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Excerpts and Summary of the 62nd Community Hunger and Nutrition Forum
Wednesday, January 11, 2006 12:00PM –1:30PM
Trinity Lutheran Church, Fresno

Sponsored by Fresno Metro Ministry

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

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Forum Focus: **2006: The State of the Plate in Fresno**

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

Hunger and Nutrition Forum Wednesday, January 11, 2006

Edie Jessup, Fresno Metro Ministry Hunger & Nutrition Project: Our 62nd Hunger and Nutrition forum is focused on the ‘**State of the Plate**’-- what are the issues that are on the plate locally? You’ll see that on the front cover of the forum packet we have put some of the issues that we think are ‘on the plate’ for our low-income neighbors, like their being able to eat, eat well, and eat consistently for their good health and the health of our community. The Governor delivered his budget proposal yesterday. Part of today’s Forum is going to be a response to that. We’re aware of some of the important things that are going to impact our community if this budget goes forward. Our community speakers will reflect on the need. Catholic Charities is seeing; the FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program and cuts to that program, and then Walt Parry, Executive Director of Fresno Metro Ministry will speak on the issues that are ‘on the plate’ for folks here in Fresno County.

Forum Participants were introduced. Jeremy Hofer, Fresno Metro Ministry Hunger & Nutrition Project, reviewed the Packet of Forum Materials.

Edie Jessup: I’d like to introduce Cathy Caples. She is the executive director of Catholic Charities. She took on a big job and she’s going to tell us a little bit about that big job today.

Cathy Caples, Executive Director, Catholic Charities: It’s hard to believe I’ve been in this big job a whole year, and I want to thank you very much for having me here today. I feel a little intimidated by the topic because I feel I am not an expert on hunger and food issues in our state. I do want to share a little bit about what challenges we are facing at Catholic Charities. I’ll start by telling you the number of people we are serving at Catholic Charities, and I think that really speaks to the issue. The number is increasing, and I’m sure that’s no surprise. **In 2004, we served 45,404 individuals for food, and in 2005, that number increased to 48,438.** Of that number, 39,624 were unduplicated, meaning we only served them once. . The count that is of most concern to me is the increase in our **duplicated** clients. One time someone comes in for emergency food, it’s an emergency, and if they

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never come back, we met their need in an emergency. **We had a 21 percent increase in our duplicated count this year**, which means that families are not experiencing emergencies, they're experiencing long-term problems. To address that, Catholic Charities has really been looking at how we have been doing business for many, many years. For those of you that don't know, we've been in business since 1933. We have been an agency that has had people come through our doors, we've asked them a few questions about demographics to meet the funders' requirements, given them a bag of food, and sent them on their way until they came back three or four months later if they needed us. With this duplicated count increase we realize that that is really not helping them in the long run, so we have adopted a Family Resource Center model and what that means is that we are inviting providers in the community to come into our wonderful building on 149 N. Fulton Street. It's a large building – we're finding it might not be quite large enough – and we are providing services together. The first time someone comes in and needs food they are given food. The second time that they come in for food we ask them to sit down with our social work team and work out what's going on in their lives. Is this a budgeting issue? Is this a matter of not knowing what all of the services are that are available to them? We are setting up a plan and we're asking them to help meet their needs by following this plan, and we are connecting them with resources.

These are some of the resources we're bringing in. The Fresno County Employment & Temporary Assistance Food Stamp staff is now in our building and **people can be signed up for food stamps right in the building**. We are a partner with the **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**. That will be a goal for many of our clients, getting signed up for earned income tax. That's money that the poor are leaving on the table. And so, that is the new model at Catholic Charities. We have partnered with Fresno Covenant Foundation to provide **parenting classes** because as people wait in our lobby with their children we observe a lot of behavior that is inappropriate parenting, so we're inviting the parents to learn more. There will be classes on anger management. There will be **classes on financial literacy**. We're working in partnership with Citibank and By Design and the goal is that we'll be able to establish individual development accounts for people so they can start the pattern of saving.

We see a lot of people in our agency. **The people that we are serving are 57 percent Hispanic, 53 percent are women, and 45 percent are children under the age of 18. Only 13 percent are seniors**. We know by the population that those baby boomers, of which I'm one, are terrible savers. It's estimated that over 90 percent of the baby boomers are not even close to being prepared for retirement. We're happy to announce that we're **expanding our senior and disabled division**, we'll be working with Adult Protective Services and we are merging with Friendly Visitor Service that has been at Fresno State for years and years. That gives you an idea of what's happening at Catholic Charities.

I probably should say at this point that Catholic Charities represents the Catholic Churches Diocese of Fresno. I am the Agency Director that stretches from Kern-Inyo County to Merced-Mariposa County. **We have seven locations within that region and there are three in Fresno County**. One is the main office in **Fresno on Fulton Street**. We have a neighborhood activity center out in **Laton** and we have a brand new program called **Viva Salud, which will be working with our farm labor camps**, people who are still living in camps in the **Riverdale area**. I want to introduce Jeff Garner. Jeff is our Fresno Family Resource Center manager. Jeff is responsible for all of our activities in the resource center. He's doing an incredible job. He came to us as an intern about two-and-a-half years ago and I've had the pleasure of being able to bring him on as staff and then promote him. Louie Villalobos is the Viva Salud program manager just so you become familiar with the names.

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Edie mentioned, and I think we're all very sad about the state of our world, our country, and how it is looking for the poor these days. **Our national government is just destroying our War on Poverty programs. Those War on Poverty programs have been successful!** Demographers have been following people and there are benefits, real, live benefits to it. I got my start at Catholic Charities with the **Senior Companion Program**, which is a War on Poverty program. **Those seniors pour \$300,000 back into this economy in Fresno from the stipend, the \$2.65 an hour we pay them for providing service to the elderly.** I think that what has happened is we have become lazy advocates and I probably need to count myself among them. I saw Ray Ensher when I came in today and he said, "Wow, stranger, we haven't seen you in 100 years," and that's true. I started out as an activist and I got a little bit complacent. I think that we're talking a lot. I'm the Executive Director of a faith-based organization that is based on the principles of Christianity, and we have to stop allowing our government to use Christianity as an *excuse* for what they're doing! We are responsible for caring for the poor if we are Christians. That is what Jesus taught us to do, and so I think if I had to say anything in terms of where I see us going: **I see us going back to a period of activism where we have to be more organized and more vocal about what is happening.**

I am the director of the **Justice for Immigrants Campaign for the Diocese.** I was so **greatly disturbed when I was advocating against the Sensenbrenner Bill that was just passed by our House of Representatives because I was told by our House of Representatives local representative on the phone that "It didn't matter if they passed it because the Senate would fix it".** Okay, our House of Representatives passed a **horrible budget bill for the poor. Our Senate has now passed that horrible budget bill for the poor,** and thank God that they made some changes in the Senate. The Senate made some changes and so now we must go back to the House of Representatives, to our House delegation, and say, **"Now you have an opportunity to do what's right for the poor."** They anticipate that that **vote is going to come on February 1.** That's just a few days away. I am sure that no one will be in the office on Martin Luther King's birthday in Washington D.C. because they consider it a 'holiday'. MLK, Jr. Day is a National Day of Service in our country. If we asked five of our friends to write letters on that day or leave messages with their Congresspeople, that would be a tremendous service to Martin Luther King's legacy. I find myself sometimes wondering: where are the Martin Luther Kings of this time? We just don't have enough people who are speaking out for the needs that we have. So, I really encourage you. **I think that all we can do is be more active.** I just want to say thank you. Most of Catholic Charity staff use our National Day of Service to gather as a whole agency and have a staff retreat so that we can reflect what it means to be *of service*. So, none of us will be able to be at the (Fresno MLK) March. This year the march benefits Catholic Charities with a food drive. For those of you that are there on Monday, please know that we are there with you in spirit and greatly, greatly appreciate the food that you'll be donating to our agency. Thanks.

Edie Jessup: Thank you so much, Cathy. Do people have specific questions for Cathy?

Ray Ensher, Health Care for All: I certainly do believe, Cathy, that we are our brother's keeper and we've treated that work pretty shabbily. My question is, do you keep any stats or do you do counseling with any of the homeless that come in, or does Poverello handle all of that pretty well?

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Cathy Caples: We really are not a homeless provider agency in Fresno. We care for the homeless more in Visalia, but in Fresno, we have what's called 'traveler's packs' and they're for people who do not have a home. We have statistics on about 300 homeless for last year. We refer to the homeless providers when they come into our agency. You may not know in Visalia Catholic Charities runs a shelter for homeless families. We have ten homeless families in Visalia, and we run a soup kitchen six days a week for whoever needs food.

Participant question: You mentioned that there's going to be a new vote in the House of Representatives that you'd like some advocacy activity here. Is there a bill number on that? Is there something new coming up?

Cathy Caples: It's the **Federal Budget Reconciliation bill**. It's the Congress' budget bill. There is no budget bill number, but it is the **conference report from the Senate back to the House on the federal budget bill**.

Edie Jessup: On your sign-in sheet if you'll put a star we will forward budget information to you if you are interested in getting updates on analysis and on bills.

Cathy, I have a question and it's a question about resources in response to need. I know that you're going to a case-management program. That may mean that there will be some people, who because of their circumstances, disorganization, or larger issues might not be able to participate in a case-managed situation. Knowing that people's need instead of an emergency is very frequently maintenance needs (an ongoing need month after month), what are you going to be telling people who you cannot serve because they do not want to meet your case-management requirements?

Cathy Caples: There is no one that we can't service after one time. We're asking them to sit down with us the second time and we hope that that's going to work pretty well. What we found when we moved Catholic Charities from 3 x 5 cards to a computer system is there will be automatic resistance and we're anticipating that. We also have found that more and more everyone can see the difference as they come into the agency and so people are responding. **We never feel like we meet their food needs at Catholic Charities. We provide them with one bag of food three times a year and every day when they come into Catholic Charities we give them a list of all the other food providers in the community because we know that our bag will last we hope five days and five days later they're going to need food again.** They need to know who all of the providers are. What we think will really work with the **CARE Plan** is that *once we determine what the real needs are* and we start addressing those needs with the families we can say "You can't wait for three more months and this is the closest place you can get food. We can now give you food once a week because you're on our case-management program, and we're going to be working with you". In many cases, they'll actually have their needs met more appropriately than they are now. Some of our people use that food that we give just as a supplement, and we know that. Most of the seniors that we serve, we know that they get our food and it's just part of their annual budget, basically. They come in three times a year and they get their bag of food.

I forgot to mention in addition to our food program, **we serve 14,000 with our USDA Commodity Program (supplied by Community Food Bank). That's in addition to the other 48,000.**

We don't feel like we are meeting the needs with the bag of food right now because we don't feel like it's culturally appropriate (as far as what's in the bag).

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We're looking at is converting Catholic Charities to a pantry method where there would be a market-like system. There is program cost, so it will take us a while to get there. We're going to have to relocate our thrift store in order to have the space to warehouse the food and have the 'shopping area'. We think that for inventory purposes we're going to need to have some sort of scanning system so that we know what's going out the door when they're shopping. It also takes money, and I know Sandra is going to be talking about the cuts to FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP). It's been cut every year since I've been around and it's cut again this year, and every time we get a cut to the food we have to buy, that cuts into the contributions that we get that enable us to do some of the other things. Fortunately, our board is so forward thinking right now that they allowed us to hire a development director for the first time in Catholic Charities' history, and he has his work cut out for him, so we're hoping it will all come together.

Edie Jessup: Thank you very much, and we look forward to working with you on these issues. I would next like to introduce Sandra Flores from United Way. United Way is the body that convenes the FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program Board. The way FEMA works with the Emergency Food and Shelter Program is that from the feds to the state to the county level there is Emergency Food and Shelter Program money available. **The amount of funding yearly is dependent upon the need.** It is the kind of 'emergency' food that Cathy is talking about that the EFSP is intended to assist with. Fresno Metro Ministry sits on the local FEMA/EFSP Board, among other folks, and I am very conscious that this money has diminished. Prior to 1996 in this country we had a year's worth of shelved food available as 'emergency' food. Now it's down to about a month's worth of shelved food. That has to do with our government's investment in surplus food and its accessibility and availability. **We have cut the food surplus by policy. Now we are experiencing cuts from FEMA/EFSP dollars to purchase emergency food locally.** We particularly wanted Sandra Flores to talk about this because **over the last several years and we know that the need for emergency food has increased here in Fresno County.** Thank you, Sandra.

Sandra Flores, Fresno County United Way: Good afternoon. I started managing the FEMA/EFSP program for United Way in July of last year. My knowledge of it is broadening. What I initially did when Edie asked me to come here to share with you today is get a background for what EFSP is. FEMA/EFSP legislation created a National Board that manages this program and determines how much money is allocated by county throughout the nation. **This year the Congress allotted \$153 million. That's the exact same amount they allotted last year, so it did not diminish. It stayed the same. However, our amount for Fresno County diminished. The Fresno County allocation in 2004 (Phase 22) was \$1,093,000; in 2005 (Phase 23) it was \$1,012,000; this year, 2006 (Phase 24) it is \$784,000-- a significant decrease.** I was on the phone with United Way of America to get a better understanding of the diminished amount. They indicated that there is a formula that the National Board uses. It goes by the most current 12-month national unemployment rates, total number of unemployed within the civil jurisdiction, which I understand to be a county, a total number of individuals below the poverty level within the civil jurisdiction, and the total population of the civil jurisdiction. Now, the population they refer to is the **2000 census, and until our next census they'll refer to that for the population,** so that's a constant number for a decade. The **poverty levels** they receive from another bureau census, so they try to get the most accurate for the county. **Unemployment rates** as well are reported to the bureau that they refer to for this formula. **Where we were impacted was in our unemployment rate because our poverty levels are very high. Last year we had 53,000**

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unemployed, which was 13.4 percent. This year we had 36,000 which is 9.6 percent. There was a 3.8 percent difference, and that's what impacted our FEMA/EFSP allocated amount for our county. This formula is the best that the FEMA/EFSP National Board has come up with to be fair. We are one of the highest counties receiving money. Of course, L.A. receives over \$5 million. They have a highly dense population and high levels of poverty there as well. There are pockets of urban areas that get a lot of money, but not too many in the millions. I have a list of all the counties in California, and we're in the top five in receiving FEMA/EFSP funds. This is the best formula that they have to figure out how to help counties in feeding the homeless and poor. **As long as our unemployment rates decline, which is a good thing, it will impact the whole formula.** I think it would be in our best interest to be aware of the formula and how it could continue to impact EFSP funds that Fresno County receives. I don't know that we would be able to change the EFSP National Board formula. That's the formula that they use.

Another challenge is how to meet those needs with less money. How do we reconcile that? We know that those issues of need are not going away. However, unemployment is being impacted. We have the Regional Jobs Initiative (RJI). We have very deliberate initiatives in our county that are trying to address unemployment. On the one hand, they are being successful, it would seem, but this is a big difference in federal allocations from previous years. I didn't have a lot of information at my disposal in the office from five years ago or six years ago, **so to say that Congress is giving less money nationally this year is not the case. They gave \$153 million for Phase 23 and they gave \$153 million for Phase 24.** I don't know how significantly the monies have declined previously to that. Edie, you may have more insight in that from being on the board for longer than I have. Any questions at this point?

Ray Ensher: First of all, the unemployment rate is not a true rate. I have talked to too many people at food distributions that have given up. They are not reported in unemployment figures. That's one consideration they should be making. I'm glad to hear that they rank us as one of the worst poverty areas in the nation and are supporting that.

Sandra Flores: I think we need to be aware that because there's a FEMA/EFSP National Board, I don't know how that would be altered or impacted. I don't know if our local board or between other local boards in other counties we might change the formula to make a more accurate figure.

Ray Ensher: **Does the local United Way FEMA/EFSP Board have to give reports back to the national legislative groups or whoever is involved back there every quarter on the need in this county?**

Sandra Flores: **No, we are not required to give reports on the need.**

Ray Ensher: Shouldn't that be a consideration?

Sandra Flores: **What we are required to give reports for is the accountability for the money that's used and how it's used and audits for that.** That's what we give reports for. Edie, you may be able to expound on that.

Edie Jessup: Ray is perfectly right. The unemployment rate is reflective of who's *looking* for a job. That's all it reflects, and people who have given up looking for a job or who cannot

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look for a job for health reasons or whatever aren't counted in that number. It is problematic. **My understanding though, is that much of this FEMA/EFSP money has been diverted to Homeland Security.** That's what we were told a couple years ago when we first started seeing the cuts to Fresno County's FEMA/EFSP allocation.

Rev. Paul Werfelmann, Hope Lutheran Church: I completely understand that unemployment rate doesn't truly reflect how many people are unemployed, but I'm wondering if that isn't pretty much constant across the United States anyway, so that it would pretty much be a wash, even the unreported unemployment.

Sandra Flores: **Nationally unemployment went down a tenth of a percent, so if Fresno County unemployment had gone down a tenth of a percent, our allocation would have been the same. So it's our area compared to the national rates.** I don't think anybody is going to dispute that any numbers statistically can't be challenged or are inaccurate. However, this is the formula. I'm just presenting to you the formula that they have, and according to their formula, we had a significant decrease of unemployment.

Eddie Jessup: And that, of course, depends on when they take those figures because it varies so much. **How many agencies were funded with Emergency Food and Shelter money in this last year?**

Sandra Flores: We have, I believe, eight or nine if we include United Way, but we're the fiscal agent for it. **I have nine Local Recipient Organizations (LROs) that were funded.**

Eddie Jessup: And isn't there a new Request For Proposals, for this money that is being considered at this time? **How would an agency who wanted to apply for Emergency Food and Shelter money do that?**

Sandra Flores: United Way received notice before our office closed on holiday break of the amount of FEMA/EFSP funding that Fresno County would receive. We published an ad in the newspaper the week of December 25. Local agencies had until January 11, 2006 at 4:30 pm (today) to respond with applications. Agencies must submit 15 copies. FEMA/EFSP board members evaluate the applications at a meeting this month to determine which organizations will receive the grants and for how much.

Eddie Jessup: **What are the top one or two recipient organizations? Where does most of that money go?**

Sandra Flores: **Most of the money goes to Salvation Army and Catholic Charities at this time for food, PG&E, and emergency rent.**

Eddie Jessup: **At what point in time during the year do they run out of that money, typically?**

Sandra Flores: The money is given in two disbursements-April and July. The first half will come as soon as the applications are approved and names are submitted to the National Board. Funds are deposited in the organizations' account. **We are seeing EFSP funds run out by the beginning of November in Fresno County.**

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Eddie Jessup: So Fresno County goes into the winter season with that money having been disbursed already and so that money is not available in the winter when it's needed most. There is a gap in EFSP funds between November and April (when the first allotment arrives for the next year). So once again, **this is an example of a program that's good because it works and it is providing direct services for those most in need. However, there's not enough of it. It runs out before the big need happens in this county.**

Cathy Caples: Sandra, I just had a thought. Now that I have responsibilities for other counties, some of the **other county United Ways actually do the RFP in advance of knowing exactly how much money is available. The minute the funding amount is announced you have access** to the money. They're able to then react much quicker, rather than waiting for the amount to be announced before they put out the RFP. I don't know if that's something maybe to think about for the future, but certainly you can check with Kings, Tulare, and Kern County because that's what they do.

Sandra Flores: As far as I understand Congress has to approve the money and it was approved at the end of December. I found out over the phone because I had a phone call that we have to print it, we have to give time for people to give applications in, and we cannot apply for Phase 24 until I close out Phase 23. I have one organization left who needs to give me their year-end report and I can close that out at that point and then tap into Phase 24. I was given strict instructions from Virginia that I cannot apply for Phase 24 until Phase 23 is complete.

Jeff Garner, Catholic Charities: So we have to think, too, of that \$780,000 only 55 percent of that is going to be spent on food, so it is a drastic cut and so **we are expecting quite a bit of changes at Catholic Charities just because of the amount of FEMA/EFSP money that has been cut from us.**

Jeremy Hofer, Fresno Metro Ministry Hunger & Nutrition Project: I think Cathy was referring to the RFPs to the community. The community RFPs would go out early November even before the exact amount of funding from the federal government is known for the next year, so that the community could have the time to put the applications together. When the actual announcement is made, we would be ready to roll and the money can be disbursed quicker.

Sandra Flores: Then my response would be I am instructed by our board about when all of that is done. Had we assumed we were going to get a \$1,012,000 again we would have been wrong to publish that because for us...

Cathy Caples: **In the other counties the United Ways aren't publishing an amount. They're just asking for applications for people who want to provide emergency food and shelter.**

Sandra Flores: **Well, I will certainly take that to our FEMA/EFSP Board.** Again, I took this over mid year, and so what I was instructed was the applications go out once we know what the totals are and actually all of the existing LROs, which are the organizations that receive money now, they actually got an e-mail with an application from me ahead of time as a courtesy. All of the existing agencies that receive FEMA money actually got the application before the publication.

Halfrid Nelson: I just need to make one sort of editorial comment here because I find that as I move around the community it seems like the needs keep getting greater and the pot keeps getting smaller. It's a huge challenge for all of us. **I like some of Cathy's comments about activism. Instead of talking about how we get this money and divide it up and when we do it and how we do it, it seems that one of the things that maybe we need to think about as a community how do we affect Congress?** That's where the buck stops literally, not metaphorically. **The dollars are stopping because they're not being allocated by Congress.** Maybe somebody will have some ideas about that.

Edie Jessup: That just segues in a lovely way into our next speaker. Sandra, thank you very much. I will without further ado introduce the Reverend Walt Parry, Executive Director of Fresno Metro Ministry.

Rev. Walt Parry, Executive Director, Fresno Metro Ministry: As we begin 2006 there are some things we do know and some things we do not know about whether residents in Fresno County and the valley will have the nutrition they need for their growth and for good health in the coming year. **What we do know is that good nutrition is essential for good health for everyone. We do know that if children do not get the nutritious food fuel they need their brains and their relationships with others deteriorate.** There are thousands of children in Fresno County and the valley where that's happening right now. What we also know is that **there is extensive poverty among our residents due to unemployment, seasonal employment, low wages, part-time jobs, lack of healthcare benefits, and lack of needed employment skills. The California Budget Project projects that a two-parent family in the valley counties when both are working would need an hourly wage of \$12.39, but in reality many make only the minimum wage or close to it, which is \$6.75 an hour, leaving this family \$23,462 short for the year.** The California Budget Project looked at Valley counties, including Fresno, and Tulare, counties. They factored the cost of housing, the cost of utilities, the cost of transportation, childcare, and then established a realistic cost of living for our area. It's what a family would really need to make ends meet. A two-parent family with only one working would need to earn \$17.71 an hour, which is \$10.96 more than those paid minimum wage in our valley. For that family their calculated expenses for the year will be \$36,836. However, their minimum wage income would be only \$14,040, \$22,796 short. A single-parent family needs to earn \$42,078 a year to meet expenses but in fact make only \$14,040 if paid minimum wage. Valley housing prices are now out of reach for many, and many families cannot afford the apartments they've been in as the cost has gone up in those very apartments.

We also know that the valley is the largest food producer in the world, but we also know that many of our residents cannot afford to buy the fresh produce grown here because of the cost or unavailability in the markets that serve them. Many of our food pantries do not have enough food to meet the need, not enough staff, and not enough volunteers to provide the needed services. Hours that people can access food from pantries have been cut and many restrict the number of times they provide food. Usually the only place in Fresno which I'm aware of for food weekday evenings and weekends would be Poverello House for a hot meal program. As we enter 2006, we also know that **heavy consumption of fast foods makes our residents sick with an epidemic of obesity and diabetes.** The **good news** is that Fresno Unified plans to send a food and physical activity policy to their board in February or March. The Kaiser *Thrive* commercials are also getting the message across to the general public about the benefits and the value of

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healthy eating and active living. **Another factor we know is that the valley is culturally diverse with 106 primary languages in Fresno Unified School District, which is another factor related to both food and other issues.** We are making some progress related to healthy eating and active living. We are making some progress in the Farm to School projects and enrolling more persons in assistance through food stamps. We are making significant progress in enabling persons with the food stamp resource to buy fresh produce at farmers markets and at flea markets. **There are efforts to strengthen and expand the Community Food Bank, which serves the food pantries. Maybe in 2006 we together can develop a plan that we implement for both service delivery and for public policy advocacy. What happens in Washington and Sacramento dramatically affects the people in our valley as to whether or not they will have access to the nutritious food they need for their good health and for the health of our communities.** We experience the needs of low-income populations more in our community than do most of the communities across this nation, **so there is no reason that we should not take the lead in advocacy related to those issues that affect low-income families both on a state and on a national level.**

The greatest threat, I think, that we have on the public policy level would be the already approved and the pending tax cuts that primarily benefit the richest people in this nation. The tax cuts will deplete the nation's treasury. It is dramatic as to how quickly it will deplete the treasury, and so there is now an **effort in this Congress to do away with and curtail entitlement programs such as food stamps, such as Medi-Cal, and to cut domestic spending because there will not be that money in the treasury.** Again, because of the tax cuts that affect the wealthiest people, **our treasury is going to dry up in this nation and we know what the deficits already are. That gives many people an excuse for cutting those things that help low-income and middle-income people** and that will probably have the biggest effect on whether or not people long-term in our community have the food they need.

Another threat to the people in our valley getting food is legislation that has been passed by the House but that would deny all services to undocumented persons. It will make it a crime for churches, nonprofits, and others to provide services or goods to undocumented people. This is a very dramatic way of getting rid of all the undocumented people who have been a part of our community for so many years and who are an essential part of the economics of our community. That is a major threat, whether or not it is instituted. The whole attitude trend now towards undocumented residents by this Congress and this administration will have a dramatic **effect both on what resources are available to all the people in our community but also how willing people will be to utilize those resources if they are fearful that they will be penalized in one way or another if they accept it.** Legislation will be introduced in California for the **minimum wage to be tied to the cost of living.** In the governor's budget, there is a recommendation for a very small increase, but there is now a recommendation that it be tied to the cost of living. We, of course, need to support those efforts for **non-polluting jobs in the valley that pay an adequate wage and health benefits. Finger imaging for food stamps needs to be terminated. Cost of living adjustments and CalWORKS needs to be implemented, not terminated. State reimbursement of county departments needs to be tied to the caseload for food stamps so that when numbers increase, funding for staffing needs to increase.** At this point, unless I've misunderstood, Fresno County could add 100,000 people to the food stamp resource, which is a nutrition resource that we want people to utilize, but they are given no additional money to serve those people. There needs to be legislation that ties the caseload for food stamps and probably other programs, too, to the

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amount of money that is reimbursed to the county. Also, in the governor's budget there are some **significant cuts to county agencies. We have to realize that will affect services and that means a lot of people will not get the food, childcare, or other services which they need** if there hasn't been the staff to work through those things. So all these things are tied together and cannot be seen in isolation. We've already talked about the FEMA Homeland Security decrease to Fresno County. **We just need to have the funds available so that all the people in our community can have the food and resources they need.** We can help people and often we cannot. When they do not have money for utilities, do not have money for rent, do not have money for food often we cannot help them at all and people are evicted, they're out on the street, they become homeless and everything worsens. Usually we can get them food for some period of time but not on a long-term basis. **All of our nonprofit organizations can provide anywhere from 5 to 20 percent of resources for direct lobbying. Many things we could work out in this regard are not direct lobbying.** There are also ways to disburse who does what so that no one organization or entity has too much of a direct lobbying load on them because we do want to protect the tax-exempt status of nonprofit organizations. But we can work together. We have the greatest need. **We can work together to determine the priority legislative efforts that are needed. I invite you to consider that we very quickly structure a task group to have a massive, widespread advocacy effort so that the people in our community will have the basic necessities of life and that the quality of life for everyone improves.** Thank you.

Ray Ensher: Thank you, Walt. Now you've joined the President and the Governor in your State of the County report. We appreciate that, and I so agree with much of what you said. I understand **the Governor said he would sign a minimum wage law. But the Democrats and others are working to have some kind of cost of living attached. We don't know whether he will sign the bill with that adjustment.**

The other question, do you have documentation on **how many undocumented people we have?** The last figure I heard was 30,000.

Rev. Walt Parry: It's my understanding that the **Governor's proposal for wage cost-of-living is a cost of living increase, but not tied to an annual basis. The California legislature will have a bill that would tie the minimum wage to an automatic cost of living adjustment.** Thus, every year, if the cost of living has gone up three percent then the minimum wage would go up three percent or some percentage.

On the number of undocumented people in the valley and Fresno County: first of all, I have no idea. Secondly, I think 30,000 would be an under report. Does anybody have any idea as to an estimated number? I would think it would be significantly over 30,000.

Cathy Caples: In the **Justice for Immigrants Campaign**, we've been talking about the Ag Jobs bill quite a bit, which would allow 500,000 guest workers, and they're estimating that all of those could be used within our state. That gives you any indication of how many we might have in the Central Valley.

Rev. Walt Parry: **Many of the undocumented people in the valley now are people that have lived here for years and years. We have many blended families where some members of the family would be undocumented, some would be citizens, and some would be legal residents. Most of these people at this point are Fresno County valley residents that contribute to our community.** In the past I've heard an estimate but I do not remember what it is, but 30,000 seems low to me.

Jeremy Hofer: I wanted to comment on the fact that nonprofits can give 5 to 20 percent of their time towards advocacy. I wonder if we could start a campaign with United Way and other organizations that interact with a lot of **nonprofits, a “Give Five Percent” campaign for nonprofits and sell the idea to them that advocacy** is something that’s going to keep them alive in the long run.

Rev. Walt Parry: We could try that through a variety of vehicles, I think. I think one thing that’s important to remember, too, is that there are many things that can be done still called **education**. I can send out a letter to 2,000 people, 20,000 people, or 100,000 people if I have the postage and I can give them information, “There is a bill that’s being proposed here. Here’s what it does. We encourage you to talk to your leaders about your opinion on this.” This is not telling them what to say. That generally is considered education. If I tell them, “Write your legislator. Tell your legislator to vote for this bill and these are the reasons why,” then that becomes **political lobbying**, and particularly if I meet with the legislator. Some things are kind of in between. I would say 90 percent, can fall within the education realm and about 10 percent would be direct lobbying. **Legislators need to hear continually from us** on an almost everyday basis related to those issues that we really care about. They’re hearing from others in that regard and they go from one appointment to another appointment to another appointment. Unless you have somebody there almost continually representing the stance that you have, the legislators often forget you.

Rev. Paul Werfelmann: What is your sense of the cooperation and coordination among all the agencies that are out there trying to address these problems? It seems to me one of the difficulties we have is that the forces we’re working against are the natural human tendencies to take care of ourselves. It’s real easy for the wealthy to do what comes natural and just worry about themselves. **There are so many different agencies taking different tacks and different ways of approaching the problems we have. Is there a sense from your chair that there is a lot of cooperation among the groups that are trying to advocate, distribute, and coordinate assistance work?** How much coordination is there and how much are we able to rally that coordination?

Rev. Walt Parry: Yes and no. On the 'yes' side there’s a good bit of collaboration oftentimes among several organizations in the local community and in relationship to some state organization that may be taking the lead legislatively. **Oftentimes there’s good communication. There is usually not good implementation.** The other part of it, we can all just do so much. Sometimes we have to decide, “Do I spend the next half hour giving these families food that they need or writing a legislator?” Many times the person’s primary job would be getting that food to that family. That would be one advantage, if we could come together in the local community and say “These are the basic principles from which we want public policy to work”, and have different groups sign on to that. However, it needs coordination, it needs staffing. **We usually know what needs to be done when. We often do not have the resources to fully do what needs to be done related to various policies and legislation.** Sometimes we’re a little shy. Sometimes I’m very shy related to something that’s going to be specifically political advocacy. I want to protect my organization. **However, we can find some other ways to do this vital advocacy. I think we do need an overall plan. At this point, our coordination is more based on relationships and circumstance.**

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Eddie Jessup: I have a perspective around the adequacy of resources. As those resources diminish, the competition between groups is high. As we've diminished our government safety net and are relying on charity and faith-based provision of services, it turns into much more of a **competitive process, and charity is not going to replace the consistent, adequate response that a coordinated.** We say government as if it's a horrible thing, but in terms of contributing to the common welfare and finding ways to deliver resources, the fractionalization that we are experiencing now by **charity competition** is really serious.

I want to call attention before we leave to the fact that next Tuesday at 1 o'clock Fresno Metro Ministry will be hosting a **Food Resources Task Group** meeting. We would like to utilize that as the place where **significant providers of services come together and we really seriously talk about what our resources are, who we're serving, and we get a feel for what the gap is.** We're hoping that you will want to participate with us in that, and get a better community understanding of how it works systemically. We have a broken system, and as we see diminished resources, we're going to have to get very smart and clever about how we provide services needed by our neighbors. Paul, I know that your church and many churches in town are providing services, providing food, providing rent money, and providing for emergency needs. We don't even have a clue as to how that amount is multiplied in our community. I think it's appreciable, but we don't know what it covers and what it doesn't. We don't have a clue where we can refer people to be served.

The one thing that we have in the food world is that **Community Food Bank is really stepping up to the plate** in ways that they haven't in previous years. I think that their resources are expanding and that the Community Food Bank is a smart distribution system that needs to be enhanced and we need to work with them. I'm glad Renetta Helms with **Fresno Madera Area Agency on Aging (FMAAA)** is here today because she works with the **Senior Nutrition Programs.** The FMAAA funding, again, has diminished and is not adequate to meet what we know is the food needs of elders. FMAAA food programs need our support. This is where the advocacy part comes in. **If you're providing services, you know what the situation is.** How we bring people together to actually act on what you know directly is through **ADVOCACY.** We have to begin to use our voice. I invite you to Tuesday's meeting and I hope that we can **begin to pull together both the provision of services and the advocacy that's needed to change some of the policy stances** and adequately response to local need.

Cathy Caples: When I first became involved with nonprofits there was an organization in town called HRC, Human Relations Commission. It was a group of nonprofits whose work was to keep the needs of the low-income in front of our city. That went by the wayside in an attempt to merge all of the little groups together when the Nonprofit Council was formed a couple of years ago. Now there is really not an effective Nonprofit Council and they're talking about reorganizing. **I really feel like we're at a crossroads in terms of nonprofit organizations coming together around advocacy.**

Eddie Jessup: I want to thank you all for your presence and attention and call on you to respond. Let us know if you would like budget updates. We can keep you informed about other advocacy opportunities for you on particular issues that have to do with Hunger, Nutrition, and low-income issues. Thank you very much. See you next month.