

Hunger in Washington County

Washington County Hunger Group

“An Estimated 30,000 Washington County Residents Are Hungry”

Washington County Hunger Group

Who Are We?

- We are an informal group of Washington County agencies, organizations, and individuals concerned about the problem of hunger. Participants to date:
 - **Maryland Food Bank, Western Division**
 - **Community Action Council**
 - **REACH**
 - **United Way of Washington County**
 - **Local Management Board**
 - **Individuals**

Food insecurity is a lifecycle issue that creates a “domino effect” of negative consequences:

- **Low birth weight**
- **Obesity**
- **Mental health issues**
- **Dental health problems**
- **Poor education outcomes**
- **Long term economic costs**

16.3% of Marylanders said there were times in 2011 when they did not have enough money to buy food, according to a Gallup survey.

Poverty is a major factor for food insecurity

Poverty Rates in Maryland and Washington County, 2010

	% of Total Population under the Poverty Level	% of Children Under 18 under the Poverty Level
Maryland	9.9%	13%
Wash. County	11%	17.1%

Source: US Census, American Factfinder, 2010 American Community Survey.
Note: The Federal Poverty Level in 2010 and 2011 for a family of 3 is \$18,310.

Other Factors Also Lead to Food Insecurity In Washington County

- **High unemployment – 8.7%, Aug. 2012**
 - **Hagerstown = 10.3% unemployed**
 - **Statewide = 7.0%**
- **Housing costs burden – 47% of renters spent 30% or more of their household income on housing in 2009**
- **Availability of affordable food – “Food inflation has replaced gas price as the most important household-expense concern” Wal-Mart President**

Many Turn to the Federal Nutrition Programs

Washington County Residents' Participation, 2011 – 2012

Food Program	Participation 2010-2011	Participation 2011-2012
Food Stamps (MD Food Supplement Program)	21,593 (Aug)	23,029 (Aug) 7% increase
School Children Eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch and Breakfast	9,781 (School Year 2010-2011 as of 10/10)	10,383 (School Year 2011-2012 as of 10/11)
Summer Food Service Program	20,132 meals (summer 2010)	25,964 meals (summer 2011)
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program	4,140 (March 2011)	4,223 (March 2012)

So What Did We Do About It?

- 1. Recognized That Some Others Did Not See Hunger As Much of a Problem or a Priority**
- 2. Received a Request from a County Commissioner and Others to Do Something About That**
- 3. Resolved to Address the Hunger Problem Without Becoming a 501(c)3 or Seeking Funding**

Washington County Hunger Group

➤ Weaknesses

- No Funding

➤ Strengths

- Good Community Connections
- Time for the Effort – Volunteers Are Retired

So What Did We Do?

Activities to Date

Identification and Support of Local Food Pantries

- Visited each of the 21 local food pantries around the county to identify their needs and resources**
- Published an updated list of these neighborhood programs and shared it widely**
- Established and continues operating a volunteer system that shares available fresh and canned foods with the pantries weekly**

Activities to Date, continued

- **Redistributed foods as needed and raised awareness of hunger**
- **Presentations to the County Commissioners, Rotary, Hagerstown Area Religious Council and others**
- **Helped school system expand the Summer Food Service Program**
 - **New this past summer- Salem Avenue Elementary School, plus Bester and Winter Street -sites open to all hungry children,**
 - **nearly 30% more children got free breakfast and/or lunch over a seven week period last summer**
 - **New this summer, meals for elementary school children participating in the new Literacy program**
- **Established a G.I.F.T. program (Give It Fresh Today)**
 - **Giving Emergency Food Pantries and MD Food Bank more fresh fruits and vegetables to distribute**
 - **New support from MCTC providing fresh tomatoes and other vegetables to warehouse and pantries this summer**

The Governor's Food Program

➤ Through the Governor's Food Program and the Maryland Food Bank's Mobile Pantry program, with the Washington County Hunger Group assisting:

➤ Washington County received approximately 100,000 pounds of free food in 13 "food drops" at various places around the county in FY 2011

➤ Locations at various churches in Hagerstown, and at Emergency Food Pantries around the county, provided free food to 4,000 needy households

➤ This program is continues in FY 2012, with drops already held in Hagerstown and Boonsboro this past fall, and Boonsboro and Hagerstown this summer.

Micah's Backpack Program Established

- Started in one local church serving children, identified by schools, who need weekend food**
- Now is supported in every elementary school by members of the faith community and others**
- This fall is serving about 450 needy students with weekend meals**

Where Are We Today? What have We Learned?

- **Collaboration Is Critical**
- **Many Others Have Stepped Up to Help Address the Hunger Problem**
- **Washington County Hunger Group's Role has Evolved**
- **Others Are Taking the Lead in Many Areas – now new opportunities**

Thank You for Your Interest!

Questions or Comments:
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