



FRESNO METRO MINISTRY • www.fresnometroministry.org
1055 North Van Ness Avenue • Suite H • Fresno, California 93728
PHONE: 559/485.1416 • FAX: 559/485.9109 • EMAIL: edie@fresnometmin.org

Excerpts and Summary of the 44th Community Hunger and Nutrition Forum
Wednesday, June 16, 2004 12:00PM –1:30PM

Trinity Lutheran Church, Fresno

Sponsored by Fresno Metro Ministry

Supported by

USDA, Community Food Project

California Dept. of Health Services Cancer Prevention

and Nutrition Section, by USDA

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

California Food Policy Advocates

The following is a summary of the reports made at the forum compiled by Jeremy Hofer and Carey Berend.

**FOCUS: Emergency in Fresno: The Food System
Community Food Bank, America's 2nd Harvest, and the Current
Hunger and Nutrition Needs in Fresno**

Forum Participants -

Matilda Soria - Fresno Covenant Foundation

Barney Zapata - Parent Involvement Mobile Education Center (PIMEC)

Tim Reese - CEO Community Food Bank

Edie Jessup, Fresno Metro Ministry Hunger & Nutrition Project: Welcome to the 44th Community Hunger & Nutrition Forum. Please welcome Matilda Soria, of the **Fresno Covenant Foundation** who will tell you a little bit about their federal grant to do work with kids.

Matilda Soria: Hello everybody. My name is Matilda Soria. I'm from the Fresno Covenant Foundation. Last year we were awarded a grant in **partnership with the Parent Engagement Center of Fresno Unified School District** and our grant was specifically to serve parents. We have trainers from all different backgrounds that go out into the community and give different workshops and trainings for parents in all different areas geared **to improve student achievement**. That's our main focus. The centerpiece of our project, which we have out in the parking lot today and you're welcome to tour after this meeting, is an RV that we transformed into a classroom for parents. **We bring the classroom to the parents so those parents that have barriers to transportation or income can come on board**. We take it to different communities, churches, apartment complexes, motel rows, schools, and we give classes to parents in all different subjects. I'm really excited to be here. If you know of a site that would benefit from these services or if you yourself work at a site please let me know. I have these fliers on the front table and I also am sitting at this table. You can come and talk with me afterwards. My main trainer, which is also the driver of the RV, **Barney Zapata**, is here. You could ask him questions. We also have a representative from the **Parent Engagement Center, Manny Vidal**, and he's here to answer questions too.

Participant question: What kind of classes do you offer?

Matilda Soria: Our main focus is **No Child Left Behind, Title I Education**. We inform parents about their rights. We also have **early childhood education classes and workshops, family literacy, family math, gang awareness, and issues about school including standards and how to read the child's report card**. All of our workshops and classes are geared to improve student achievement. If there is a topic that we don't have on board the **PIMEC (Parent Involvement Mobile Education Center)** we'll find experts in the community to give that workshop.

Participant question: Do you have nutrition education classes at all that you're providing?

Matilda Soria: We do. Actually, parents have requested those types of workshops and **Barney Zapata actually has his Bachelor's degree in Nutrition and Health** so he's actually the person to speak to about that. Barney, just off-hand, what types of workshops have you given on board?

Barney Zapata: Yesterday we taught about health and body functions and what are the reasons we get sick. We like to start from the bottom and come up to the top. What are the reasons we get sick and what can we do to prevent diseases, and especially among the children how nutrition plays a very important role in development, behavior, and the learning process.

Participant comment: You may be aware that **UC Cooperative Extension has a six-class series on nutrition education for low-income parents** that we might be able to incorporate in some way. I'll give you my card.

Matilda Soria: Does anybody else have any questions? Thank you so much. I should be here throughout the meeting. If other questions come to your mind please feel free to talk to me at this first table. Thank you.

Edie Jessup: Thank you so much. It really is a treat to find out the resources that we have here in Fresno and to use them to their full extent is my goal. We're certainly hoping that the connections between other nutrition education programs and other information can get out to folks through such efforts as this.

Tim Reese is the new executive director of the **Community Food Bank**. If you will recall, food banks are where food comes from for the various pantries throughout Fresno County and beyond and they help to distribute USDA commodity food. It's really critical that it be strong and that it have good community support. We know that we don't have enough food in the system at this point and working with Tim and the food bank to improve that is something that we can do. I also want to announce that we have a wonderful collaborative that will be kicking off between Fresno Metro Ministry, Community Food Bank, Tulare County Food Link food bank, and the USDA. **We will be having in the fall two Congressional Hunger Fellows who will be working in the Fresno and Tulare County areas with the four of us on specific hunger-related projects.** They will work here for six months and then they will go back to Washington, D.C., write papers, and deliver the information they find here in Fresno County to our legislators in Washington D.C.

Tim Reese: It really is my pleasure to be here with you and I really, truly mean *with* you. It is together that we are going to address hunger and nutrition issues in community. The food bank, I hope, will become a stronger partner with you as we reach our goals and work together. I'm **Tim Reese, President and CEO of Community Food Bank** and very happy to be here as part of the nutrition network. We feel that we truly are a partner with you, that we want to be more involved to address common goals. Our approaches, our techniques, and the resources we bring to the process may be different but we all share the common ideal and common goal of addressing nutrition and hunger needs in our community.

I want to really emphasize partnerships and working together in this process. **Community Food Bank is part of the California Association of Food Banks.** We work together with that state association to increase resources to the community. **We're also an affiliate of America's Second Harvest**, which gives us a significant advantage to bring to the community, and **we're also a strong partner of the Northern California food bank cluster.** We partner with seven food banks in Northern California to assure that resources, our fair share, comes to our community.

As you know, **one in four residents in our community lives in poverty** and our poverty rates are twice the national average. That is a challenge for our community. Forty percent of children in our community are hungry or at risk for hunger or food insecurity. Those are alarming statistics. In America we are used to thinking of poor communities as the Appalachian region and we're used to thinking of the South as being poor, but **in the United States there are two very poor areas and we**

happen to live in one of them. There is the Appalachian region of the Southeastern United States and there is the Central Valley in California, and I think unfortunately over time things are getting better there and worse here. Fresno County ranks number two in hunger and food insecurity in the State of California. The number one county is Tulare. About 40% of our population is hungry or food insecure. It's kind of phenomenal when you look at it. When you think of who is hungry we all see the supposed homeless person standing at the street corner with the sign that says, "Will work for food," That's not who we generally are talking about. That person is not who we refer to as hungry or food insecure in the United States, anyway.

Who needs help? It's very clear who needs help and who increasingly needs help. **Children, seniors, and disabled persons, of course, all have hunger and food insecurity issues. Working parents and the working poor are a significant increase in the number of people who are hungry in our community.** For example, five years ago a fairly small percentage of the people Poverello House fed were families. Today it is the majority of people they feed. The majority. These are people who work two jobs, two-income families that simply can't survive on the income that they receive.

I'm going to make a comment that I hope doesn't offend anyone in the room and I think I'm among friends, but do you realize that the number of working poor in America that's increasing is in direct correlation to corporate welfare that our government is giving out freely in the hundreds of billions of dollars in corporate welfare? Do you realize that the largest retail corporation in the world actually teaches their employees how to get public benefit? I don't want to make a libelous statement but you can assume who the world's largest retailer is, and the top four wealthiest people are part of that family. They literally do not pay living wages and they literally teach employees how to get food stamps and other federal programs, so what you and I are doing is not only subsidizing the corporate welfare on one end, we are then subsidizing through our taxes again non-living wages and unfair labor practices. So we pay twice, you and I do every day. It is absolutely appalling. So the number of working poor is increasing and I'll tell you why. This corporation, which has no control and no constraint, is the model now for corporate America. Every other company to survive must compete with that company and adapt their same business practices, so you will no longer see in the future union grocers, you will not see full-time employees in the retail world, you will not see living-wage jobs for middle America. The polarization in our society is accelerating at an unbelievable speed and if we don't change it in 50 years you would not recognize our own country, the change is so incredibly rapid that's occurring. But that's a whole other topic that I could get lost in.

What is part of the solution? The solution is partnerships. The solution is working together because no one entity can solve this problem alone. We can't even begin to solve the problem and we have to have a strong and dynamic hunger relief and prevention network and that network that I'm going to talk about is **America's Second Harvest**. Whether you're in Fresno, Madera, Kings County, Tulare County, wherever you are in California, close to you is an America's Second Harvest-affiliated food bank. That food bank's Emergency Food Assistance Network is a critical part of how we address this. Direct service organizations that you represent that are out meeting health and nutrition needs, government agencies, and very strong community partners are part of how we begin to address these challenges.

America's Second Harvest is the national network across the United States of 200 affiliated food banks and hunger relief organizations that distribute nearly 2 billion pounds of food and grocery products annually and utilize about a million volunteers in the process. Two billion pounds. However, that doesn't begin to meet the need. The affiliation with America's Second Harvest certifies that your local food bank that is an affiliate meets very stringent national standards regarding food safety, warehousing, food handling, business management, personnel labor practices, volunteer practices, fundraising, etc. That's why it's very important that as a community we support an affiliated food bank because we have to meet very, very stringent requirements that the food we deliver to the Emergency Food Assistance Network is safe, clean, nutritious, and meets quality standards. It's a challenging industry and business because we have to meet the affiliation standards. Because we distribute federal food we have to meet the federal standards. We have to meet the State of California standards to assure that the food distributed is safe. Also, **as an America's Second Harvest affiliate if someone donates food to us and we handle it in the proper manner**

that donor is exempt from a law suit under a very specific federal food Good Samaritan donation law. Many people don't donate food because they're afraid if they donate food and someone gets sick they're going to get sued. Well, if the donor handled the food properly and if we handled the food properly they're exempt from any liability, civil and criminal. That's a specific law that Congress adapted under President Clinton.

We get a lot of questions asking what a food bank is. People don't understand it. There's a pantry, there's a corner kitchen, there's a soup kitchen, there's Poverello, there are all these programs, there's Food not Bombs. How does a food bank fit within this? **The food bank solicits, acquires, warehouses, and distributes large donations of food through partnerships with groups that directly serve those in need of food assistance.** We do not actually provide food directly to those who are hungry and food insecure. We are the distributor, the wholesaler, the middle person who acquires the large volume of food, breaks that down into manageable portions, and gets it out to those who actually provide the food to the consumer. That's very important because there is no way that a church or a senior center distributing food in our community could handle a truck with 40,000 pounds of tuna. They can't handle the transportations costs, which are at least \$1,000 minimum, and they couldn't acquire that food, which for a load of tuna at \$40,000 pounds is \$20,000. We are able to acquire that, break that down through our warehouse operations, and then send two cases of tuna to that distribution site instead of 20 pallets of tuna to that distribution site. That's the difference between a food bank and a food pantry.

Why are the food banks important? Because we take large donations of food and get it out. We are part of America's Second Harvest to salvage millions and millions of pounds of food. We get food to our community that comes from Arizona, Illinois, Iowa, all across the country. America's Second Harvest has given us a percentage, an allotment of food, from the America's Second Harvest system. That's where the majority of our food actually comes from. It's not local. It's from America's Second Harvest. They send us a list. We literally order food from America's Second Harvest. While that food is free we must pay transportation cost, so the truckload of food that we get from America's Second Harvest isn't free and that's where costs come in and then we have the expense of warehousing and distributing, but because of the food bank other groups are able to obtain that food and distribute it.

The food comes from a variety of sources. It comes from the government in terms of **USDA commodities. What's interesting about the commodities program is that it is not a hunger/nutrition relief program. That is not what it is intended to be. It is intended to be a price support to the producers of the food to support commodity prices.** That's the intent of it. So if any politician tells you it's about feeding the hungry in America that's not true. It's about keeping price supports up. So when the State of Florida going into an election year is having trouble selling orange juice because of the Atkins diet craze and competition from Brazil, who's buying about 40% of the orange juice produced in the State of Florida? The federal government. An election year president, governor? You put two and two together and figure that one out. **Food producers also donate food to the system.** We have community food drives. You've seen the barrels. People donate all the time. **Food processors and manufacturers will donate food. We get a lot of food from wholesalers when there are end lots and little bits and there are some damaged cans and stuff that didn't sell or the label was changed or it's nearing its expiration date** and they have to pull it because no retail customer will buy it when they look at it and think, "Gee, this is getting old." Food retailers and certainly America's Second Harvest are major contributors of food to the system.

Then where does food go? **The food goes out to the EFAP federal commodity distribution sites, food pantries.** We also send food to **residential shelters that are for homeless, to adult and daycare centers, to before-school and after-school programs** where school-aged kids get some food from us, although that's not a major source of food at this point, and out to **community kitchens, Poverello** being probably the largest one that we supply food to. We have 175 partners in our network, the **Emergency Food Assistance Network**, and we send that food out in Fresno, Kings, and Madera Counties. That's our America's Second Harvest territory, per se. As far as the growth over the last few years it was projected to be around 8 million pounds. We are actually at about **6.5 to 7 million pounds.** Projections can get really optimistic.

You've seen the growth and the amount of food distributed by Community Food Bank. In spite of that, we should not be at 6.5 million pounds. **We should be at 33 million pounds. That's four times what we're currently doing.** That's a pretty tall order because of the need. The need is that great in our community. **Half of the warehouse is empty.** There is a great irony within the system. Fresno County out of the ground grew \$4.5 billion worth of food. That's a phenomenal amount of food in Fresno County, yet there are a lot of hungry people in Fresno County. It doesn't make sense. It's a distribution issue. Farmers in many cases would be glad to donate food but they can't pay to have that product picked, packed, and sent to us because that's literally money out of their pocket. They don't have those funds. The food bank is actually **considering with the northern cluster of contracting with a labor contractor** so that when someone calls up and says, "I have 20 acres of oranges for you. You need to come pick them," we don't rely on a few volunteers but we literally send a labor crew out and pay them to pick the fruit because it would come to us in bins. Then under our hunger initiatives we'll solve the problem of what to do with it once we get it, but we have to grow significantly. That is a challenge for the food bank.

Why is it important and how is this going to help people? We surveyed last year and found out that the majority of reasons why people need food are recent unemployment with very high unemployment rates and long-term unemployment because there aren't a lot of jobs out there and people are rolling off the welfare rolls with the time limits and people are desperate. The working poor. **Fifty-seven percent of people at church pantries are working and just don't have enough money to make ends meet.** There are lots of reasons why people need the food in our community.

What are we going to do to address that issue? **Our goal is to improve the nutrition, health, and well-being of our community through the Emergency Food Assistance Network, those who actually distribute the food to those consuming the food, and our partners. Our partners are the Nutrition Network, Fresno Metro Ministry, donors, and other groups that we work with in partnership to achieve those goals, the gleaners, the Community Alliance with Family Farmers.** Those are our partners. The network is those who distribute the food on our behalf to the community. **Our goal for the next year is a 100% increase in the delivery of produce, dairy, and frozen product. We have to change the mix of the food available because we all know we have a health crisis in our community in terms of nutrition and we won't solve it if we're distributing poor-quality food.** The kind of food that gets into the system is stuff that will never, ever perish. It's like nuclear waste. That package of crackers will be there a million years from now perfectly intact because there's not enough nutrition in it. We must in the next year increase our volume by 1.4 million pounds. That's our goal. That's a lot. **We want to increase the number of people fed from 80,000 a month to 96,000 a month.** That's a lot of people in our community, but we could do triple that easily to meet the need. We want to increase customer satisfaction and accessibility of our Emergency Food Assistance Network because if our customer is not happy we're out of business and if we're not providing enough food or the quality of food that needs to be available people who are hungry and those who help feed them will go elsewhere to find the food, and we have to remember that that's our customer.

Let me go over some specific things that we're doing. I hope that within 30 days we'll have a celebration and open the cooler/freezer. We've ordered the cooler/freezer. **We will have a new cooler that will hold 40 pallets. We'll have a new freezer that will hold 20 pallets.** Our goal is to double the amount of fresh produce, dairy, and frozen product. We'll actually be able to probably quadruple the amount available in the community because, unfortunately, **we turn away millions and millions and millions of pounds of food** annually that we could get because our community hasn't had the vision or the political will to solve this problem because our elected officials don't believe there is a problem, or they think it's those people on that side of the railroad tracks who are just lazy. Those are the attitudes that we have to deal with. Of course, you know that. I'm preaching to the choir. **We're going to install sorting equipment.** We have available to us from a major packer some really good equipment so that if there are gleaners or if there is product in bins that's not packaged or has not been sorted it can be donated to us. We have the machine that will lift the bin, dump the product, start the whole conveyer belt routine, clean it, sort it, get it to the end, box it, and then we'll palletize it, then it will go out to the community. That won't happen until the fall because the packers are busy right now and they don't have the time, of course, to come over and help us install the sorting

equipment, but we will have it up this year along with the cooler/freezer. That will increase our ability to pump up the volume and the quality of food. We're doing more in terms of local food solicitation. We're doing a better job of getting food locally from those who have the food. **We're increasing our efforts at rescue and gleaning.** And I think more importantly, **we're really reaching out to develop collaborations in the community and diversity in our community** so that we are a part of every effort to alleviate hunger and address nutrition in our community. **We are increasing community education, outreach efforts, and, of course, advocacy and additional outreach to change community norms and address elected officials.** All that is part of what we're doing.

How can you make a difference? If you are a group interested in distributing food, **join the Emergency Food Assistance Network.** It's a simple application and it's easy to qualify. There is a \$100 annual membership fee to help alleviate cost and there is a shared maintenance fee. The good news about a shared maintenance fee is we're going to be much more creative and flexible with shared maintenance fee because historically the shared maintenance fee was either zero or 16 cents a pound. We're going to vary that and have a lot more zero and have some that is six cents a pound, eight cents a pound, and 12 cents a pound. **Certain things will be 16 cents a pound and actually that's going up to 18 cents July 1,** but there is much more flexibility now within our system based on need, demand, and availability so we can adjust that. So join the Emergency Food Assistance Network. We need more sites out in the community. Somehow you have to be connected to a public benefit organization. Certainly you can volunteer. We could not move 6.5 million pounds of food without hundreds of volunteers a month coming to the food bank to help sort, salvage, process food, and help us get it out. Money is very, very important. Often people want to give two cans of green beans and it costs them a dollar. That's wonderful. However, **if you give us the dollar we can buy \$16 worth of food for that dollar and get 40,000 pounds in a truckload from America's Second Harvest** versus spending a lot of time sorting a few cans of green beans. But we want those. Educate yourselves. Speak out in the community.

If you have a concern or question or need to get a hold of us don't hesitate to call. Go look at America's Second Harvest website at the exciting things that the national network is doing. Together we can end hunger in our community if we work closely together. Are there comments or questions?

Patty Minami from UC Cooperative Extension; Your hunger initiatives are very ambitious. How are you funding things like sorting equipment and transportation? The ongoing costs seems like they would be huge.

Tim Reese: It is huge. I'll share with you some of the challenges that we've overcome. When I arrived at the food bank mid January we had significant red ink. I was rather stunned. **We were in the hole in excess of \$160,000** in just six months of the current fiscal year. **I'm pleased to report that we'll end the year only in the hole about \$140,000.** Now, that's a huge change because the trend was a loss of \$25,000 a month. We certainly couldn't sustain that kind of loss so I've addressed that issue and we will have a balanced budget starting July 1, so we will be able to sustain the organization in terms of its fiscal health into the future. We've also gotten beyond the issue of the cooler/freezer. The great irony was that we had \$120,000 in the bank for the cooler/freezer and I thought, "What's the holdup here? We have the cash. It's in the bank. The need is great. It's well documented." We got creative and decided to call the cooler/freezer equipment and temporary equipment and we're installing it in the warehouse but it won't be attached to the warehouse. It simply is like moving in a desk, a chair, or a computer. It just happens to be a rather large box with an air conditioning refrigeration unit attached. That's how we've gotten around that issue. In terms of the growth I'm very happy to report, and although you may not like the company I'm happy that they're helping us out, **Altria has confirmed a \$50,000 contribution for a new refrigerated truck and that check will arrive in about three weeks.** We also had a golf tournament this year. It was the 9th year. It was unbelievably successful. The net was \$46,000. Not the total amount of funds raised, but the net. That tells me that people want to help the Community Food Bank and people want to help this community. We just have to reach out in partnership to bring people in and say, "Thank you, you're welcome, what can we do to help you help us?" Our goals will be achieved financially because of the increase in fresh produce, the increase in the cooling and freezing capacity, the increase in volume. We're changing the way we do our inventory. **We're no longer going to keep stuff in the**

warehouse for two years. If it's not out in six months we're getting rid of it because the way to turn it around is increase volume because we pay for the space, we pay for the staff, and we pay for the utilities already so I'd rather have four times the amount of food going in a two-year period versus something sitting there for two years because it's something nobody really wants. No one is going to pay 16 cents a pound for something nobody wants. Well, if nobody wants it it's free and if we can't give it away it will be a bonus to you in your shipment in your regular stuff and then you will give it away because there are some people who will want that stuff. **We are now committed to providing exceptional customer service:** exceptional because it's hard to define excellent. Exceptional customer service because the food bank forgot who the customer was. **We now have a food purchase program.** If your organization wants tuna I'm not going to say, "Oh, gee, the food bank doesn't have any. Sorry." I'm going to say, "How much do you need? Well, let's try and find it." What happens is this. The classic example is FEMA funding, and I was part of the problem for the food bank several years ago when I ran another organization. We lobbied to have the FEMA funding formula changed and give the money directly to the organization feeding the hungry rather than to the food bank because my organization in feeding the homeless could not get the food we wanted from the food bank yet our money was at the food bank. We'd say, "We want fresh milk, we want cheese, we want meat, we want vegetables, we want all this stuff." "Sorry, it's not available. Here's what's available: cookies, crackers, cracker crumbs, onion crackers, garlic crackers, salt crackers." We didn't want that. **So when the formula for funding changed and the dollars went to those agencies directly where do they get their food now? Not from the Community Food Bank. They literally go to WalMart, Sam's Club, Costco, or order it from a wholesaler, but the Community Food Bank can get that same food at 30% less.** If I can increase the amount of food available to feed my people by 30% because I'm buying it now at the food bank I'm going to do that, aren't I? So we now have a food purchase program. We put \$20,000 into a revolving account because that's about how much it costs to get a truckload of anything from the Midwest out here. We price it per can and if we can't beat Costco, Wal-Mart, and the wholesaler distributor locally by at least 25% we haven't done our job very well. **Often we can beat it by 50% or 75% because through America's Second Harvest we can get that truckload for next to nothing.** So that's part of our effort to change our customer service. Have the customer tell us what they want and let's go get it. We're also going to ratchet up the amount of federal commodities available because we get an allocation from the federal government based on demographics but then there are also bonus commodities. We get a fax just about every week that says, "Gee, the federal government went crazy and bought all this stuff and there is this bonus available." In the past we often, unfortunately, turned away bonuses because we didn't have the ability to handle it. We didn't have the cooler, didn't have the freezer. We turned away frozen meat and turned away a variety of things. Well, that's appalling to me. I just find that totally unacceptable, so we are gradually making efforts to be fiscally sound, improve customer service, and get better quality and more food out to the community.

Edie Jessup: I would like you to say something about your ability to get donated food. My understanding is that a lot of the 99-Cent stores and so forth are getting product that formerly went into the donated emergency food system.

Tim Reese: I was at the food conference in Chicago about a month ago and **there is a concern nationally about the amount of food available.** Because of changes in manufacturing, distribution, inventory control, and because in part the world's largest retailer has its own proprietary business practices, the amount of food available is decreasing. America's Second Harvest is seeing a downward trend of food available. That's of serious concern to the network. We have a goal of increasing by 100 million pounds the amount of food in the system in five years. That's a lot of additional food from new sources, particularly when the trend is the other direction. America's Second Harvest shared with me a vision for Fresno and I said, "Well, what's your vision for our community?" Isn't it interesting that outside people often have a better vision for us than we have for ourselves? They said, "The food bank in Fresno could be a great food bank." I said, "What do you mean, great?" "It could be a stellar food bank." I said, "Whoa, that's a big word. What do you mean by stellar?" He said, "You grow more food in Fresno County than anywhere else in the entire United States."

Everyone in this country needs that surplus food and if you have in Fresno a state-of-the-art warehouse distribution center you could be a regional hub not just for Fresno, not just for California, Arizona, and Nevada but for the Western United States. We could get food grown in Fresno that currently gets tilled under or fed to the pig farms and ship it nationally.” Now, when I asked where the resources were coming from to achieve this great vision they just looked at me, but that is the big-picture vision that that is possible in our community to solve several problems. Surplus food is a disposal problem in our community, air quality is an issue, and groundwater is an issue. Why till under all that food that’s sitting there rotting and adding to these problems if we can solve that problem for the farmer, for the producer, for the packer, for all of those folks? **There is more than enough food to feed everyone. It’s just an issue of distribution** and the will to make that happen. We’re sharing that vision to try and move forward. It will take time. Miracles don’t happen overnight. You’ve got to get there one step at a time.

Rev. Walt Parry: I forget the details on this but I know enough just to ask the question. **Some food leaves Fresno, is taken to Sacramento, and then comes back to Fresno. Would you explain what that’s all about?** It’s not a trick question because that’s all I remember about it. I don’t remember the answer.

Tim Reese: I know it’s not a trick question and it’s a tightrope response, so I’ll walk the line carefully. The federal government in its wisdom sometimes is at odds with itself and the community’s goals. A fairly large amount of money has been removed from the system and provided to an organization that distributes food to pantries across the state and it has removed those resources from the food bank network. It’s a little frustrating to the food banks because rather than resources coming to Fresno and then being distributed in Fresno by the Fresno food bank food literally gets transported to Sacramento at X cents per mile reimbursement by the federal government, warehoused for a couple of days, and then sent back. Well, if it’s fresh produce that has a three-day shelf life and you’ve sent it one day to Sacramento, one day in the warehouse, and one day back it’s not good anymore. There are challenges within the system to get beyond territoriality, power control. These are human issues, they’re agency issues, they’re what we deal with in life, that competition. Unfortunately, this isn’t a competition about inefficiency and a competition about keeping people hungry. We’re good at that. **Let’s have this be a competition about success and reducing barriers and increasing access and really coming together, not just in Fresno but statewide, to make maximum use of the resources available. So that is a challenge.** I don’t have a solution to it, but that is a challenge.

Participant question: I was wondering how the people get to know about the pantries and how the working poor and people can come to the pantries to receive food.

Tim Reese: That is a challenge in our community because there’s not an easy, quick answer to the question, “Where do I go if I’m hungry?” We don’t have a 24-7 hunger response in our community because if it’s Saturday night at 8 p.m. there is nowhere to go to get food. The only exception is Poverello. They will feed you a meal just about any time of day, but in the middle of the night there is no resource. People call our office often to find out where they can go to get food and it’s by zip code, but through the hunger fellows and through other cooperative initiatives we hope to be able to map where all of the pantries are and people could either go online or an automated phone response where you would enter your zip code and the phone message would tell you where the pantry sites within your zip code are. That is an ideal. It’s something we’re looking at. Through the hunger fellows we’re looking at the system and how we can improve customer service, improve access to food stamps, improve access to pantries, and reduce barriers. Those are some of the things that we’re trying to address to be able to get the information out to people because it’s so critical. One thing positive that’s going to be a solution to one of our recent challenges is with new refugees coming to Fresno the federal government is going to release additional commodity money, not product, but money, to the food bank. We have to connect with the right community agencies to purchase the correct product that the refugees would enjoy consuming. Long grain rice I can’t stand and I prefer the sticky short grain rice. That’s just what I grew up on. If refugees are given the wrong product they won’t eat that product, so we have to find the foods that are appropriate to that community, particularly

in the first year or so when they're adjusting to life in the U.S. and all of the changes that they will go through and the challenges that they will face so at least they can have their own comfort foods, fresh vegetables that are appropriate, that kind of thing.

Participant comment: I log onto your website on a regular basis and I haven't been able to access it lately. It would be so helpful to social workers, teachers, and nurses if they could log onto your website and find out a place to send a child or a family in their zip code.

Tim Reese: The website is a challenge. We are looking for a resource that could update and maintain the website. It could be a valuable resource. Right now it's antiquated and outdated.

Jerry Whitney, Bethany Inner City Church: As I minister to the hungry and to the poor the biggest thing for them not to come to us are the barriers that we put in front of them. We help about 120 people every week and we have a no barrier food program and for the longest time that's the thing that breaks my heart is that there is food out there that we could go and get that we're not getting. I'm here today and my heart is still broken because we talk about things and I think that if we could begin to treat those that we want to help with dignity and respect that would go a long way to solving the problems of hunger. As you talk about commodities we think about commodities. The people need food over and over again and we have so many barriers. As you progress and you want to do new things, my hope is that you can find ways to just destroy those barriers so that people that are hungry could just come to you because they're hungry. I don't know if you can address that. It wasn't really a question, maybe just an encouragement to really respect those that come to us and treat them with the dignity that they deserve because we don't know what their life situation is or anything like that.

Tim Reese: I absolutely agree with you and your sentiments. We don't directly provide the food. It's through the network members. I had a very good object lesson this last week. I went to an EFAP commodity distribution and volunteered to hand out the food and spent four hours there. That's reality. I haven't made it to a pantry yet, which is a different set of realities, but I was frankly appalled not with the clients but I was appalled at the paltry, piddly box of food being given. I thought, "This isn't enough. There is not enough nutrition or variety here. This is a pretense, a myth. It is an illusion of addressing hunger." I was very frustrated and I looked at the faces of people coming through the line and it slapped me in the face in terms of assumptions, in terms of my own myths, in terms of looking in the faces of those who are there who are hungry and who stand in line in the heat for an hour to get a few cans of stuff. It was very, very frustrating and we must do a better job of getting food out to people.

Edie Jessup: We really must, and I really appreciate the fact that you're talking about the dignity with which we should treat people. The other part is that there is plenty of food and we are withholding it, in fact, from people.

Jerry Whitney: You're more than welcome to come and see what we do. We do it Tuesdays at the **World Impact Center** from 11:30 to about 2 o'clock. What we do is a perishable food rescue. We go to the grocery store and we pick up the things that they're going to throw away. If you could imagine how much the grocery store throws away but because our resources are limited we can't buy it all. We're doing this, to be honest with you, on social security income that I receive and my church has finally started to help me out a little bit. But I invite anyone that wants to come and see what a little bit of dignity and self-respect can do, and I'm saying that with a lot of humility, but for doing it for six and seven years now I feel that we have treated them with respect and dignity and you talk about the faces of the people, it's a totally different thing where we're at. They come out with great joy, they come out with great happiness. Sometimes we have a little, sometimes we have a lot, but lives have been changed and lives have been transformed in ways that if I had more time I could share with you. I invite you to come and see what we do just so that maybe God can restore a little bit of hope in our hearts that it's not a failure to reach out to someone and offer them a loaf of bread or a glass of milk, whatever it is.

Sandy Dralle, Plant a Row for the Hungry: We have some fliers and one of the things that we have been doing is we've started asking people to plant rows and ended up gleaning. We're having an event on July 17th and one of the things we realized very early on was that we needed to put that this is a no sign-up event. Come and get fresh produce on that day and there is no sign up. The first year we did it we had a lot of reluctance from the people standing outside waiting to get it wanting to know if they'd brought the right credentials, so we really saw this as part of what we're doing. As far as increasing, some of the things we're looking at this year are to be able to better market to the right people to bring in more things and to do some TV advertisements and that kind of thing. We certainly have found that the key is getting more people to really understand that individuals actually can make some kind of an impact on bringing in more food.

Rev. Walt Parry: Previously the Community Food Bank was suggesting that we refer people who need food to the food bank and then the food bank would find a pantry that's available. How do you want to handle that from the standpoint of the food bank basically provides food to the pantries?

Tim Reese: Please have people call. The challenge is that we can answer the phone from about 7:30 to about 4:30 and if someone needs food or information earlier than that or later than that we can't respond to them directly. What I would like to do is have our pantry and EFAP site directory actually on a website so that anyone could log on and say, "In your zip code here is exactly where you go, here is the address, the phone number, the days they're open, the hours they're open, and what they distribute and the criteria." We're not there yet, so in the meantime have people call us. We'll get that information to them over the phone because it's updated on an every-other-week basis because sometimes it changes. A site, or the times, or the day will change, but we try and keep that really current. Every employee has that book at their desk and if I happen to get one of those calls I just flip over by zip code and say, "Here is where you can get what you need."

Rev. Walt Parry: Going back in time 10 or 15 years ago there was a problem that Second Harvest had a lot of non-nutritious food that they sent and if you were going to be part of Second Harvest you had to take the bad with the good. My question is has the proportion of the bad decreased or is it about the same and how do you deal with that sort of dilemma?

Tim Reese: It is a dilemma. The positive is everyone is talking about health and nutrition so that is a complete shift in attitude and the conversation, at least. **There is a recognition and an attempt by America's Second Harvest to increase protein available in the system specifically.** They started a seafood initiative to get more salmon. Most consumers don't understand canned salmon so we have to educate them that it is an extremely valuable source of protein, very valuable. People look at it and see that it has bones in it and it's pink and they think, "Yuck!" So part of it is education about what is available. But the system is demanding better quality food. There are huge discussions within the system about how to reduce the nonperishable snack foods and how to increase the staples such as beans, rice, vegetables, frozen meats, dairy products, and those kinds of things. We're not out of the woods yet with that issue but at least it's on the agenda and is being discussed nationally.

Participant question: Given the fact that obesity is such a huge epidemic, that it has been tied to hunger and to food insecurity, given recent studies, one out of Purdue that says that people who have nutrition education are better able to manage their food resources, I realized that nutrition education falls quite a ways down on the list of priorities when you have hungry children in your family, but at the same time there is a great deal of federal money that's going into this kind of initiative because of the health impact and the potential costs to society. Is Second Harvest able in some way to link into that pool of money?

Tim Reese: Well, I'm so grateful to Edie because she constantly kicks me in the right place to motivate me to seek resources that we can partner with to achieve our goals, part of which is the nutrition education component. America's Second Harvest is working to link the food distribution with those nutrition issues. A personal vision that's a dream of mine is **I would love to take the**

proverbial roach coach and literally convert it into a fresh produce coach, a pantry wagon that's mobile, refrigerated, has awnings that come down, a big table that folds down with the chairs attached, and distribute fresh fruits and vegetables out of that and at the same time while people are getting the fresh fruits and vegetables educate them about nutrition, sign them up for food stamps, have a one-stop shop that goes to the community, and while you're there let's have a cooking demonstration and sample some of this delicious stuff and learn how to use it. There is a whole generation that literally has no idea how to cook. You buy an avocado that's rock hard, you throw it away. No, you put it in a paper bag for a couple of days and then it's perfect. People literally don't know that. It's very frustrating.

Participant comment: I work at one of the EFAP sites at our church and the food bank use to provide recipes along with cans of salmon and unfamiliar foods to some people and people were very grateful for that.

Eddie Jessup: I'd like to ask you if we can get a hold of a copy of your pantry book and perhaps we can make that more available to some folks, knowing that it changes some, but that might be very helpful.

Tim Reese: Most of it is pretty consistent. Eighty-five percent of it doesn't change. We are always looking for new partners and we do monitor the partners we have because occasionally certain distribution sites get a little territorial about "their people" and "their community" and if you happen to come from the wrong side of the street **there are some access issues, so we're constantly monitoring to make sure that those sites are open to anyone within that zip code.**

Participant question: How many distribution sites are there in Fresno County?

Tim Reese: There are about 175 distribution sites. The EFAP is around 55 or 56. There are about 60-something pantries, and then some of that total includes some group homes, alcohol and drug programs, homeless programs, so those are really closed access points. They're not open access points. I struggle with that myself but those sites tend to be the higher volume purchasers of foods and we need a balance of those that foods are given to and those that foods are in a sense sold to because we've got to have some income strength, so there are challenges there. I'm very frustrated and we're monitoring closely our distribution sites because my personal philosophy is if I'm running a homeless program and I get federal funds to feed them as part of my budget and yet I'm getting food from the system subsidized how is that program using those resources? Is there a double dip? Are they using the food money in their budget for other purposes and using our system to subsidize their own budgets? Those are issues but the fact is that we've just got to get the food out to people who need it.

Eddie Jessup: Tim, I want to thank you so much. This has really brought the conversation far. I think that you would find that the folks in this room would be around to help you solve some of these issues. I'm glad we're talking about how the food gets to whom and that not all the sites are open so that we understand those things. Before we close I want to call your attention to the pink sheets that have been passed out. There are two fantastic events that are going to happen on the 29th right here in Fresno. One of them is the **Latino Public Forum that is going to be talking about breaking the barriers to fruit and vegetable consumption.** Patty Minami has the flyers in Spanish, also. And that same day at the same time there is another forum on **Building up Healthy Communities, Breaking Down Health Disparities.** It will be focused on addressing community factors to improve the health of communities of color. I really encourage you to get people to either of them because they're important conversations. As you leave, Barney is going to be out in the Parent Involvement Mobile Education Mobile and please do take a moment to tour.

Tim Reese: I just want to say bear with us because **we are down four positions and we won't be replacing any staff.** It is a challenge because we've got more work to do with fewer people to do it.

Eddie Jessup: It's very important for folks to know what you're doing. Thank you Tim.