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Excerpts and Summary of the 60th Community Hunger and Nutrition Forum
Wednesday, Nov. 9, 2005 12:00PM –1:30PM

Trinity Lutheran Church, Fresno

Sponsored by Fresno Metro Ministry

Supported by:

California Dept. of Health, Cancer & Nutrition Section, California Nutrition Network

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

Kaiser Permanente

Vitamin Settlement Cases Consumer Settlement Fund to improve
the health and nutrition of CA consumers

Community Alliance with Family Farmers

Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission Refugee Rural Initiative

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

***Focus: New Day at the Fresno COMMUNITY FOOD BANK:
Building to Meet the Need and End Hunger in Fresno***

Sarah Reyes, CEO

A Dialog with the Fresno Community
Where we are and where we are going

Wednesday, November 9, 2005

Edie Jessup: This is our 60th Nutrition Forum. Thank you all for being here today. I said I'd go shopping for ten dollars' worth of food and I wanted her to bring ten dollars' worth of food from the food bank because I think that when she talks, you might consider what would make a cheery donation to the food bank for folks that we're thinking about this year at Thanksgiving time and what folks can get for that amount. Also in your packet, each holiday season Metro and usually with the Senior Nutrition Group puts out a suggested menu. If your group or organization or congregation is collecting food for the food bank to distribute during the holiday time, do put some thought and give folks some suggestions. I know Sarah will have some too, but folks need to think about what people can actually prepare and what is healthy for them. Instead of buying boxes of Fruit Loops, you might just really think about something that would be nutritious and go farther for a family or an elder. We anticipate that utilities are going to be a huge issue this winter, particularly because Salvation Army and EOC have run out of funding for assistance with utilities,

Report on the Downtown Fresno Farmers Market THRIVE FEST

Jeremy Hofer: I put together a real quick slide show of pictures from an event that we held just this last Saturday at the Downtown Farmers Market, and I just wanted to impress upon attendees here how colorful and how wonderful a venue farmers markets and flea markets are in general to our work for health advocacy. It's called Thrive Fest, and it was collaboration between Centro La Familia, Stone Soup Fresno, West Fresno Healthcare Coalition, and Fresno Metro Ministry, and it was sponsored by Kaiser Permanente. It's kind of a neat collaborative because of the diversity of the people that were working on it. This is the Downtown Farmers Market. If you haven't been there, definitely pay a visit to it. It's my favorite farmers market just in what's available there, and it's very inexpensive, which is another good thing. We kicked off the EBT Food Stamp Program at the market. Actually, it was the owners that kicked it off, but we helped them with technical assistance in doing so, so now they have a point of service device, which is a device that they swipe the cards through and they give food stamp recipients as many tokens as they want to spend on food at the market. They had about 50 dollars' worth of food stamp money that came through the market that day, which is

exciting because this is opening up a new stream of purchasing from the vendors. These are small farmers, low-income vendors that are barely scraping by, and so it's neat to be able to support them. All the vendors have a pin that says "We accept EBT" on them. We had a number of different cultural physical activity and entertainment dances. Among dancers from Stone Soup Fresno, West Fresno Healthcare Coalition gospel dance. A lot of the vendors mentioned that it was great to have this event out there because of the music and it was just so festive and it brought out a lot more people and new people that they hadn't seen before. The Thrive Collaborative gave out items that encourage physical activity. It all had to do with healthy eating and active living. There was a jump rope contest and Frisbees were given out. Latino Five-A-Day was out there with their healthy eating game. One of the goals was that we would really get business for the vendors down there, so we had coupons that we gave out to people for a dollar off of their produce, so it was a good day for the vendors. All the vendors said they did much better than they had done before, so it was successful. I really love this picture. It's a vendor with a Five-A-Day apron on eating a fruit. That was our event on Saturday, and we're looking forward to doing probably three or four more of these events at farmers markets in Fresno County over the next year as part of a project, the California Nutrition Network Project, where we are encouraging bringing people to markets that have these EBT machines. It's a food stamp promotion and nutrition education promotion project at farmers markets. You can visit the Thrive Fest and these pictures on our website: www.fresnometroministry.org

Eddie Jessup: Thanks, Jeremy. It's almost Thanksgiving, and folks have on their mind that their neighbors might have some food for this holiday. I particularly am happy to be able to introduce Sarah Reyes, who we're so pleased is working at the Community Food Bank, and she has some exciting things to tell us about the Food Bank stepping up into its role here in Fresno. The important thing that I want to emphasize is that we're thinking about folks and the degree of hunger reported multiple times to you. Hunger is real here. There's a new report that's going to come out next week that is going to show things not better, as a matter of fact. But as we're thinking about feeding people and the desire to feed people through the charity stream, I would particularly like for us to think a beyond charity and making sure that folks have a good holiday and have food in their belly. So I would ask your organizations that are working on donations and working on helping fill that holiday need to **take a step further and to advocate for folks having food on the table every day, not only by supporting the emergency food stream, which Sarah represents, but also by supporting the nutrition programs that we know really help get food regularly on the table. We know that the emergency stream cannot get out enough food to satisfy the hunger, so food stamps, school lunches, Summer Lunch, WIC, the commodity distribution, and all of the programs which Sarah can talk to you about need to be supported.** These are important things that we encourage people to be enrolled in. There are other good reasons for it, too, but **particularly because of the health issues that we're seeing in the valley, the obesity and diabetes issues, it's really, really important that we do the next step this year after the holidays.**

I want to welcome Sarah Reyes, CEO of the Community Food Bank, and let her tell you what's happening.

Sarah Reyes, CEO Community Food Bank

Sarah Reyes: Thank you. Eddie did a lot better shopping than I did because I was running through the warehouse and said, "I need ten dollars' worth of food. Somebody grab me ten dollars' worth of food." Instead of backing up a truck, we decided to pick some heavy things to show you. I'll give you an example. This box of crackers is only 72 cents at the food bank. The Capri Sun Sport is only three dollars for that whole case. The Mexican Creations, which is a sauce that you would do on Mexican food or chicken, that whole case right there is only three dollars. I noticed she had some broccoli here, and it looks very nice. I was going to bring some of that but I decided I didn't want to lug a whole big box of broccoli this way, but we have fresh broccoli. It's really good-looking broccoli. A forty pound box of broccoli is two dollars. **That just shows you how we can spread our dollar at the food bank.**

Some people say then you're putting a price on the food that you have at the food bank. Those people have to remember that I had my two trucks go and pick up two loads of broccoli, 22 pallets of broccoli, from Firebaugh, and so I have to pay for my drivers to get on the truck to drive to Firebaugh and then come back and unload it, so that's really a **shared maintenance cost** for us to be able to do it. It doesn't really meet our cost of the labor and all of that and with gas prices, but we provide broccoli right now at 5 cents a pound to our agencies, so it is a good effort. **We not only provide it to our agencies but we just gave out nine truckloads of broccoli to the entire State of California and to food banks for those in need. That's a lot of broccoli to move, and we did that in 24 hours.** That's next to impossible, but we're getting really good at it.

Today I want to talk to you about some of the programs that we have at the food bank and to let you know what we're doing, because we're trying to do more, we're trying to be more accessible, we're trying to be more visible, we're trying to put a face on hunger and the issue of hunger on people's plate, so to speak, even after Thanksgiving is gone. Somehow, someway, people think people are only hungry at Thanksgiving or that those in need should only eat during Thanksgiving. I think that what we have to do as advocates and what we have to do at the food bank and should be doing on a daily basis is reminding people that the Brookings Institute didn't just say that we had the number one poverty clusters around Thanksgiving, but we have it every single day of the year. All those reports are about what happens in this community every single day of the year. So we are doing a lot more, and if your agencies want to participate in this with us we are glad to have you join us. We are doing a lot more with Metro, and we appreciate that. Edie has me on something every single day of the week, which is a good thing. To give you an example, we're on this e-mail list, so Jeremy e-mailed everybody about this Thrive Fest and I said, "Oh, Jeremy, this is a great idea! We have all this produce. Can we go out and distribute it for free?" Jeremy was smarter than I was, and I'll admit that. He said, "Well, that's a really good idea, but I don't think the farmers who are selling their products really want you to be distributing for free at that location." I said, "Okay, but maybe we can figure out down the road how we can combine a Thrive Fest and a free produce market."

Hunger 101 Classes

One of the ways that we're trying to get the word out through the food bank about the need and about the issue of hunger is through **Hunger 101 Classes**. If you want us to come out to your agencies and your businesses and conduct a Hunger 101 class we would be glad to do that. The Hunger 101 class, I believe, puts a face on hunger and it really does provide people an opportunity to understand what it means to try and make ends meet. We took actual case studies of people who lived here in Fresno County and we wrote their stories up and then we make you take on the identity of that person during the Hunger 101 class. You have to take on that person's life and you have to do a budget. At the end of your budget you have to see how much money you have left over for food, and if you don't have enough to make just three balanced meals, breakfast, lunch, and dinner, for your family just for one day, then there are alternatives. You have to apply for food stamps. We have a food stamp office that you have to go to and apply for when we do this class and you see what the process is to apply for food stamps. We also have a soup kitchen that you can get a free lunch or a free meal from and you have to decide whether or not you can lug your kids and your family all the way down to the soup kitchen and whether or not you're willing to do that. It's a really good opportunity to let people know that this is an everyday occurrence for many people in this community. We did this to a group of bankers at a Fig Garden office complex. My staff member and I walked into this office and it had marble floors and nice wood paneling and they're driving beemers and Mercedes and we thought, "This is going to be interesting." So we did this class. We have a store, so you actually have to go purchase. We give you your money from your savings account that you have left over and you have to go to the store and you have to purchase the items and we have the prices on them. It was really interesting. After that experience one of the ladies came in and said, "Look, this is all I have in my wallet. I'm just going to give this to you. Please, if I can do more I'm going to send you a check." Some of them have come and volunteered. They really felt that this is how it is for people on a daily basis and these are not far-fetched ideas for people to experience that. When I run

the class I'm a little bit more rude. I shut the welfare office down. Some people on my staff will leave it open the whole time, and I'm like, "No, the welfare office is only open 8 to 5. We don't stay later than that. We don't speak multiple languages. We only speak two. That's it. If you speak something other than Spanish or English, sorry, we can't help you." We try to show people the reality of that. We are willing to come out and do a Hunger 101 class for your agencies, or if you know people who would like us to do that, give us a call and we can do that.

Community Food Bank Pantry and USDA Commodity Distributions

We also service **170 pantries in three counties and commodity sites in Fresno County.** The pantries are those that belong to churches or nonprofits. When people just can't make ends meet and need some emergency food they can go to a pantry and they can get emergency food. We have that listing, so I really want to tell all of you because a lot of you get calls from people who need some assistance with food. Tell them to call us. We're really easy to find, and our number is 237-FOOD. Very simple. Call us. We ask them the simple question of what zip code they live in because we want to send them to someplace close by because the majority of these people would not be able to get in their car and drive across town. We also know who puts limits on it and who doesn't put limits on what and where they can go and get that. The one thing you'll find is that it's always hard to ask for help. If it's hard for us to ask for help and we can make ends meet, can you imagine what it's like for a mother who can't make ends meet or parents who can't make ends meet every month to call and ask where they can get some food and then have to go through hoops and fire and water and everything else to get food? We can actually send them to places that we know are a lot more sensitive to people in need. Those pantries are there to service our community and we appreciate what they do.

The one thing that we are working on is the USDA commodities, which most people don't realize we provide for Fresno County and only Fresno County. This is the Commodities Program. Basically, they're groceries that are provided through the federal government, the US Department of Agriculture, and they're operated county by county. We are in the process of getting our program up and running correctly, retraining our sites, making sure that they're running it correctly and that they're doing things correctly. I've found that sometimes our volunteer sites throughout the county took it upon themselves to say, "I only want legal citizens to get the food, so I'm only going to give to legal citizens and you have to prove to me that you're here legally." That is not a rule of the program. Some have said, "You've got to prove to me you live there and you've got to prove to me this, you've got to prove to me that, and I need all this information." That is not part of the program, so we are in the process of retraining. We've retrained everybody. We're going out and doing site visits. Actually, Katy and I were out in Reedley today at Streetlight Ministries and we did a site visit. We found some problems and we're working with them to make sure that they're up and running and they're doing things correctly. The Commodities Program, basically, is a supplemental program. I'll give you an example of what they're getting this month in the Commodities Program. They're getting a two-pound bag of pinto beans, a two-pound bag of rice, two packages of pasta, two cans of vegetables, two cans of fruit, and two bags of cranberries. That's what they get in a grocery bag. It's not meant to get you through the whole month, but it's meant to supplement and help you get along a little better. Some of these things, obviously, the rice and the beans, would go a little longer. We're trying to put some staples in there. The only qualification for this is you must sign under penalty of perjury that you meet the income guidelines. Now, we're not the food police. We're not there to say show me how much you make. Our volunteers should not be there to say show me how much you make and show me this and show me that. You sign under penalty of perjury as you sign in for the commodities that you meet the income guidelines. We have sites throughout Fresno County. Currently we have 46 sites. We are looking to expand those sites throughout the county. Those of you that have those types of services provided or you are interested in becoming an agency, you need to call me and we'll talk to you about that. We're going to do another training at the end of January or early February with the USDA. You service a zip code, and we are lacking in some of the areas. We're looking at opportunities right now. We need a place in Parlier. We need a place in Sanger and we're looking at

some opportunities there. We need a site in Kerman. We need a site, for example, in Southeast Asian Communities, and I'm very excited about the fact that we have talked to Sharon Stanley over at FIRM. We've also talked to Silas Cha at Center for New Americans and are looking at getting them on as well. So we are looking at those types of opportunities, not just in the City of Fresno but in the rural areas, and the rural areas are hardest. To be a site you need to have an area that you can receive the food and that you can store the food in, so you need a closet or a room that can be locked so you can receive the food. The food is received the day before you do a distribution. We will work with you on a day that you do a distribution. You do it once a month for three hours. We'll work with you on that day because it has to match us getting to fifty sites. We deliver the food to you, so Katy has to manipulate my drivers all over the place. You also need some volunteers, and the volunteers can put the bags together and hand them out and sign people in. Our sites on average have about five or six volunteers that come in and put the bags together and then they hand them out as well and sign people in. That's really all you need. The one requirement that I am adamant about and am really pounding in to people is you have to report. I have to tell you, and this is not something that makes me very happy, in Fresno County we are not getting our fair share of USDA commodities to hand out to people in need, and the reason we're not is because we have not reported the people that we serve to the federal government. That's how they determine how much money you get for these commodities. I have sites that have operated that show they serve nobody because we haven't reported that, so I am getting really, really tough on that because I think that we should be getting twice as much as we get. So just to let you all know, you do have to do that monthly reporting. It's very simple. With the sign-in sheets you just calculate how many people signed in, and then one of the columns shows how many people are in the household. You just add those two numbers up and you give it to me, you fax it to me, and then you tell me what foods you have left over. That's it. That's all the reporting I need, but I have to have that reported so that I can send that in to the federal government and then my \$140,000 for a quarter could go up to \$250,000 and we can get more commodities. I tell my sites this all the time. They always ask why they don't get chicken or meat every month. Well, we don't get it because we haven't reported the information. Those are expensive commodities, so if I get those numbers and our prices go up, we can get that out to everybody. If you are interested in that or in finding out more information just call me. It's 237-FOOD (2377-3663). I'll spend some time on the phone with you or you can come in and see me. Right now I am running the program because the person who runs it is out on maternity leave. I have 50 sites, and it's really important that we get that program up and running and we get to as many people as possible. It's there for those in need and it's free. **All you have to do to qualify for the USDA Commodities Program is sign that you meet the income guidelines and you get groceries once each month. Just think if more people knew that that was available how many more we could help and deal with this hunger problem.**

Community Food Bank Mobile Pantry

The one program that I'm very excited about is our **Mobile Pantry Program**. **The Community Food Bank is now going to do direct service to people in the community.** We have been an organization that has served agencies. Our agencies include, for example, Salvation Army, Poverello House, Catholic Charities, Rescue Mission, small churches and pantries all over three counties, some group homes, some drug rehab homes, and those types of things. We have now decided that the need is so great that we need to do direct service to people. In August of this year we launched a Mobile Pantry Program just to see if there was a need out there. Sometimes we get an abundance of produce, and because of the generosity of our farmers locally they give us fresh produce. In the beginning of August we got plums, nectarines, tomatoes, corn, squash, and lettuce. It was coming out of our ears. We were distributing it to all our agencies, but I didn't want a lot to go to waste, so this crazy person, me, said to my staff, "Let's go out there and give it to the people ourselves." So we called one of our agencies in Central Fresno and said, "Can we use your parking lot?" This was on a Wednesday. "Can we use your parking lot on Monday?" They said, "Yeah. For what?" "Don't worry about it. We're just going to come and distribute some produce. It will be fine. Can you just have some volunteers there?" "Sure. How many do you need?" "About ten." "Okay,

great. We'll be there from this time to this time." I told my staff to put it out there in the media, try and get it out as much as they could. On that Monday we said we were going to begin distribution at 8 o'clock in the morning. People started lining up at 6 a.m. We gave out 35,000 pounds of produce in four hours. They came with 20 volunteers and they helped some of the older people walk their product to the car. We had bags out there. People were walking away with fresh produce free of charge and they just couldn't believe that we were doing that and that all we wanted was for them to sign in so that when we do it the next time they would be able to come. We saw the need and saw that we needed to do more of this, so we have launched this Mobile Pantry Program.

The person that is now going to be our nutrition educator in our Mobile Pantry is Katy Johnson. Katy is going to come up right now and talk to you about the Mobile Pantry Program. **We are officially launching it on November 21st for Thanksgiving.** We have enlisted and recruited mobile pantries to help us on that day. They are known as the CHP, the Police, and the Sheriff. We have recruited them be mobile pantries for that day for us. They're going to help us deliver Thanksgiving meals to people throughout the county. Edie asked me a great question the other day. She asked if people are going to be afraid because all of a sudden a cop drives up. We're working with them because they meet families in need all the time and they see victims of crime in various neighborhoods. They're actually working with us to identify some of those families, so the family will know when the CHP drives up that it isn't there to arrest somebody, that they are there to deliver food and they'll be very sensitive. We thought it was a great opportunity to team with them to raise the awareness. In addition to that, they see victims of crime all the time and know neighborhoods where people have needs, and they need to understand the issue of hunger as well. I'm glad to say that Jerry Dyer and Sheriff Pierce and the CHP commander have agreed to join with us on this effort to do that. Every other day of the week it will be Katy's job, and she's going to tell you a little bit about how she plans on running the Mobile Pantry. She's going to do one tomorrow at Highway City, so it will be really fun. Fresh broccoli and onions and salad mix is what she's giving away tomorrow. Here's Katy.

Katy Johnson, Community Food Bank Mobile Pantry: Hi. I share Sarah's enthusiasm about this program. I'm really excited about it. Another thing I share with Sarah is my love for getting out and being hands on and doing these types of things and talking to people. Basically, three times a week we're going to go out into the community to organizations that serve low-income households, so we're looking at families, seniors, and children. What I plan on doing for children is going out and talking to them about the importance of starting to eat healthy at a young age during their formative years and asking them, "What would you rather eat, a handful of potato chips or broccoli?" or something like that, and probably immediately they're going to say a handful of potato chips. We would engage in conversation. "Well, why? What would be the benefits of eating broccoli as opposed to the greasy potato chips?" We'll play games and get them really excited about eating healthy so that when they go home they can tell their family, "Look, I learned about this. I'd like to start improving my health." We'll stress the importance of activity. We're going to hand out materials given to us from the Five-A-Day Program. We've got bags and shirts. It seems to work out well when you give kids stuff with slogans on it. They seem to like those types of things. We're also going to be going out to community centers and cultural organizations to have them get groups of people together so we can talk about how to incorporate healthy choices into their lifestyle. For example, did you know that the healthiest foods are around the perimeter of the supermarket? Also, the cheapest things in the supermarket are around the perimeter of the supermarket. A lot of people don't really know that. Giving people tips like that is helpful, especially if they're low income or if they're on a budget. If you tell them that the cheaper stuff is on the outside and it's going to make them live a little bit longer I would think they would tend to pick those choices, but they don't know, so we're going to go out and give them that type of information. Five-A-Day also distributes things like cook books in Spanish and in English, so this would give people an opportunity to learn how to cook healthier meals. Also, we're going to be going out to senior centers, because as you know, a lot of seniors don't really eat the healthiest because they're on a budget as well, so we're reaching out to all low-income groups in Fresno, Madera, and Kings County. When an organization calls me and says that they would like to set up a Mobile Pantry meeting it's about an hour long. We can go in and talk and distribute the food. I want

to tailor it to that organization. If it's mainly a Hmong association we can get some ideas of some Hmong food that they can incorporate more vegetables in or possibly get a Hmong translator and tailor it to that organization. That's basically what we have planned. If you would like to participate in the program please call me, Katy, at 237-FOOD. I would love to hear from you and set up an appointment for you. Thank you.

Sarah Reyes: The important thing is not only the education but the distribution of food because she will be taking food with her and doing some distribution of the food, not only the commodities but items that we have in our warehouse as well, and getting those out to people in need, so that's very important as well. In addition to that, as I said, Katy is going to go out tomorrow. We have 22 pallets of broccoli in our warehouse right now and we're getting it out to all the places we can get it out to and our agencies are taking it out. Just to show you the enthusiasm that I have, and I really appreciate this, Katy said, "Well, you know, Highway City is doing distribution of commodities tomorrow. I can go out there tomorrow and distribute broccoli and onions," because we have a lot of onions, too, and I said, "Okay. Well, do we have a driver?" She said, "Well, I can drive a car. I probably can drive a truck." I said, "Okay, Katy, you're going to take the truck, load the truck, unload the truck, distribute the food, and talk to people. No. Get a driver." So that's the enthusiasm. If you don't think that she wants to be out there, she really does, and anywhere and everywhere we can get with this program we want to get with this program. So if you know of organizations or if your organization wants her to come out, please let us know. **Our goal right now, and this is only in the beginning stages, is to distribute three times a week and 4,000 pounds a week through the Mobile Pantry.** It's a lot of food, it's a lot of places, but we're going to try and do that for the first year and then up it even more. If we beat that goal we'll be very excited. As Katy said, we are engaging people. **Right now we're looking for a warehouse driver assistant who will be bilingual who will participate with Katy on that as well, and then we've engaged others in different communities to help us with interpretation for those communities.**

We've had some of our USDA sites go on suspension because they didn't come to the mandatory training and for other reasons. For example, Kerman doesn't have a site right now. Katy is going to go out next week and do the distribution for that. We have one in Central West Fresno and she's going to do the distribution for that one as well because we don't want people to miss that opportunity. When we do these commodities they get used to them and then when they're gone trying to get them back is very difficult. The Mobile Pantry will also be used to fill in until we get another agency up and running so that they don't miss that opportunity, they don't say, "Okay, well, they're not giving them," and then trying to get them back is next to impossible.

Community Food Bank Donation Events

Another thing I wanted to mention was Thanksgiving on the Mayflower on November 16th through the 21st at Fig Garden or Sierra Vista Mall. You're all welcome to come and bring us some food. We are joining with Y101 radio station and they will be out there from 5 a.m. until 7 at night. I was just talking to the radio station and they said, "Yeah, Sarah, you have to be out there Wednesday at 5," and I said, "Okay, 5 p.m.?" She went, "No, 5 a.m.," and I went, "Oh, people get up at that hour?" I really encourage you to go by, and if you want to go by and participate on the radio sending that hunger message call me because I'm looking for people to go by. You have to promote the Community Food Bank. I know you will want to promote yourself, but you have to promote the Community Food Bank and bring in the food, but you can go out there and you can talk about hunger and the need and that you are with agency such and such and you work with us on this hunger issue. It's a popular radio station, not news talk, not anything else. I think they play pop music, nowadays type of music. They're well listened to. They're going to be out there and will allow us to schedule. I'm putting a schedule together so they'll know who comes out. What an opportunity for us to get out there and tell people about those needs and about what's going on. I know Plant a Row might want to be a part of that and going out there and talking to people about recruiting for gleaning or for Citrus Saturdays or things like that. Call me. I know Metro Ministry would, and some of the others in the room may want to do that. Please let me know. It really is just talking to them about Thanksgiving, about hunger, but

letting them know that it's not just hunger at Thanksgiving, its hunger all year long. The food bank used to let the radio station gather food and we went out there and said, "Bring food. Isn't it fun!" I want to take it to the next level. This is an opportunity that we cannot let pass in this community where a radio station is going to spend five days collecting food and raising the issue. We've got to step it up, so we need people, and I want to have you all come and join with us in that effort, so please call me if you're interested. It's Saturday and Sunday as well, so if you're interested let me know and we can talk about the scheduling of that.

In addition to that, if you have nothing to do on November 16th at 5 in the morning, and I'm sure a lot of you are booked at 5 in the morning, but if you have nothing to do, we're going to go out and stand and do **Bucks For Birds** at Palm and Shaw. We're going to have buckets and we're going to go stand out there and collect cash to buy turkeys for Thanksgiving, so if you have nothing to do and you want to come and spend a couple hours and stand on the street corner, you're welcome to come do that. It's Bucks For Birds. Call me and let me know. We'll get you on there. We'll give you a T-shirt and you can go stand out there and ask people to give money, or if they drive by, the radio station will promote it. That goes into our Major Tom. We have a Buy A Bird, Feed A Family program this year. This is our Major Tom. He is a turkey dressed in fatigues because he is our mascot this year for fighting hunger in the Central Valley. There's a twenty-dollar donation. There are only 500 of these in existence in California. You can't find him anywhere else. Five hundred in California, and actually, there are a lot less than that right now because we've been working on this program. A twenty-dollar donation feeds a family of six for Thanksgiving, and you get the limited edition of Major Tom. The entire twenty dollars goes to buy the meal. In the meal is a 14- to 16-pound turkey, stuffing, potatoes, cranberry sauce, dessert, vegetables, gravy, and the whole thing. It's all the stuff you eat at Thanksgiving. We have not raised all the money yet, but we've raised a large majority of it. We have **1,000 Thanksgiving meals that the food bank is going to be providing for free to our agencies**, no shared maintenance, no nothing, and then they will distribute them to those in need in the area. This is really our first attempt to make sure that we have an opportunity to provide to our agencies some Thanksgiving meals. If you are an agency of ours and you're wondering how come you didn't know about it, check your mail because the letter is coming now. We didn't want to do it in advance because then everybody starts lining up and we weren't even focusing on Thanksgiving. In the mail you'll be getting your letter about this telling you that you have to call us and the pick up day and that type of thing, so if you're an agency you'll be seeing something about picking up your Thanksgiving meals.

Finally, on November 19th, which is a Saturday, from 8:30 to 12:30, if you'd like to come out and spend some time with us or your organization would like to come spend some time with us we are going to be **sorting food, putting meals boxes together, sorting food on commodities** for Katy to be able to distribute to those in need. For four hours you're welcome to come and spend some time and make your holiday a little bit brighter knowing that you helped some people in need, so you're welcome to come down to the food bank and volunteer. The only way we're able to service as many people as we do is because we have volunteers who come out. We'll put you all to work. You can come with your family. You can bring your kids. We'll put the kids to work, too. It's just a good opportunity to do that. It's November 19th, which is the Saturday before Thanksgiving, from 8:30 to 12:30. We're located at 210 N. Thorne. We're south of Roeding Park in that warehouse area. We would appreciate it if you want to come spend some time with us. We have a lot of activities going on that day. Last year we provided nearly 7 million pounds of food through three counties, Fresno, Madera, and Kings. My board has challenged us and put our feet to the fire to make sure that we go to **8.4 million pounds of food for the next year**, so we are on the fast track to make sure that happens, which means that we need to find more avenues to provide that food, more opportunities to provide that food and get it out there. It also means that we need more resources in providing that food.

What the Community Food Bank needs:

The things that we need for Thanksgiving are not all your old things that have been on your shelf for two years. We need the things that you would want to eat for Thanksgiving. People have to remember, you've got to look at it and say if I wouldn't eat it why would I think a poor person would eat it. You're no different. I really ask people that when they think of giving us the **donations, try and give us what you would feed your family**, not the things that you got and you thought were really good and they turned out to be horrible, you went on your carb diet and you're going to give us all your Atkins. That's really nice. We'll take those donations and we'll try and get them out there, but you know, when you talk about **those in need, they have the same needs that we have, they have the same wants that we have**. So if you want to give a donation, if you're doing food drives, just let us know. We can bring barrels out to you or you can come pick them up. We're willing to work with you.

This is a Food Bank that I will tell you is more active and it's going to get more active, it's going to have more activities going on. I've probably made your head spin with all the things that are happening at the food bank, but **if we don't get loud about hunger at the food bank, if we don't do a better job of distributing the food at the food bank, if we don't do more talking about providing nutritious food to people in need at the food bank, then who else is going to do it? I think it's our goal and our responsibility to do that**. That is what we do. If you have other ideas let us know. Edie was gracious enough to introduce us to a gentleman from USDA in regards to healthy snacks for kids and we're looking at doing a program like that, so we're looking at lots of opportunities. I'm going to end there and open it up for questions.

Comments and Questions:

Teresa Kiernan, UCCE Master Gardener: What are you doing for gleaning?

Sarah Reyes: We are doing nothing for gleaning. I don't have any staff members. Somebody called us today and said, "I have a huge grapefruit tree. If somebody comes and picks it you can have the grapefruit." Unfortunately, I don't have the staff to go have somebody pick it, so if there are opportunities or organizations that have gleaners, let us know and we can work on that.

Teresa Kiernan: That's one area where we could involve our youth.

Sarah Reyes: We have a partnership and a relationship with Plant a Row and we do some things with them. We do get calls like that, so if there are programs that are out there, if you have youth that can go out, we send them out there to pick a tree or something like that, let us know because we can get that and then put it out into the system.

Edie Jessup: This is an arena that really needs to be developed here in Fresno County. Laurie Labbitt has been at the forefront of this for a couple of years, and it really is an organizational issue, so contact Metro and we'll put you on the list and we'll readdress this. There are other counties that have great gleaning programs that are well organized. That would be a wonderful way to augment food resources if we could expand that. PAR (Plant a Row for the Hungry) is looking for volunteers. I think that we have the idea of what needs to be done, but it's pulling together the volunteers and organizations to make it happen. There's so much produce that's lost, and it's a shame.

Sarah Reyes: It's just that I have a limited staff. Remember, I have 50 USDA sites that they have to get to. Every day of the week they're out there. I have donations that have to be picked up and I've only got three truck drivers, so that's a lot of work for them. Every half hour that we've been here an agency has backed up to my dock to pick up product and we're on limited staff. I only have seven people in my warehouse. They service 16 agencies a day and we're distributing to 50 sites, so we're limited on the things that we can do as a staff. But if we get it in, we'll get it out to people.

Participant comment: I'd like to add that the only gleaning effort that we've really focused on, because it's easy to manage once you get it hauled around but it doesn't require the refrigeration that some of the other produce does, is citrus, and so coming up on citrus season again provides lots of opportunities. PAR gets calls all the time from elders particularly who don't want to waste food and yet have a tree that they can't pick anymore themselves, and so if any of you know of groups that are available that those people could be referred to pick the fruit and then get it to the Community Food Bank that would be wonderful.

Jeremy Hofer: The model that I haven't really seen happen but that I think would be interesting to explore is to actually **tie gardeners to their local pantries** so that the pantry was doing some kind of work, so that they wouldn't take it all away to you and then you take it all the way out. It's really just gardeners coming into the pantry.

Sarah Reyes: Or calling a local church if maybe they have a youth group, that type of thing.

Rev. Walt Parry: **Is the amount of food that the major agencies are getting through the food bank staying about the same, increasing, or decreasing? I know at various times over the years they say they will buy elsewhere if they can't get what they want at the food bank, but then they end up paying five times more than if they worked together with the food bank. What's that trend and what do you hope happens?**

Sarah Reyes: We unfortunately are at the throes of donations. **We go out and whatever we get out there that's donated to us is what we have. We have a lot of different products but we don't have everything that people would need, and that frustrates people all the time.** For example, if someone wants chickens, well, Foster Farms isn't donating chickens to us. They don't even donate turkeys to us, so we have to go out and purchase them. That's very frustrating. What we try to do at the food bank is show our agencies what you can do. To give you an example, we're getting a delivery next week of salami and pepperoni. I got an e-mail yesterday from my operations person who sent it to me and to my food resources person and to Katy and to my inventory clerk telling us to expect that this donation of salami and pepperoni is coming in. I responded to everybody on the e-mail and said, "That's great. Did you ever think of doing a package deal? We have some pizza sauce back there. We have some pizza crust back there. We have things, so let's do a special where we say we're going to do pizza month at the food bank, so you purchase it in a package deal." That type of thinking has never happened at the food bank, that idea of **packaging things as a meal.** Instead, they'd send out all the salami and pepperoni and they'd still be stuck with the pizza sauce and the pizza bread because they didn't think of that. **We are becoming more creative at the food bank.** We got a whole bunch of apples donated to us around Halloween. One of my inventory clerks and I looked at each other and she said, "You know what? I have the perfect thing that goes with that." I said, "What is it?" She goes, "I'll be right back." She runs out to the warehouse and comes back and she has these little caramel dipping things that have come out, and she goes, "What a great snack! You peel the apple for the kids and they can dip it in the caramel and you can bob for apples and you can do all of this around these harvest festivals." So we got some volunteers and we got these big bins of apples and we had our volunteers separate 30-pound boxes and we did a package deal, a 30-pound box of apples and a box of dipping sauce, and you have a party and we'll throw in some apples so you can bob for them, too. What a deal! So they're gone. They went like that. The agencies were just eating them up because they were just like, "Wow, you've got a package deal for a party that we're going to have for our kids." So we're trying to be smarter about how we deal with that. We see both increases and decreases throughout the year. Right now it's madness at the food bank. It literally is absolutely insane. We went out to Reedley and came back. I was there at 9:45. As I opened the door I had three of my staff members going "We need this, what about this, what about that, what about this," and it's only going to get worse because next week is just...don't even look at me next week. I'm eating ham for Thanksgiving because I hate turkey that much right now and I really hate Thanksgiving right now. We just came off of Halloween, which was a nightmare.

Candy and snacks and things were out here because of the harvest festivals and things. So recently we have seen an increase. There will be a decrease after January because people will be tired and ready for a break. We need to keep that constant and make sure that they have that constant, but it's our responsibility to market it to them. It's not their responsibility. If we just give them a menu and they say, "Well, they don't have what we want so we're going to go to Costco," that's on us. That's not on them. It's our responsibility to do that. **I have my shopper, my resource specialist, who is constantly with our agencies and did two tours this week for agencies letting them know we're packing things better, we're getting smarter at doing that, and we have to be more aggressive on that to make it constant.** Hopefully that answers your question.

Edie Jessup: Just a follow-up on that. We talked at one time about your working and finding out the kinds of things that your agencies are looking for and beginning to look for those food items to distribute. I know you have somebody on staff that's working that way.

Sarah Reyes: Yes, we are. We are having agency meetings. **We're having dialogues with our agencies asking them what it is that they need and thinking about how we can go out and get that product for them if they're willing to purchase it.** I have a shopper. She's called a **food resource specialist. Catherine is my shopper, and she can go out and beat the prices of what I call the 'Cos' in town, Costco, WinCo, and FoodsCo. She can beat all those prices for everybody** and so she is doing a lot more of that. A lot more people are calling her because we're talking to our agencies about the things they want. They want what everybody else wants. **They want the staples. They want rice, beans, meats,** and so we are doing more of that. In addition to that, **we're trying to be more culturally sensitive when we do our purchase program so that we're not buying things that people don't want.** I'll give you an example. The food bank a year ago bought a whole bunch of black beans, a truckload of black beans, and they thought it was a great deal. They thought, "We're going to buy a truckload of black beans at this price and it's really cheap and it's great for us and we can provide it to our agencies." Our agencies didn't want them and they couldn't understand at the food bank why the agencies didn't want them and why they weren't moving. I came in mid April and I was going through the product a couple weeks later and they said, "You know, we have these black beans. They're really great, but people won't buy them," and I said, "Because you're dealing with Mexican Americans. We don't eat black beans. We eat pinto beans." And they said, "What do you mean? They're beans." "No, they're black beans. If you were in Central America you'd be having a hot business right now, but you are dealing with a large majority, 90 percent, that are Mexican and all we know is refried and pinto, and they're the same bean that you refry, so why did we buy those?" And they said, "Well, we just thought they were a great price and they were beans and they looked ethnically right." Well, no. Another example is they bought a truckload of canned garden salad. "You put salad in a can?" is what I said. "How do you eat salad in a can?" They had this on the menu and it was not moving. I said, "Well, nobody wants to eat salad in a can. That sounds horrible." It was actually mixed vegetables. They just called it garden salad, so it had string beans, cauliflower, carrots, you know, the mixed vegetables. I said, "Okay, change the menu to say mixed vegetables." We have no more. It's all gone now. We have to be more culturally sensitive, we have to be more understanding, and we have to know how people think and what they need and it will go out there. Top Ramen is another example. It's flying out of our warehouse right now. Why? Because a lot of people use Top Ramen and need Top Ramen and so we should do the Top Ramen. We shouldn't do the beef ravioli because more people are going to want the Top Ramen. Its things like that that my staff has to become more aware of, more culturally sensitive to, and we are doing that on a daily basis. Any other questions?

Ron Perry: I'm actually not here on an official capacity. **I am a relatively new board member at Community Food Bank.** I've been on the board less than a year, so Sarah and I are kind of the new kids on the block. If you haven't noticed, the energy that's coming from up front it is reflected in our food bank. My goodness, it has changed tremendously in the short period of time that I have been there. **It is a team that's working and is committed to getting food to Fresno County and all the**

agencies that we service. The food bank is really working hard now in a way that it has never worked before, in my opinion, at really servicing the people that are in our area. Many thanks to Sarah and the wonderful team that she has assembled. I like going down to the food bank now. It's really a dedication out of love, so go back to your respective churches and agencies, wherever you're from, and let them know about what the food bank is doing. We encourage you to do that. If you have any questions, call us. We're at your service.

Sarah Reyes: I appreciate that, and I appreciate Ron's support in regards to this. First of all, I'm going to tell you I apologize for any treatment you got from the food bank that was not appropriate treatment because that was the standard procedure at the food bank. We are trying to do better, and we are going to do better. **Customer service is number one. But let me also tell you that we have rules and regulations that we have to follow in our commodities. We're going to follow those because if we jeopardize that program that means it goes away for everybody. I will tell you that customer service is number one.** We are trying to help and support and deal with everybody who has those needs, and so that is number one. I was talking to my staff today. I can just see the change in the short time that I've been there. It's getting crazy. I said to my operations guy today, "Oh, man, I'd better be nice to the warehouse staff next week because it's going to get ugly." We just have too much going on. Our mentality is that I may be the CEO and I may have that office and that title but next week I'm going to spend several hours in grungy clothes and I'm going to go back there and work the dock and I'm going to help with shipments and I'm going to do that because the responsibility is all of ours. I tell my staff if I can do that, they can do that. Katy is going to go out to all the USDA sites and learn how to drive a truck, and all of you should be off the road when Katy's driving a big truck like that. **We are just really eager to get all the food that we can out there.**

Carmen Corvarrubios, Families First: I would like to find out how one becomes an agency.

Sarah Reyes: You call Karen at 237-FOOD. **We have an application and a contract that you must sign. It's a hundred dollar membership for the year. We go out and do a site inspection to make sure that you're storing the food properly. It has to be off the floor and that type of thing. We show you what our requirements are for that, and then after that site inspection and the application we need your board of directors, we need your 501c3, that type of information from you. Once you do that you can become a member agency of ours.**

Actually, Families First should talk to Katy and you should be a Mobile Pantry site because, keep your fingers crossed, we should hear in January. We submitted for a grant for First Five for five thousand dollars to **purchase baby food**, so those of you who are serving families with kids 0 to 5, let us know because we're going to purchase five thousand dollars' worth of baby food. Katy will be the one who goes out there and does the nutrition education class and then **we'll provide half a case of baby food to each family, and there will be some cereal with that as well. Those of you who could use that just let us know.**

Participant comment: You talked about bringing cans of food and you also talked about money. **For us as agencies in this community, the message we need to be getting out to the people is that for those that are able to give two cans of food, that's fine, but that dollar bill is much, much better.**

Sarah Reyes: Look at what the dollar bill will buy us. Look at what we can get.

Participant comment: That's the message we need to tell.

Sarah Reyes: Yeah, and that's what I tell people all the time. Some people can't afford the dollar so they'll pull two cans off their shelf, and that's fine and I appreciate that. Anything helps. But what I tell people all the time is **look what I can get for that price versus what you can get for that price. I'd**

rather have the money because I can go out there and get that. If you're going to give me donations, the best thing to give me is nonperishable. We do have a cooler/freezer. We're able to take perishable goods in, but you know, a dozen eggs here versus I can buy a pallet of eggs is very different than one can of food, so nonperishable foods are best, but we stretch money a lot further.

We do a shared maintenance fee with our agencies of a maximum of eighteen cents on some products for agencies. **For every dollar that we get we can go out and buy a minimum of ten meals on that dollar** and turn it into ten meals, which nobody else can do. It's phenomenal when you think about it. The dollars are what's important.

Jeremy Hofer: Can you get us the notice about November 19th? We can send that type of stuff out. We have an e-mail list of about 800 people.

Sarah Reyes: We'll e-mail it to you.

Jeremy Hofer: Can we get a pantry list that is usable for advocates so that advocates that are at Families First could get it in an e-mail and then they would be able to see, okay, here's the USDA commodity here and here are the cross streets nearby? I've explored this with Daytra, and we were even thinking about some kind of web page for advocates where they could type in their address or the nearest cross streets and then three pantries would pop up.

Sarah Reyes: Well, I can't give you a website. I haven't even gotten my website up and going yet. But on the volunteer flier, yes, we can do that. We had to get our lists in order, and I think I talked to Edie about that. We do have it updated. As current as it is, it will probably change as far as USDA sites. Those are pantry sites and they are listed by zip code, location, day of distribution, hours of distribution, and phone number, so it's very easy for you to be able to go down and say you live in 937-whatever, this is the day of distribution. We have that in an Excel file, so we can get that to you. I don't know how we can get that out to other advocates. I guess I can get it to Jeremy and then he can get it out to everybody else. **What we'll do is when we e-mail you that list we'll just tell you what the requirements are of people so that you know what those requirements are. But yes, that's easy enough. For us it was just getting the right information out because we had some really bad information, but now it's all updated.**

Edie Jessup: Okay. And we will update the 800 number also. There is an 800 number, 1-800-870-3663, which goes to a call center that has all this information about where people can get Food Stamps, and has the pantry and commodity sites in Fresno County. That's answered 24 hours a day, so it's a good number to have and we'll remind you of that at other times.

I want to thank you so much, Sarah.

Sarah Reyes: Let me just say thank you to everybody. **Give me a call if you have any questions or any concerns. It's 237-FOOD (237-3663).** It may take me a second to get back to you because this is crazy time.

Edie Jessup: Thank you so much, Sarah. If you have specific questions for Sarah, write them on your evaluation. We'll compile them and get them to her and get them back out to you.