Preble Street

Maine Hunger Initiative

October 2010
Overview

I. History
II. Preble Street Food Programs
III. York County Food Pantry Analysis
IV. Farm To Pantry Project
VI. Recommendations
This year Preble Street will serve 480,000 meals or 40,000 monthly.

Meals served monthly by program:

• Resource Center - 19,624
• Florence House - 2,094
• Teen Center - 1,733
• Food Pantry - 16,556
Maine Hunger Initiative: Organizing

• Engaging food pantries
• Technical assistance and resource sharing
• Comprehensive food pantry list
• Regional food pantry meetings
• Farm to Pantry Project
Maine Hunger Initiative: Advocacy

Partnering with Maine Center for Economic Policy and Maine Equal Justice Partners to develop and implement a long-range plan for ending hunger in Maine
Maine Hunger Initiative: Accomplishments

- Coalition building
- Governor's Workgroup
- Food for Families ARRA project
- North East Regional Anti Hunger Network (NERAHN)
- Anti-Hunger and Opportunity Corps (VISTA)
Hunger in Maine

According to the USDA, Maine’s level of food insecurity rose more than any other state in the nation between 2000 and 2005.

• Maine ranks 9th in the nation for food insecurity
• Maine ranks 3rd in the nation for very low food security
• Maine DHHS reported a 30% rise in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participation between 2008 and 2010
Analysis of Food Pantries in York County, Maine
Note: 31 food pantries surveyed with a 100% response rate
Households Served

Collectively food pantries in York County serve a total of 4,316 households per month ranging from 7 to 1,200 households.

![Bar chart showing the number of households served per month.](chart.png)
Collectively food pantries in York County serve a total of 11,580 individuals per month ranging from 17 to 1,210 *
Increased Need

• Food pantries have seen an average increase of 20% in the number of clients they serve in the past year

• Two food pantries report that they have experienced a 100% increase in the number of clients they serve

Note: 26 out of 31 reporting, 5 pantries not reporting
Food pantries in York County have been in operation as little as 1 year and as long as 70 years.

**History**

Year food pantry opened

Note: 28 out of 31 pantries reporting
Operations

• 84% of food pantries are run entirely by volunteers

• 97% of food pantries are dependent upon volunteers to operate the food pantry

• 41% of food pantries need more volunteers
Transporting Food

- 84% of pantries do not get any deliveries from their food sources
- 68% of the food pantries rely on volunteers to use their own cars to transport food
- 33% of the food pantries report they find it somewhat difficult to transport food
Space

- 43% of food pantries report they do not have adequate space to operate their food pantry
- Two food pantries do not have a refrigerator or freezer on site
• 65% of pantries also give out non-food items
• 58% of pantries offer delivery to homebound individuals
Of food pantries that have a budget 55% have a budget under $500/month

Note: 22 food pantries provided budget information, 9 did not report
Among pantries with a budget, 92% of funding comes from private donations from individuals, businesses, civic and faith based organizations, United Way, and foundations.
Where food pantries spend their money

73% of food pantry budgets is used to purchase food

Note: other = memberships, capital expenses, fuel assistance, maintenance, supplies, etc.
Food Sources

Breakdown of all the emergency food in York County

- Food Bank, 29%
- York Co. Food Rescue, 22%
- Donations, 18%
- Retail Grocery, 11%
- Local Food Rescue, 10%
- USDA, 8%
- Discount stores, 2%
Food Sources

32% of food pantries surveyed do not receive food from Good Shepherd Food Bank

Reasons given include:

• Distance is too far
• Another food pantry in our area gets food from them
• Too expensive
• Already receive from NH Food Bank
• New requirements and no one willing to do the training
• No time to drive to Auburn
• Already have enough support from the town
• No vehicle
Food Sources

23% of the food pantries surveyed do not receive food from York County Food Rescue

Reasons given include:

• Have not applied yet
• Not necessary at this time
• Not enough storage
• Too close to another food pantry in town
Food Sources

55% of the food pantries surveyed do not receive USDA/TEFAP food

Reasons given include:

- Don't have enough lockable storage
- Don't qualify
- Have not applied as of yet
- No need
81% of pantries face the dilemma of increased need and decreasing supplies. In response they have had to turn people away, give less food, or reduce their hours.  

- **Have not had to modify the amount of food given out or turn people away**, 19%
- **Turned people away**, 13%
- **Modified the amount of food given out**, 68%
How food pantries inform communities of their services

Note: other = putting up a sign or having a website
How difficult it is to access emergency food

- Only 23% of food pantries serve people regardless of residency.
- 77% of the food pantries serve only residents of the town or neighborhood and possibly a neighboring town.
- 39% of the food pantries require proof of residence.

![Pie chart showing the percentage of food pantries open to residents and others.]

- Residents: only 77%
- Open to anybody: 23%
What people must provide to get food

71% of pantries have requirements for people to receive food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eligibility requirements</th>
<th>Percentage of food pantries with this requirement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proof of residence</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>USDA form</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Referral from town</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photo ID</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security #</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral from agency</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proof of income</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
84% of food pantries give food that lasts a week or less.
How often people can use a food pantry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage of food pantries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once per month</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once per week</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice per month</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice per week</td>
<td>1%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

From Accessibility to Advocacy

1) Accessibility
2) Food Choices
3) Food Sourcing
4) Strong Volunteer Base
5) Program Development
6) Communication/Collaboration
7) Advocacy
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Accessibility

• Open to anyone
• Extended hours of operation
• No documentation required
• Centrally located
• Home Deliveries
• Community outreach and publicity
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Food Choices

• Variety of food
• Client choice
• Reliable supply of produce, dairy, and meat
• Nutritious and well balanced
• Food for special populations and diets
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Food Sourcing

- Reduce dependency on small food donations and occasional food drive
- Increase funding to purchase from food bank
- Deliveries to food pantries
- Adequate space and and storage
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Strong Volunteer Base

• Effective recruitment
• Volunteer coordination
• Clear policies and procedures
• Availability of training and technical assistance
• Variety of roles and responsibilities
• Volunteer appreciation
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Program Development

• Secure donor base
• Effective fundraising
• Consistent reporting
• Fiscal accountability
• 501(c)(3) status
• Board development
• Client input
• Public awareness
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Communication/Collaboration

• Work strategically with other food pantries and the community (United Way, schools, farms, etc)
• Share food and other resources (van, bookkeeper)
• Connect clients to other resources
• Participate in regional food pantry meetings
Vision for a Model Food Pantry

Advocacy

• Awareness of public policy decisions
• Participation in legislative initiatives
• Client participation
• Connection to local government
• Community engagement
• Promote long term solutions to hunger and poverty
Farm to Pantry Project
Farm to Pantry Project: Design

• Based on research on best practice models

• Contracted with 6 regional farmers for product
  - Chase Farms, Wells
  - Little River Flower Farm, Buxton
  - Rippling Waters Farm, Steep Falls
  - Spiller Farm, Wells
  - Tibbett’s Family Farm, Lyman
  - Two Toad Farm, Lebanon

• Provided fresh local produce and eggs to all 31 food pantries (e.g. over 3,000 dozen eggs)

• Farmers delivered to food pantries unable to pick up
Farm to Pantry Project: Benefits

- Increases low-income community members’ access to fresh local eggs and produce
- Provides support to regional farmers
- Creates an efficient food system model
“It could not have come at a better time for us. Usually in the winter, we snowplow a lot of driveways in order to have cash flow. Last winter’s lack of snow nearly put us out of business.

“Having this wholesale market for our vegetables this summer is helping us to dig out of a deep financial hole. Also, without exception, we have met wonderful, dedicated people at each pantry who are doing great things in their communities for the families and individuals who live there. It has been a pleasure to work with them.”

~ participating farmer
Strengths

• Food Pantries and Food Rescue operations are relatively food secure

• Food Pantry coordinators and volunteers manage stressful work compassionately

• Active collaborations exist, including Healthy Maine Partnerships’ southern regional meeting, York County Food Rescue’s quarterly meetings, and the New Hampshire Food Providers’ Network (which southern York County pantries attend)
Challenges

• Introducing and accessing local produce and eggs

• Unclear relationship between municipal General Assistance programs and food pantries
## County Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>York</th>
<th>Cumberland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of food pantries</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households served monthly</td>
<td>4,316</td>
<td>5,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households in poverty</td>
<td>7,009</td>
<td>11,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of low-income served</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase in need</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantries requiring a referral from town</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantries receiving from Food Rescue</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantries receiving from Good Shepherd</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantries receiving from USDA/TEFAP</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Recommendations for hunger free communities

• Implement best practice model for food pantries
• Engage people who use food pantries in assessment and improvement of the emergency food system
• Offer poverty simulation workshops for pantry workers
• Work with distributors and anti-hunger organizations to increase food sources
• Replicate and expand farm-to-pantry efforts
• Capitalize on underutilized federal funding opportunities
• Work with Maine Hunger Initiative and its partners, Maine Center for Economic Policy and Maine Equal Justice Partners, to promote state legislation and policy to end hunger
Presentation
Slide Notes
Preble Street is known for working collaboratively with public and private partners to meet urgent needs, advocate for social change, and create innovative solutions to ending hunger and homelessness. In 2009 Preble Street worked closely with United Ways throughout Maine on the Food for Maine project which raised $300,000 for food to pantries across the state. Preble Street also works with United Way of Greater Portland on the Pantry Project, an ongoing food drive which benefits food pantries throughout Cumberland County.

After experiencing increasingly frequent bare shelves in the food pantry, Preble Street learned that the USDA Bonus Commodities coming to Maine had decreased from over 3 million lbs. of food in 2002 to less than 300,000 lbs in 2007. Unbelievably, there was no public recognition of this, no communication about it and no resulting assessment of its impact on Maine’s emergency food system. Emergency food providers continued to keep working the best they could with what little they had. The lack of any state wide advocacy effort dealing with the issue of hunger became glaringly obvious. Around this same time, from 2000 to 2005, the USDA reported that the rate of hunger grew more rapidly in Maine than in any other state in the nation. It was from these turn of events that Preble Street launched the Maine Hunger Initiative.

In February 2009 the Maine Hunger Initiative (MHI) team began work in York County. Community Organizers spent time at pantries, learning from their coordinators and volunteers, provided technical assistance, disseminated information about programs such as 211 Maine, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension’s Eat Well program and the USDA Commodity Supplemental Food Program and established a Farm To Pantry initiative.

One of the Maine Hunger Initiative’s first tasks was to compile a comprehensive list of food pantries in York County. This was accomplished by cross-referencing the lists available from 211 Maine, Good Shepherd Food Bank, York County Food Rescue, Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging and the USDA’s Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). The initial count of food pantries from all of these sources listed approximately 20 food pantries. After MHI data gathering and organizing, it was determined that 31 food pantries were located throughout York County.
The Maine Hunger Initiative has taken the information gathered from food pantries and created a comprehensive food pantry list including location, hours of operation, and eligibility requirements. MHI has shared this list with York County food pantries and other organizations including 211 Maine, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), local Healthy Maine Partnerships (HMP), People’s Regional Opportunity Program (PROP), Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging (SMAAA), the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, York County United Way, Women Infants and Children (WIC) Program, York County Community Action, and York County Food Rescue.

The Maine Hunger Initiative staff held two regional food pantry meetings, one in Coastal York County and one in Northern York County and attended the existing Healthy Maine Partnerships’ Southern York County food pantry meeting. At these meetings food pantry coordinators shared what they are most proud of, challenges that they face, and solutions they have found. Food pantries coordinators and volunteers expressed enthusiasm for having smaller regional meetings to share ideas and learn from each other.

As the Maine Hunger Initiative has become more aware of the pervasiveness of hunger, MHI has also become acutely aware that Maine is one of a few states without an organization or an advocacy effort targeting hunger. MHI has partnered up with Maine Center for Economic Policy (MECEP) and Maine Equal Justice Partners (MEJP) to address hunger throughout our state and explore legislative and policy changes that will ultimately alleviate hunger. The Maine Hunger Initiative is working on addressing both the operational challenges of relieving hunger and the systemic problems that cause hunger.
The Maine Hunger Initiative learned from and worked with other successful anti-hunger coalitions including the Mid-Coast Food Security Coalition, supported by the United Way of Bath and Mid-Coast Hunger Prevention in Brunswick and the New Hampshire Food Providers Network a partnership between the United Way of Greater Seacoast, Rockingham Community Action, the New Hampshire Food Bank and the University of New Hampshire.

The Maine Hunger Initiative has been participating in the workgroup created by the Governor's executive order that is addressing electronic accessibility to public benefits, gathering information from food pantry recipients, Preble Street’s Homeless Voices for Justice, and community caseworkers to help provide input into this process.

Recently, Preble Street partnered with Hannaford Brothers' and DHHS to access over a million dollars in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) money to provide a onetime $100 food supplement gift card to approximately 13,800 Maine families with minor children who are living in poverty.

The Maine Hunger Initiative was selected to be one of the two Maine representatives in the Northeast Regional Anti-Hunger Network (NERAHN). NERAHN is a coalition of anti-hunger agencies from the seven states in the northeast region (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut) and national representation from USDA’s Food and Nutrition Services, Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), and Bread for the World. NERAHN's mission is to reduce hunger by maximizing resources through collaborative efforts; and to work collectively to design and implement action on state, regional, and national levels.

On a national level the Maine Hunger Initiative has been chosen to participate in the New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCH)’s Anti-Hunger and Opportunity Corps, an AmeriCorps VISTA project which includes representation from approximately 20 states across the country. This project has been initiated by Joel Berg, Executive Director of the NYCCAH and author of All You Can Eat, How Hungry is America.
**Slide 7 - Hunger in Maine**

Statistical information regarding hunger in Maine is taken from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2008 report, Measuring Food Security in the United States. It is revealed in this report that Maine is the most food insecure state in New England. Food insecurity is the current language used by the government to define hunger. Food security for a household means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle. Not all Mainers have access to enough healthy food to meet their needs.

Low food security (food insecurity without hunger) - reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet, with little or no indication of reduced food intake.

Very low food security (food insecurity with hunger) - reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

**Slide 9 - Methodology**

The map of York County food pantries shows the location of the 31 food pantries. Two of the food pantries that serve York County residents are located outside of York County, one in Porter, Maine (Oxford County) and one in Somersworth, NH.

**Slide 10 - Households Served**

There are 7,009 low-income households in York County. (9.4% of the 74,563 total number of households - US Census, 2000). York County food pantries are feeding 62% (4,316) of the low-income households. The range of number of households served each month is indicative of how disparate the emergency food system is. Approximately a third (35%) of the food pantries in York County serve less than 50 households per month whereas 6% of the food pantries serve over 500 households per month.

**Slide 12 - Increased Need**

Food pantry coordinators report difficulty responding to the increased demand for food. Challenges include the inability to gauge the number of people who will need their services each week. This increase is attributed to first time food pantry users who are impacted by high unemployment and high cost of living. Food pantry coordinators report that they are serving more families and elderly clients.
Slide 13 – History

The graph depicts the growth of food pantries in York County over the past 70 years. In 1940 there was 1 food pantry. Today there are 31. One-quarter of these food pantries have opened in the last 5 years.

Slide 14 – Operations

Coordinators report that staffing is one of the biggest challenges in operating a food pantry. Volunteers are often older and unable to perform physical tasks such as loading and unloading food boxes.

Slide 15 – Transporting Food

In addition to the physical burden of transporting food, volunteers are using personal vehicles and money to pick up and deliver the food to the pantry and to pantry recipients. Food pantries need to travel up to 1 ½ hours to access items from Good Shepherd Food Bank in Auburn.

Slide 16 – Space

Having adequate space to properly store cold and dry goods is a challenge to pantries. Adequate space and storage allows for more access to nutritious but perishable foods. More space also allows for a client choice distribution model.

Slide 17 – Services Offered

In many cases food pantries provide services that reach beyond the immediate need of food. This can be challenging for food pantries that do not have case managers to help clients access additional resources such as housing, employment and mental health services. Despite this challenge many pantries extend their services to meet the greater needs of clients.

Slide 18 – Budgets

Almost half of the food pantries report that they have no operating budget. Of those that do, 55% of them have a budget under $500 per month. This chart demonstrates the vast range in food pantry size and capacity. Food pantries have little or no budgets and are dependent upon volunteers, yet they are expected to be sustainable and to meet the needs of their communities.
Slide 19 - Where funding comes from

It is extremely time consuming for volunteers to solicit adequate funding from such a variety of private and public sources. Food pantries want to have reliable funding sources to be able to plan on purchasing sufficient amounts of food each month.

Slide 20 - Where food pantries spend their money

Collectively, food pantries spend an average of 73% of their budget on food. Many food pantries put 100% of their budget towards purchasing food. One food pantry reports that they spend all of the money they receive on utility bills.

Slide 21 - Food Sources

In addition to seeing an increase in the number of clients they are serving each week pantries also report that they are seeing a decrease in available food resources. York County food pantries are only receiving on average of 77% of their food from existing hunger relief organizations such as Good Shepherd Food Bank, York County Food Rescue, and USDA/TEFAP food. Best Practices for emergency food pantries indicate the importance of maximizing the amount of food that a pantry receives from existing hunger relief organizations.

Slide 24 - Food Sources

Many of the food pantries that do receive TEFAP food did not indicate this on their survey. Since pantries receive TEFAP food from York County Food Rescue and bonus TEFAP from Good Shepherd Food Bank a pantry may not understand that this is a separate food source.

Slide 25 - Response to increased need

Findings regarding increase in need correlate with the data from the U.S Mayors 2009 Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness where it is reported that 76% of their food pantry respondents have had to make some type of cutbacks in the past year. York County data is higher than the national average in that 81% of food pantries report making some type of cutback in the past year.
Slide 26 - How food pantries inform communities of their services

93% of food pantries inform the community of their services through word of mouth. Pantry coordinators report that stigma and shame prevent many people, particularly the elderly, from accessing emergency food.

Three quarters (77%) of the food pantries inform the community of their services through the town hall. People are often required to show a card issued by the town hall in order to receive food.

Slide 27 - How difficult it is to access emergency food

Much of the information received through the food pantry survey also helps one understand how clients might experience the emergency food system. There are many reasons why someone may want to access a food pantry outside of the town they live in. They may be too embarrassed to access a food pantry in their own town or it may be easier to access a food pantry in the town they work in or where friends and family live.

Slide 28 - What people must provide to get food

The majority of food pantries (71%) have some type of requirements for people to receive food. Food pantries often require proof of income, residence, and benefits. Interestingly, almost a quarter (23%) of the food pantries requires a referral from the town.

Slide 29 - How long food is intended to last

The information gathered from the food pantry survey also helps one to understand the dilemma that people face in accessing food for their family. Only approximately 15% of the food pantries are giving out enough food to last more than a week.

Slide 30 - How often people can use a food pantry

Almost half (48%) of the food pantries report that are open once every 1-2 weeks or as needed, the other half of the pantries (52%) allow you to receive food once a month. For many families their monthly expenses exceed their wages leaving them little or no money available to put towards maintaining an adequate food supply. It is not surprising that many families, depending on the number of children in their household, may need to access a food pantry 3 or 4 times a month just to keep food on the table.
Slide 41 - Farm to Pantry Project: Benefits

The Farm to Pantry project creates a mutual partnership between the farmer and the food pantry. This type of food access system establishes a direct connection between the grower and hungry people.

Slide 42 - Farm to Pantry Project: Response

Food pantry coordinators expressed their appreciation and that of the clients for having received such a bounty of fresh produce and eggs. The farmers also enjoyed working with food pantries in assisting people who may not have otherwise had access to fresh, local, nutritious food.

Slide 46 - Recommendations for hunger free communities

Conducting a client satisfaction survey can help gather information about what type of impact food assistance programs are making in someone’s life. A client satisfaction survey can be used to engage people who utilize food pantries and help measure progress towards the food pantry’s goals.

A poverty simulation workshop can raise awareness around the barriers experienced by low-income people seeking services. A poverty simulation is an interactive experience to help people understand what is like to live with a shortage of money and resources.

The York County Food Pantry Analysis Power Point presentation and other demographic information that you have about your pantry can be used as a tool to advocate for clients and to leverage funds. Other ways to raise public awareness and to advocate for ending hunger is to invite candidates/officials to tour food pantries, attend candidate’s forums, make recommendations for specific legislation, and to engage friends, family, and colleagues in conversations about hunger in the community.

One example of underutilized federal dollars that are available to help fight hunger is money available through USDA’s Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Currently Maine is only serving 16% of children who eligible to receive a free meal in the summer. Collaborations with local partners to expand summer food service sites are encouraged.