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Excerpts and Summary of the 55th Community Hunger and Nutrition Forum

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FOCUS – *'05 State of the Plate in Fresno*

Compiled by Carey Berend and Jeremy Hofer

Hunger and Nutrition Forum

Wednesday, June 8, 2005

WHY 'STATE OF THE PLATE'?

Edie Jessup, Fresno Metro Ministry: Good afternoon. This is 55th Hunger and Nutrition Forum and we're really glad you're here today. We've titled today's forum the *'05 State of the Plate*. The foundation for this Forum is a new study and policy brief from California Health Interview Study (UCLA) on Hunger and Food Insecurity and how that relates locally to a Fresno Bee article that reported on the basic cost of living increases over the last few years here in Fresno. That article in the Bee compared food and medical costs and housing costs and a number of other selected items, all of which had gone up in Fresno. This forum will explore the issues of increased hunger and the increased cost of living and what the impact is on folks here in Fresno. Today we have a great panel to discuss what they see in the bread lines and soup kitchens here in Fresno.

NEW: CHIS/UCLA HEALTH POLICY BRIEF ON HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY IN CALIFORNIA

I want to call your attention to a couple of findings: The second page, in about the middle of the page, tells you a little bit about who's hungry and who's food insecure in Fresno. We will be talking about the fact estimating **100,000 people in Fresno County are food insecure at low-income levels**. You can compare it on the next page to the statewide number, which is at the very bottom. In this map you can see that the darker colors on this map are mostly in the San Joaquin Valley. They have added a couple categories this year. This map used to have Fresno as one of the very worst counties in California for food insecurity. This year it's reflected in the dark, dark green. *However, we have not improved any in the two years between studies*. Other places have gotten worse in the state and that throws us into a category that's a little different. Also the graphs show food insecurity by race and ethnicity Here in Fresno, you will see that hunger has gotten a lot worse for folks of color in Fresno as in the state, and there are certain adult groups that are more vulnerable. This new research is a wealth of information and I commend it to you. This data was released yesterday here in Fresno and at UCLA.

It is not our opinion. We have the research and now, we have the comparative data on hunger and food insecurity in California and specifically in Fresno and Tulare Counties.

Because we've not gotten worse I don't know that we can celebrate that **35 percent to 40 percent of the adults in our two counties below 200 percent of poverty don't know where the**

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next meal is coming from at times during the year or that our neighbors are going hungry. I do not think that is getting better. **Doing no worse than in 2001 is not doing better.**

What is food insecurity? **Lack of assured access to enough food for a healthy, active life through socially acceptable means is called food insecurity, and hunger is the result and lack of income and living-wage jobs ultimately are the cause of this.** The California Health Interview Study released by UCLA yesterday, which was Hunger Awareness Day, shows that there is a rise by 5 percent in food insecurity **in California and 2.9 million people do not have reliable access to enough food because of their economic resources.** The highest rates of food insecurity are in the San Joaquin Valley. **In Fresno at least 100,000 and in Tulare 55,000 of your neighbors are food insecure and at risk for hunger.**

The gravest concerns throughout California are the rise in hunger among these particular populations: adults 65 years and older – grandma and grandpa are hungry – and only in California are SSI recipients not allowed to participate in the Food Stamp Program even though they qualify by income. Another population that has increased in their food insecurity is low-income pregnant women; 40.7 percent of low-income pregnant women were food insecure in 2003. This results in not only poor health for mom but the impairment of another generation. Low-income homes with children; 38.3 percent are food insecure and almost 11 percent are experiencing hunger. Forty percent of unemployed adults are food insecure. Low-income wage workers are one of the fastest growing populations facing running out of food every month. And in an apparent racist turn here in Fresno, there is a rise in food insecurity and hunger in the Latino, African American, and Asian populations. All of these groups have worsened situations in the two years between 2001 and 2003. **Beyond the fact that this is unnecessary because there is plenty of food, hunger and food insecurity costs our society in medical care and costs our society in children not ready to learn in school and adults unable to work and contribute to the common good in our communities.**

The CHIS survey of food insecurity and hunger in California is **a monumental and reputable study recognizing hunger as a critical measure of health. It is the largest health survey ever conducted in any state, yet we know that it did not capture the real number of hungry people in our two counties.** The number of hungry neighbors is even higher than the 155,000 reported because they only interviewed people who had land line phones and spoke English. We must act on these findings. There are 155,000 and more adults at risk of hunger in Fresno and Tulare County plus farm workers who were not surveyed, plus monolingual other-than-English speakers who were not surveyed, plus children who were not counted in this study. We can't ignore this data. We can't ignore the real people, our neighbors, who are suffering. **This is not emergency hunger. It is a systemic hunger politically endorsed because we as a community allow it to continue.**

The food banks, **Community Food Bank in Fresno and Food Link Tulare County** and volunteers who work at pantries deal day to day with supplying food to hungry people through the Emergency Food System. They have the expertise; they know the extent of hunger and know what our local capacity for responding to that hunger is through the Emergency Food System. They do critical work for our communities in answering hunger but admit that they **only have enough food to respond to one-third of the need.** The CHIS data on food insecurity and hunger just released is a start on truly addressing the systemic issues that we must answer.

Both Fresno and Tulare County Boards of Supervisors have declared themselves food stamp friendly counties. That requires action on their part and a review of the Employment and Temporary Assistance office needs in order for them to enroll everyone eligible in food stamps. That would go a long way towards solving the month-to-month issues for low-wage, low-income people. Full enrollment in the Food Stamp Program would bring in \$89 million in federal money to the Fresno County economy. Why are we not doing that? Why are our federal child nutrition programs not covering all children with good food at school for breakfast, lunch, and after-school snacks? Why are we adults not seeing that all kids get summer lunch being served at 80 sites throughout the city and county starting yesterday? Why are there threats to cutting WIC and senior nutrition programs?

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We have work to do because the answer to the CHIS data on hunger and food insecurity is to assure that wages and supplemental programs, until families can have enough income to put food on the table themselves reliably, must cover a month's worth of living expenses and food for people.

So I ask you to join the food banks and Fresno Metro Ministry and the food pantries to assure that the federal, state, and local programs are sufficient for a healthy community. If you want more information on these programs join us here at the forums and at our Food Resources Task Group.

The *State of the Plate* here in Fresno can change. **Help us solve the problem revealed by the CHIS data by helping charitably with groceries for today and advocating for systems that do not discriminate, that do assure food on the table on an ongoing basis for all our neighbors through the normal access to healthy food by all and full utilization of federal nutrition programs.**

There is nothing more humiliating than an adult having to beg for food for their children or themselves. There is nothing more humiliating for my community than to withhold food and programs that can answer the hunger of my neighbors. Let's get busy. I really ask you to read it and begin to share the information, which is good information, with your colleagues and friends and work with us to work on this. Are there any questions?

Ken Clark, farmer in Fresno County: I have 20 acres of raisins. My brother here is Mike Moles, another Fresno farmer with 40 acres of vines. We came late. My first question is what does full enrollment mean that would bring in \$89 million in federal dollars?

Edie Jessup: That means those people who are eligible for food stamps –by income and resource eligibility. If everyone eligible in Fresno County were enrolled in food stamps, they would have food stamps to buy food. What a concept! So they would spend those food stamps on food at markets where they can spend food stamps. We are working on open-air markets so that the farmers actually can directly benefit from increased purchasing power. There is a multiplier effect from federal food stamp funds because increased retail purchases help create jobs. There are going to be more people buying food with full enrollment in the federal food stamp program. It's federal money. It is not local or state money. It is federal money and it's an eligibility program.

Ken Clark: Again, full enrollment means in order to get the \$89 million we need to have every single person that's eligible in Fresno County signed up? If there are people who are bashful or shy or ashamed to have food stamps we can't force them to sign up.

Edie Jessup: No, but right now we have **about half the people enrolled that are eligible** for food stamps. **If we were to look at food stamps as we should, as a nutrition program, a health program, there should be no shame in being enrolled.**

Ken Clark: I agree. I'm just trying to explain why the people who are hungry have not applied and how many people are we from full enrollment and how do we achieve that.

Julie Hornbeck, Director, Fresno County Employment and Temporary Assistance: Minor correction. There is state money in food stamps. There is no county money in food stamps. Currently, to answer your question, **we have over \$11 million a month being issued in food stamps.** I think we need to write UCLA and get the Fresno specific data because I do see that they did ask if they were on food stamps and I think we need to assess how many people who said they were food insecure actually got food stamps in this county. **We do have over 93,000 people in this county on food stamps and we have had a 28 percent increase in our non-assistance food stamps in the last few years.** I understand this is a state report, but I think to have it be validated for Fresno data is very important for us so we know who it is we're really dealing with. We've just gone

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through something for two years in a row trying to enhance the Medi-Cal-eligible children to be enrolled and found that they were already enrolled if they were eligible.

The SSI piece is a state decision where they cash out the SSI people. They get \$10 worth of food stamps. It's based on the premise that that's all the food stamps they would get based upon their SSI income. I understand where you're coming from, Edie. It's just that that is the premise that was originally done in 1976, but in 1976 or 2005 the minimum food stamp benefit is still \$10 and they really haven't changed anything in the Food Stamp Program since 1976 to change that. If you had somebody who was on SSI and that \$10 is keeping them on SSI, then they drop off of SSI to get the food stamps. That's a whole other thing. We need to really be careful what we wish for sometimes, but we do need to explore it and I know your interest in exploring it. At the Senior Resource Center they do take food stamp applications there and offer it to anyone who comes in and applies for Medi-Cal.

Edie Jessup: Great. That's terrific. **I want to say that the food stamp office, the Employment and Temporary Assistance office, has done huge work in the last couple years in terms of outreach and enrollment. They really have stepped it up and they have worked with community-based organizations.** If your community-based organization might be interested in being trained in taking the preliminary application for food stamps, you can contact me and I can get you lined up with **the E&TA** trainings with Johnie Belford. We hope to make a big difference that way and extend the power of the Employment and Temporary Assistance office in terms of getting folks enrolled. They have been wonderful with it. Their resources, though, are limited for a variety of reasons. I do want to call your attention, at the back of this CHIS report there is a Fresno County profile, and Julie, I'd be delighted to sit down and see if we can't get those numbers firmed up here. Thank you. Anything else on the CHIS data?

Anna Medina, Assemblyman Juan Arambula's Office: I just wanted to add something. Since you were talking about the enrollment, **there are a lot of myths out there, too, and a lot of people who are eligible are not applying because of those myths.** For example, some people believe if they apply for food stamps their kids are going to be taken away. So I think that there needs to be some kind of forum to inform those people and clarify those kinds of myths as well.

Edie Jessup: Yes. We work on that periodically with folks, that food stamps are not public charge – that is one of the biggest issues – and that you can apply for food stamps for your children even if you aren't the person wanting to apply for them. There are a number of things that are at issue with that. Thank you and we're glad that Assemblyman Juan Arambula is interested because we will come back to him to help with food stamp issues.

Phoua Moua will talk very briefly about the federal Summer Lunch program. That is an excellent way for families to extend their budgets by making sure that their kids are getting lunch.

SUMMER LUNCH: SCHOOL'S OUT...WHO'S EATING?

Phoua Moua, Fresno Metro Ministry: In your packet is a spread sheet on Summer Lunch sites in Fresno. **The good news about this is that we have increased by a couple sites this year from last year and some of the sites are expanding participation.** One of the important things about Summer Lunch is that a lot of our kids in schools get free or reduced meals during the school year, but if they are out for the summer they don't have any way of getting breakfast or lunch. **The Summer Lunch Program is a federal program that helps cover that gap in the summer to provide meals for kids who are not in school. Every child from 0 to 18 is eligible to eat at all of these sites, no questions asked.** If you are a community-based organization that works with children, if you're just a person who has neighbors that have children that are looking for things to do or places to eat in the summer, this is a great resource. I also have this list electronically. If any of you want it on your desk top I'm willing to e-mail it to you. Just contact me or come up to me and give

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me your e-mail addresses. The printout version is sorted by zip code so if people ask about free meal programs you can ask them what zip code they're in and then hopefully that will narrow down what site is closest to them. We're also working with Assembly Member Juan Arambula's office on a PSA on Summer Lunch. The two main sponsors for Summer Lunch are Fresno County EOC and Fresno Unified School District. Fresno Metro Ministry is doing referrals as well as the Fresno Unified School District for any kind of further information on any of these sites. You can also contact our legislators' offices.

This spread sheet shows the site, the address, the sponsor and their phone number. It shows the days of the week the site is serving Summer Lunch, the date they begin and end Summer Lunch, and if they serve one or two meals daily (Breakfast/Lunch/Evening).

Any kind of extra food that anyone wants to donate to any of these sites, all would be appreciative of it. The food program is only for children, so parents that are coming that bring their kids to the program can't have access to the meals that are served. We've got some great examples in previous programs where raisins or fruits have been donated, and those are what the adults or parents can eat during that time.

We have identified that if there is an activity that's going on at site rather than just serving the meals, the participation of the kids is better. If any of you want to volunteer to work at one of these sites by bringing in new activities, that's certainly welcome. Sponsors and site coordinators at the Summer Lunch Summit asked if people wanted to volunteer to provide activities with children. Contact information on this list --go ahead and call them if you are interested in volunteering.

2005 THE STATE OF THE PLATE **Food distribution in Fresno**

Jeremy Hofer, Fresno Metro Ministry: I've worked with Phoua and Edie Jessup on the Hunger and Nutrition Project specifically on a Community Food Assessment. Part of the Fresno Community Food Assessment is a look at pantry sites. At Metro we advocate for better food access in our communities so that people that are hungry or food insecure have a chance to get food and it's readily accessible to them. **One of the ways that people can get emergency food is through the food pantry network of which there are two different types of sites.**

Before I get into the description of the sites, I had an interesting call this morning. I got a call this morning and this woman was calling on behalf of her father who had seen a news program the night before about hunger in Nevada and she was wondering what we were doing about hunger in Nevada. I couldn't imagine where they had seen that we were helping the people in Nevada so we kind of brainstormed and then I remembered that at the press conference somebody had mentioned *hunger in the valley*, and *hunger in Nevada* kind of sounds the same, and so out of that I figured out that **what she was actually calling about was her father was hungry and needed help with getting food on a regular basis on a fixed income.** So I pulled out the Fresno County food pantry list, which the Community Food Bank has helped us compile, and found her zip code. In each zip code there are two different types of sites. There are **USDA Commodity Distribution Sites** (which Dianne Hanslicek will describe how these sites specifically function during the panel discussion). There are also **general Food Pantry sites**. As a rule, advocates should guide people to the USDA commodities sites because people can go once a month to these sites. They have to go to their zip code at least to start. They go to their zip code, they bring a photo ID, and they bring some mail and they get a card and then they can keep coming back. I gave her the USDA site for her zip code and then I also gave her a couple general food pantry sites. I asked her to call me back if those numbers didn't work because we're trying to better our list. She called me back, and for all of the numbers that she had called either nobody had picked up or they were for a completely different zip code than what was listed. All of this is a roundabout way of saying that **we need to better our system of referral for these food pantries. As part of our food assessment we're finding that a lot of the pantries don't refer people to the Food Stamp Program, they're not referring people to other local**

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programs that all could be integrated. I'm asking that if you work with a pantry and are interested in helping out put a little "P" for Pantry with a circle next to your name on the sign in sheets. Metro will contact you about your food pantry to ask you some questions, specifically, the questions that are in this Food Pantry Inventory that is in your packet. Some of these questions are about what the requirements are that people have to show to get food at your pantry. And we need to double check what zip code you serve, so that we can continue to update these lists, and better refer people who are hungry to your site.

Now, let's talk about different food distribution methods. We have **Jeff Garner from Catholic Charities who have a Food Pantry and Commodity Distribution; Doreen Eley from the Poverello House, they do hot meals; Dallas Blanchard is here from Food Not Bombs and they do hot meals; and Diane Hanslicek, who will talk to us about USDA Commodity Distribution**

Tell us a little bit about your programs. **Thinking about who are these people that need food, what are the issues, what are other kinds of issues that they face in their lives that really impacts this need, and what's your capacity, where are you at with serving these people, what are your limits and requirements of people that are seeking food, and how do you work with different agencies to better this system?**

Jeff Garner, Catholic Charities: I'm the manager of the Family Resource Center at Catholic Charities. The Family Resource Center started this program two years ago to tie in our social services under one umbrella because before the Family Resource Center was established the food distribution program was a program on its own. We almost had a revolving door attitude with how we served our clients. The clients came in, got food, that was it, and then we would see them again the next time their time to get food was up. **So the Family Resource Center combined all of our social services together and we advocate to our clients the other services that are available beside the services that they came for today at our office.**

The food program at **Catholic Charities provides food for home preparation and for homeless clients that can use the food right away.** Right when they step off of our site they can begin to eat the food immediately. **We distribute the food once every four months to clients.** The requirements that we have for the clients is they **provide a proof of ID and a proof of address.** The proof of ID is needed for each family member in the household. We do work with the clients. If they don't have the information we go ahead and serve them and we let them know next time they come back to please provide the information because our goal is not to police them. It's to provide food. That's the bottom goal, but it *helps to gather that data for all the grants that we write and the important data that we need to collect so that we can address these issues.* When clients come in for food we also, as I said before, advocate to them. **We make sure that they know about the USDA commodity program, which we are a site as well, and we do that every Monday from 9 to 1 o'clock. We also let them know about Fresno County food stamps and we are helping them fill out the application at our site.** We also are **promoting the Summer Food Program.** We've had a lot of clients interested already in that. We also **let them know about the other food pantries.** We **also let them know about the Salvation Army and Poverello House.** We try to give them as many resources as possible. That's what we hope to accomplish.

A lot of people ask why we serve our clients just once every four months because the food that we do provide them is intended to last for 12 to 15 meals. The food that we provide them is *spaghetti sauce, spaghetti noodles, rice, beans, soup, nonperishable items that can last and sustain for a long time with 12 to 15 meals,* which isn't a long time, especially if they have to wait every four months. **The reason why we have that four-month policy is just because of the food supplies that we are able to garner in (not enough food for the need).**

Half of our food we purchase, half of the food is donated by local farmers, by other food banks, and also by vendors who give us a very good deal on the food items that we purchase. At Catholic Charities now we work on a case-by-case basis. The **client comes in either with a referral or they come in with an emergency that we deem needs service right away we will go**

head and serve them before that four months because we don't like to turn anyone away without food. You might think that giving the clients that knowledge that if they came in and requested and told us about their emergency that they would get food that they would abuse that system. Actually, they're really good about that and they don't. **Most of our clients understand the four-month process and they understand that we have a limited amount of food, but clients are also starting to understand that they can come into us and they can explain their story and they can let us know their situation and then we can reach out and help them through our services in house and through our services to other agencies.**

Last year we served **36,000 unduplicated clients**. Sixty-seven percent of these were Hispanic, 53 percent were females, and our largest age group that we serve is between the ages of 18 and 34. Looking at the data from the last two years, the number of children served has increased slightly, but our numbers have pretty much stayed the same, **3,000 unduplicated clients a month**. Unduplicated clients are clients that come for service once. First-time service for that calendar year we count as an unduplicated client. If they come every four months that's three times a year.

A growing need that we see has to do with the refugee resettlement, as we have that program as part of Catholic Charities. A lot of the refugees as they come in for orientation will come down to our food pantry and receive food. **The food that we have is not culturally sensitive to their needs and we learned that very soon.** We thought that we were going to give them noodles and things, but there are a certain type of noodles that they prefer and that they are used to eating, so **right now we are in the dilemma of trying to find that type of food at an affordable price because it doesn't match the rest of the distribution that we give out**, so if we buy things in lower quantities the price is going to go up and storage is an issue. We have been working with other food banks and pantries and grocery stores to try to find out where they can get these items at an affordable rate and **even wrote out food vouchers for them so they can go and purchase these items**. Our capacity to meet the need of hunger is a capacity that we are working on. I'm always willing to work with Fresno Metro Ministry or other food banks to address these needs.

I think Catholic Charities is in a state where we can expand our services, where we can expand our staff and our volunteers and our donations coming in. We would love to be the leader in the forefront of helping clients get as much food as they possibly can.

One thing that just came across my desk a couple weeks ago, **we applied for a grant with Feed The Children out of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. They provide free food, and the only thing is you're responsible for picking up the food that they are able to distribute. Well, their nearest distribution center is in L.A., and we cannot afford to send our truck down there to pick up the food.** When we heard that we were approved for this to be a partner we were delighted, but then when we heard it was in L.A. we sort of scratched our heads trying to see who we could reach out to, either if it means sharing a tractor trailer with another agency or to look into a trucking company and using their travel and their gas as a donation. We are always searching for partnerships and always searching for donations. I think what we are able to provide in the future that we do have with Catholic Charities is very uplifting and **I think that our clients can benefit a lot more than what we are really offering them right now. There is always more to do.** So thank you for your time and if there are any questions I'll take them.

Participant question: Because you're called Catholic Charities...we're called a youth center and we're a shelter for abused children. **Do you ever have folks because of the title think that you have to be Catholic to get the services?**

Jeff Garner: Yes, we do. Some come in and say, "I'm not Catholic, can you still help me?" and they are afraid that because of their faith, with the name being Catholic Charities. Of course we help them. They do not have to be Catholic. I think people might assume.

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Ken Clark, farmer: With all the trucking companies in Fresno County there's no connection right now with any trucking company with respect to the L.A. connection for Feed the Children?

Jeff Garner: Currently what we have looked at, no, there has not been.

Ken Clark: What would be the pickup day each month, or would it be every month or every two weeks for picking up food in L.A.?

Jeff Garner: It's our option. For us it could work once a month.

Ken Clark: They have a warehouse there?

Jeff Garner: They have a warehouse, a distribution center.

Ken Clark: So all that's needed is for someone to approach a trucking company, find someone that goes to L.A., maybe comes back empty and could pick up food?

Jeff Garner: Yes.

Ken Clark: Well, boy, we should work on this right away if you've already been accepted for the grant. I mean, that's an understatement, I realize. But aren't we the center of trucking in California? We're the capital. We have to do this, then, right away. What is your phone number, sir?

Jeff Garner: 237-0851.

Ken Clark: Well, I'd like to tackle this right away.

Jeff Garner: Good. This is something that we could definitely share with other food pantries. If you think of a large tractor trailer there is a lot of food we can get in. We would love to partner with other agencies.

Jeremy Hofer: Catholic Charities is an example of a site that is both a general Food Pantry and a USDA Commodities site.

Next up we have a hot meals program that is international, I think, but in Fresno it has been going for quite a while. Dallas Blanchard tell us a little bit about Food Not Bombs.

Dallas Blanchard, Food Not Bombs: Hello. As our name implies, we are a political activist group that works on the issues of war and poverty. **Food Not Bombs is an all-volunteer movement** which has no formal leaders and strives to include everyone in its decision-making process. Each of the groups **recovers food that would otherwise be thrown away. We do this at farmers' markets, a few grocery stores, and some local bakeries.** Just a very briefly, Food Not Bombs has been around for 25 years just last month and it has grown **to hundreds of autonomous chapters all sharing free vegetarian food to anyone without restrictions.** We usually share food in city parks or on street corners and we have chapters in North America, Central America, South America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Asia, and Australia. **In Fresno we've been around for nine-and-a-half years now. We share food on Saturdays and Sundays. Saturdays it's at Roeding Park. On Sundays it's at Courthouse Park downtown. Over the nine-and-a-half years we've shared 90,000 meals.** That's kind of a rough estimate, but we share **about 9,000 meals a year.**

Our meals are treated as a picnic, not as a soup line. We try to blur the lines between those who are sharing the food and those who are coming to eat. We all eat together. In addition to

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our regular meal sites we do special events throughout the year where we share food at the Earth Day Celebration and the Martin Luther King march. We've done the Cesar Chavez march in the past in addition to peace marches and protests. We share food with about 100 to 150 people on Saturdays, about 30 to 40 people on Sundays.

Some of the trends that we've seen recently are that we're tending to get more families, the working poor, a few more children, not just your stereotypical homeless folks. Also, there used to be a larger disparity from the beginning of the month of those coming to eat with us compared to the end of the month. It used to be about 75 people at the beginning and about 150 at the end. That's kind of narrowing. We're seeing more people throughout the month. We're also seeing people that are getting more food than they used to. They were getting smaller portions before.

About 90 percent of our food is donated. The funding that we get is all through private donors and out of our own pockets. Our capacity limitations are mainly volunteers. It's a little bit financial, but for the most part it's volunteers. If we had more people volunteering we could expand to more days. Like I said earlier, there are no limits or requirements. We have had city council members eat with us down to people living in the bushes.

As far as other agencies that have worked with us either on an ongoing basis or in the past, we've had a **free medical clinic. We distribute food like bags of produce. We do clothing and bicycle repairs. The Health Department comes out on occasion and we provide drug treatment referrals for folks.** That's about it. Any questions?

Again, we serve on Saturdays from 1 to 2 at Roeding Park. On Sundays it's either 3 or 3:30 at Courthouse Park near the Martin Luther King statue.

Jeremy Hofer: I've participated in the Sunday group, and there's nothing like hanging out with a bunch of people listening to music and cutting vegetables for a good time.

Our final speaker is **Diane Hanslicek** who has been very active in a number of ways in the food community here, but today she is going to be talking about her work with a USDA commodity site at Unitarian Universalist Church.

Diane Hanslicek, Unitarian Universalist Church USDA Commodity Distribution Site: We have been doing a USDA food distribution at the Unitarian Universalist Church on Millbrook, 93726 since 1994. This is our 11th year. We started the first year the food bank started distributing the food. **Most of our clients are elderly, mostly women. We have an Armenian church, a Serbian church, and a Russian Orthodox Church near us. A lot of our clients get information from their churches to come to us. Many of our clients are the same ones we have been seeing for these 11 years, although we are starting to get younger Asian, African American, and Hispanic families with children.**

Our distribution is the fourth Thursday of each month. **The fact that it's located at the end of the month means we get quite a few people if they haven't been able to collect at their site in their zip code.**

With their card for their USDA food, they can go to any location and so we get referrals from other locations as well. **People have to sign up once a year for USDA food. They have to show a picture ID and proof that they live in the zip code. Once they have that card they bring it each month, they sign up how many people are in their household, their address, and we mark their card that they've gotten it for that month.**

We've kept records since 2002. Our highest numbers during that time was for 2002-2003. **We were getting 240 households per month, which represented 750 people in those households. Currently the numbers we are getting have gone down. I think it's partly because we are getting fewer items in USDA, fewer amounts of fresh food, fewer amounts of meat. We used to get around ten items. We're currently getting eight to nine items a month.** After we've gotten only eight items we will see our numbers go down.

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Occasionally we get homeless people. They cannot utilize the food that we're given unless they have a way to cook it.

We usually get noodles or rice, a can of spaghetti sauce or tomato sauce, fruit, a can of vegetables, trail mix or dried fruit, dried milk or cereal, and sometimes peanut butter. Our church has its own pantry. We can utilize what's left over in the pantry. **We also provide used clothing, children's books, and thanks to Fresno Metro Ministry's resource book, we can refer people if they ask questions about where they might get other resources.** One of our clients is in a wheelchair, has lived in the same home for 17 years and she came to us because she was going to be evicted and did not know where to go, so we were able to get her some help on that.

There are income guidelines for the food that we give out under USDA. One way that food distribution has been improved is that people don't have to bring proof of their income. They self-verify. They tell us whether or not their incomes are below certain amounts. *For example, in a household where there are four people if their monthly income is below \$2,356 they would qualify for a bag of food.* **It used to be that if you had four people in your household you could get one bag of food, four to nine people you could get two bags of food, and over nine people you would get three bags. Those numbers have changed, so if you have up to five people you get one bag, six to ten people you get two bags, and over ten you get three bags. In that way the amount of food that we're able to offer people has not improved.**

Our numbers have gone down, as I said. Part of the reason, I think, is that our clientele is elderly, the bags are heavy, and transportation is an issue. We do deliver food. If someone lives in our neighborhood and they have no way of coming we will deliver food.

The food bank used to pick up the food that was left over. They're no longer able to do that, so **we have started a partnership with Saint James, who has a food pantry, and what we can't store for our food pantry they come and pick up and they are able to distribute that.** When we move in a couple of years out to a different zip code Saint James is interested in taking over our food distribution, so it's a good partnership.

We do have a list of sites where we can refer people. If they don't live in the 93726 zip code we can give them a bag of food one time and we can tell them where to go the following month. That has changed also and it's an improvement. **We do get questions about Summer Lunch Program and food stamps. The food bank has been helpful as has Fresno Metro Ministry so that we can answer those questions.** I think that's all. Does anybody have any questions?

Daytra Latin, Community Food Bank: Over the last couple of weeks I have received the responsibility of USDA Commodity Distribution. So the amount of bags that people get for the size of family-- look for me to change that. **That was a rule that came from who knows where, but it didn't come from USDA, so we are looking at changing that so that we can give out more bags of food to folks than what we're giving out now.**

In addition to that, hopefully for June, you will receive more than the eight to nine items. I believe I did ten items or more, and then what we're going to do is add to that.

Part of the difficulty that we have at the food bank with the agencies that we do work with is **storage capacity. We have a lot of produce sitting in our warehouse that we can't move because our sites do not have cooler storage. With our USDA sites what we're going to do is on the day of Commodity distribution, if they can take the product, is drop off fresh fruits and vegetables that we do have so it doesn't go to waste so we don't end up pig farming it.**

I do want to let you know that we're going to have a training coming up in July or August with USDA so we can get everything solidified and I look forward to that so that we can do a better job with USDA Commodity food.

Diane Hanslicek: I encourage anybody who is not part of this USDA Commodity program. It's a wonderful way to be able to assist people in your zip code and I appreciate the efforts the Community Food Bank has made.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PANELISTS:

Larry Gray, Administrator of Rescue the Children and Craycroft Shelter in Fresno: I'm going to put the food bank on the spot. A couple of months ago we talked about pooling all the agencies to buy food. Is that still in the works? We talked about a joint venture.

Daytra Latin, Community Food Bank: We do have the Food Purchase Program for agencies. Catherine McCarthy is our food purchaser. Whatever you need for Craycroft, give her a call and she'll get the best deal on it. When I was listening to Jeff about buying noodles and stuff like that, we get an awesome deal on that because we're able to purchase it by the truckload and it drops the rate down considerably.

Edie Jessup: Thank you. **As many of you know, there is a new Director at the Community Food Bank. Sarah Reyes, our former State Assembly person, is the new director, and she is really open and is trying to find new ways to get things happening.**

I know in the past has been a difficulty with purchasing of food and complaints of co-oping agencies about not being able to get food for emergency distribution, but the food banks are set up to be that incoming place for bulk food at a good price and to distribute the food effectively. In the past I know that **if the FEMA money that comes into this county were used and pooled through the Community Food Bank, we would have a lot more food available to distribute through our pantry sites.** (We need to understand that the FEMA money for emergency food in the last two to three years has been decreased every year by \$300,000 so we're close to a million dollars less than we used to get in this county to buy emergency food). If the agencies receiving FEMA funding would co-op through the Community Food Bank, we would have more food available to distribute to hungry Fresnans. Sitting down and having a pow-wow about that and finding ways to utilize that FEMA money that is left for us to buy emergency food would be a really great plan for our county and would expand what we could do. Metro is looking forward to everyone doing that. The Community food Bank is going to have an Agency meeting in the near future. We hope this is on the agenda. Are there other questions?

Laurie Labbit, PAR and Master Gardener: **Plant a Row for the Hungry is a cooperative effort between the Community Food Bank and Master Gardeners of Fresno County.** In the summer we have a designated day that's a major event for us that's called **SOS for PAR.** That flyer is in your packet. If you have ways to **help us publicize this either to people who have extra fruit or vegetables in their home gardens or small farms or to people who would come that day to pick up fresh produce.** If you have ways to help us publicize this I'd really appreciate your putting it in newsletters, putting it on calendars, taking extra fliers that we have here today. Plant a Row for the Hungry is really a people to people project. In addition to that one event **we designate certain food pantries and distribution sites in the community that we have reliable information about, and these are the ones that we publicize as PAR pantries and ask home gardeners to take even small amounts to these sites whenever they have extra.**

I know that on a Tuesday morning I can take any extra zucchini, tomatoes, anything I have in my yard that I'm not going to be able to use to Hope Lutheran Church. They distribute it immediately to people who are in line waiting for the packaged foods that are part of the distribution, and it's a very rewarding kind of thing to do because people really are very pleased to get that addition to their diets. If you are a person who grows vegetables, has a fruit tree, has a neighbor whose fruit tree might produce extra this summer, would you please take one of these. We also list our number on there so if one of these sites is not convenient for you please call us and we'll connect you with a summer food program of some kind so that food that could be used for good nutrition for people doesn't go to waste.

Edie Jessup: Thank you for that effort. That connecting to places that can take the food immediately and get it distributed to people immediately is really important. I'd like to make two comments on the great presentations we heard from the three different kinds of food programs today.

Practically everyone said something about how it is you're going to hook food up with sites that can distribute it, and also hook people up to sites where they can get food when they are in need of it. We have the formation of a good solution indicated. **We have an 800 number that is being used for food stamp referral, and that number through September is available. We're going to be exploring with the food bank and others having an 800 number where people can call for referral that will hook people up for different sites. It will also be able to hook people up who have produce that could get distributed and so forth.** We're looking at a comprehensive kind of number for that so that everyone would have that one number.

The other thing that I think that we're finding as we visit different pantries and different distribution sites, **it is hard knowing**, for instance, that Food Not Bombs is in Roeding Park in the afternoon on Saturday. **It's hard to keep that information of specific days and times for food access in our head, and hard to refer people to it. Many places aren't open, for instance, after work. We know that there's a huge rise in the working poor.** It was mentioned by Catholic Charities, and I think that Dianne is seeing that also with the USDA Commodity Distribution.

Emergency and Commodity food distributions aren't happening after work for people. The other thing would be on the weekends when people aren't working, on a Saturday or Sunday, having some place that was open. **There is no pantry open that I know of on Saturday or Sunday.** Metro frequently gets calls about 4 o'clock on Friday from people who have been trying to find some place to get food; they haven't accomplished that, and **they're going into the weekend of two or three days with no food and there's really no place to refer them to.**

We have talked to some congregations. **We would very much like to look at finding a place that was available to be open and to organize volunteers or agencies that could rotate people through and make sure that there was a place where people could actually go in real time to get food for right now and then get referred to these other places that could be a support to them.**

So those two things, a phone number that really connects people and works most of the time and also a place where people actually could get food right away and then get referred to the sites in their neighborhood.

Rev. Walt Parry, Executive Director, Fresno Metro Ministry: I have a question for the farmers. When you have surplus raisins is there some sort of a system that we can develop where, one, we can get those raisins out to people so it's feeding people but at the same time you get some money back for it? What would you envision as a way of utilizing your raisins long-term for people that need it and so that you get some benefit from it?

Ken Clark: I'm not sure. I wasn't worried about getting money back for the raisins that I want to donate, but **if there is a possibility for any money to be refunded or to pay for any portion of the raisins then I think I could probably bring in more growers.** We have an entity near Kerman, 22 growers. We're in a battle with the industry right now trying to clear through the courts that farmers in Fresno County who produce raisins have the right to sell their entire crop without putting aside a reserve. The marketing order is being twisted right now by the packers and by the RAC so that producers who want to pack their own fruit have to set aside a reserve if it's a reserve year. I don't know if you know how the industry works, free tonnage and reserve, free tonnage being the raisins that farmers are paid for when they deliver their crop. If it's 70 percent that year, that is all the raisins they need. Then 30 percent of all the crop goes into a reserve, which the packers have basically been stealing from the growers to use in an export program where they sell raisins overseas for \$500 a ton to Hong Kong and the price here in California this year is \$1200 tons. If there is a reserve the packers can sell a ton in Hong Kong for \$500, come back to the RAC and get cash if the RAC has

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cash or raisins to make up the difference between that \$500 and \$1200 price. So the growers who contribute to the reserve, and that's been everyone since 1995, have not been able to get any money for their reserve. In fact we just had a hearing in Fresno this year – I'm also an attorney so I was a lawyer on the case – where a complaint was filed by the RAC against Marvin Horne and his wife Laura and their in-laws and, Raisin Valley farms – I'm one of the 22 growers – which is our packing facility on Lassen Ave., and we have 22 growers and we do about 3,000 tons. **Well, I'd like to bring those 22 growers in Raisin Valley Farms into this and expand beyond that because I'm an alternate on the RAC also on the board and I would bring this up at an RAC meeting.** A few years ago when we had a 400,000-plus ton crop when the raisin crisis started four years ago the RAC donated 1,000 tons to a food program. They were going to donate 500. I got up and argued, "We have all these raisins. Now is the time to donate. Cast your bread upon the water," so they went to 1000 tons. **There are raisins every year that can be donated and they're being donated out of the county right now. If we've got a need here, obviously it seems like it should start in our county and spread out, so I'm very interested in bringing this to the 22 growers that are trying to pack their own fruit 100 percent in Kerman. The gentleman that I'm going to contact today about this is Marvin Horne. His cell phone number is 217-3334. I would like anyone in the room who wants to try to get more dried fruit to contact him directly and tell him Ken Clark gave his name and number because, believe, me, I want to get the industry involved.**

My Christian brother here, Mike Moles, farms 40 acres. I farm 20. I produce between 20 to 30 tons a year. Mike probably does 60 at least or more per year. I have some fruit right now in 30-pound boxes at Raisin Valley Farms. **I want to go pick up 20 boxes at least today, 20 30-pound boxes, 600 pounds, and take it somewhere today where the need is greatest.** I've been donating 6 boxes at a time to Poverello House once and the Fresno Rescue Mission two or three times this year, but I'm trying to tithe for the Lord out of my crop so I still have raisins to deliver this year. I only produced 12 tons last year, but I still need to donate at least 2,400 pounds this year so I want to do another 600 today and then I'm still not at 2,400 yet to do my ten percent of my crop, which is what my goal is personally. It's the least I can do. I think a lot of growers would want to do this.

Eddie Jessup: Thank you.

Mike Moles: They make different packages, half-ounce, ounce-and-a-half packages, one pound, so on and so forth, but for distribution purposes **what would be an adequate approximately poundage that could be distributed?**

Eddie Jessup: I think that there are a couple people that we want to sit down and talk to about that, and one would be the **Community Food Bank because they have an idea of that kind of capacity so that it would get out to all the individual Food Pantries.**

Ken Clark: What, 10,000 pounds or 100,000 pounds?

Eddie Jessup: It would make a big difference to be getting raisins into the emergency food stream, particularly here in Fresno, and I will feed your desire to do this. **In Fresno County we have one of the highest, four times the national iron-deficiency anemia rate, and raisins are just a lovely antidote to that and so we should be getting it out to our kids.** Because there are a variety of places and ways to do this I think talking to the Food Bank is an important start on it, and then we need to talk to people at EOC and perhaps the School Districts and so forth about how raisins could work into snack programs, into breakfast programs. My friend Lucy Hicks from California Food Policy Advocates can talk to you about that because we're looking at how we can co-op some of this fresh produce and get it into schools.

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Ken Clark: I do know a couple of key people in the industry that are really large and I think they have big hearts too and they're really interested in their commodity that they grow and farm and pack.

Edie Jessup: **Jeremy, will you set up a meeting between these folks and the several folks that need to get in right away so that we can begin to get the right answers for you about exactly where and how would work best?**

Ken Clark: I just want to mention that my raisins are packed in 30-pound boxes. The raisins have been completely cleaned and approved and micro-inspected, so if they were delivered to any agency I would imagine the boxes would be cut open and then there would be *a need for maybe zip-lock plastic bags. It becomes more expensive, obviously, because of the packaging to get them packaged and delivered. If they were donated in at least this bulk we could have the bags and they could be passed out at the time with people scooping their own raisins out of the box.*

Edie Jessup: They could, and someone we would need to **talk to would be Gary Joseph at EOC Food Services, who provides food for Summer Lunch**, about how they could manage to do that. I think that they could. They have a vocational training program and so that might work to put those two things together. This can happen, folks.

Jeremy Hofer: I just wanted to mention that **Metro has a Food Resources Taskforce that has been going for a couple of years.** People such as the Community Food Bank, farmers, people that are interested in Farm to School, a number of people in this room have participated in. **That sounds like a good focus of a meeting coming up, bringing you to the table and bringing other people that have the answers to your questions and I think you have the answers to theirs,** so I'll work on putting that together.

Edie Jessup: Thank you all very much. We appreciate the good and faithful work that you do day in and day out. See you next month on the second Wednesday.

Today's Packet Includes:

Fresno Metro Ministry has an annual meeting coming up and you are welcome to join us; Agenda; June Calendar of Metro Food and Nutrition meetings; a Report from folks who went to the state capitol on May 10 for Hunger Action Day. Forty-seven people from Fresno went on the bus and talked to our legislators about hunger and issues that they face every day. A report from the Regional Summer Lunch Summit; list of current Summer Lunch sites. CHIS Health Policy Research Brief on Food Insecurity and Hunger. Articles by the Fresno Bee on Summer Lunch, Making Connections, resource form for new agencies, or if you have changes. Inventory of Fresno Food Resources Survey. A flyer for the **8th Annual 4th of July Celebration of our Diversity**; Plant a Row for the Hungry (if you have extra, that fruit and vegetables can be distributed to people who are hungry, this is a way to share). Evaluation form.

Thanks for the great healthy food from EOC Food Services Catering.

Fresno Metro Ministry
Community Hunger & Nutrition Project

www.fresnometroministry.org