Maryland Food Stamp Challenge
January 24 - 31, 2011

Taking the Challenge: Can You Live on the Average Food Supplement Program Benefit?

What is the Food Stamp Challenge?
The Food Stamp Challenge gives participants a view of what life can be like for millions of low-income Americans. Challenge participants use the average benefit from the Food Supplement Program (the official name for the Food Stamp program in Maryland) as their budget for food for one week. They are forced to make difficult food shopping choices, and often realize how difficult it is to avoid hunger, afford nutritious foods, and stay healthy.

While living on a food stamp budget for just a week cannot come close to the struggles encountered by low-income families week after week and month after month, it does provide those who take the Challenge with a new perspective and greater understanding of the difficulties many of our neighbors face trying to provide sufficient nutritious food for their families.

Maryland Hunger Solutions is hosting a Food Stamp Challenge for the week of January 24, 2011. Join us and take the Challenge!

What are the guidelines for the Challenge?
1. Each person should spend a set amount for food and beverages during the Challenge week. That amount is $30 for all food and beverage.
2. All food purchased and eaten during the Challenge week, including fast food and dining out, must be included in the total spending.
3. During the Challenge, only eat food that you purchase for the project. Do not eat food that you already own (this does not include spices and condiments).
4. Avoid accepting free food from friends, family, or at work, including at receptions or briefings.
5. Please keep track of receipts on food spending and take note of your experiences throughout the week.
6. Invite others to join you, including co-workers, reporters, chefs, or other elected officials.

How do you start the Challenge?
You can register for the Challenge on Maryland Hunger Solutions’ website (www.mdhungersolutions.org) or by filling out the attached registration page. We’ll keep an updated list of Challenge takers on the site, and will be available to support you during your Challenge week.

The first day of the Challenge is January 24th. You can purchase food at your local supermarket, corner store, or convenience store. You can make one shopping trip on day one of the challenge and spend the entire $30 or you can make several trips.

Please make sure to send a copy of your receipt. We want to share what you purchase and how far you stretched your $30.

How can you share your Challenge experience?
Maryland Hunger Solutions has created an online diary to chronicle our shared experiences on the Challenge. Maryland Hunger Solutions’ Director, Cathy Demeroto, will be posting her experiences on the Challenge, and we hope that you also will contribute your Challenge stories by:
- Sending us a picture of what you purchased – and what you had to put back on the shelves because you couldn’t afford it.
- Taking a video of your shopping trip.
- Writing a few sentences about your day on the Challenge – what you ate and how you felt.
- Sharing reactions from your friends or colleagues about the Challenge.
Food Stamp Program Challenge: 
Registration Page

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the statewide average monthly Food Supplement Program benefit in FY 2010 was $130.45 per person, approximately $4.35 a day or $1.45 a meal.

In November 2010, nearly 644,000 Maryland residents participated in the Food Supplement Program. The Food Supplement Program is a critical safety net for those in need; having a designated amount to spend on food helps ensure that families are not forced to cut or skip meals in order to pay for other basic necessities. Even so, many eligible families are not reached by the program and those who do participate may still struggle to afford a healthy, adequate diet.

Maryland Hunger Solutions encourages elected officials and their staff, agency representatives, and members of the nonprofit community to participate in the Challenge and share their experiences of a week on the Food Supplement program diet.

As a participant in Maryland Hunger Solutions’ Food Stamp Program Challenge, I commit to limit my food budget to $30 for the week of January 24, 2011. I agree to share my experiences publicly on the Maryland Hunger Solutions website (www.mdhungersolutions.org).

I, __________________________________________, register for Maryland Hunger Solutions’ Food Stamp Challenge and will live on the statewide average Food Supplement budget from January 24 — 31, 2011.

-------------------------------------------
Signature                              Date

Please use one of the following methods to submit this form:

- Scan and e-mail to ckaiser@mdhungersolutions.org
- Fax to 410-528-0023
- Mail to:
  Maryland Hunger Solutions
  400 E. Pratt Street, Suite 606
  Baltimore, MD 21202

Alternatively, you may register online at www.mdhungersolutions.org