. Their website is <http://www.extension.umn.edu/Nutrition/>.

If you have individual questions, you can contact Greg Sorenson by e-mail at Greg.Sorensen@CO.RAMSEY.MN.US.

Summer Food Service Program Outreach:

Alison Brady works with Second Harvest doing outreach for the Summer Food Service Program operated by the Minnesota Department of Education. The Summer Food Service Program works with hosts and sponsors to provide free summer meals for children. In Minnesota, 290,000 children receive free or reduced school meals during the school year. The Summer Food Service Program was designed to provide alternatives for those children to receive food during the summer.

Any organization that provides programming for kids during the summer (whether for one week of Vacation Bible School or for short term summer program or all summer long) and serves more than 50% of children who are eligible for free or reduced school meals is eligible. Sites can operate as “open” sites where any child (regardless of income status) can show up and receive free lunch or as “closed” sites where food is offered only to those who are participating in the programming.

Organizations who have kitchens and experience preparing food can apply as a “Sponsor” and can prepare and serve food. Sponsors can also prepare food for delivery or pick-up by “sites”. Currently there is additional funding available from the Minnesota Vikings and Target to help sponsors and sites get connected to this program. . The grant opportunity to support SFSP sites and sponsors has closed for 2010, but may be available again in 2011. Once eligible as a sponsor or site, organizations can be reimbursed for food costs and some administrative costs associated with the program.

For more information on Second Harvest’s resources related to the Summer Food Service Program, including links to the Minnesota Department of Education site, visit their website at:

http://www.2harvest.org/site/PageServer?pagename=progserv_sfsp_resources.

If you have individual questions, you can contact Alison Brady by e-mail at abrady@2harvest.org.

Other Resources:

Other resources mentioned include:

Hunger Solutions: For help finding local resources visit their website at: <http://www.hungersolutions.org/find>.

Bridge to Benefits: This website helps people find all the assistance programs for which they might be eligible. <http://mn.bridgetobenefits.org/>

United Way’s 211: Dial 211 for referrals to organizations providing help for a variety of needs including emergency food assistance.

For more information about How are the Children? or additional resources for children and families in Suburban Ramsey County, contact Yvonne Cournoyer at yvonne.cournoyer@isd623.org or 651-604-3586.