

# ***Healthy Polk 2020 Community Priority: Ensure access to affordable, healthy food for everyone***

March 18, 2011

***What follows is a summary of a process designed to transform a Healthy Polk 2020 community priority into specific, actionable strategies. The process was begun in the summer of 2010, and is continuing, as of this writing.***

## **Guidance from the experts**

### ***Meet the experts***

Thirteen food, hunger and nutrition experts, who were identified by their peers, were gathered on several occasions over a three-and-a-half-month period, beginning in November, 2010. The experts included:

- Brendan Comito, Chief Operations Officer, Capital City Fruit
- Jody Gatewood, MS, RD, LD, ISU Extension Nutrition and Health Program Specialist
- Linda Gobberdiel, MA, RD, LD, Executive Director, 1000 Friends of Iowa
- Gary Huber, General Manager, Iowa Food Co-op
- Sandy Huisman, MS, RD, LD, Director of Food & Nutrition Management, Des Moines Public Schools
- Susan Klein, MS, Nutrition Educator and Consultant
- Doris Montgomery, MS, RD, LD, Iowa Nutrition Network Coordinator, Iowa Department of Public Health
- Sarai Rice, Executive Director of Des Moines Area Religious Council
- Matt Russell, State Food Policy Project Coordinator, Drake University Agricultural Law Center
- Laura Sands, MS, RD, LD, Public Health Nutritionist
- Lynn Swinger, RD, LD, Windsor Heights Hy-Vee Dietitian
- Mary Swalla Holmes, Healthy foods advocate and food mapping consultant
- Angie Tagtow, MS, RD, LD, Owner Environmental Nutrition Solutions; Co-founder Iowa Food Systems Council; Coordinator Iowa Food Access & Health Working Group; Founder and managing editor of the *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition*

### ***What the experts say this priority means***

Experts believe that, if successful, we would see that every person in Polk County would be willing and motivated to choose healthy food. This requires, among other things, that the food is obtainable, and nutrition information is understandable. People would be willing to take the time to select and prepare nutritious food. There would be enough servings of healthy food available, especially for persons of limited income, and a way for each to access the food. There would be ample local and regional food production and processing capacity. Moreover, people would enjoy eating their food in a way few people do now. To see the complete [definition of the elements](#) of this priority see page 5.

### ***The community assets identified by the experts***

A subset of the experts was gathered to identify the community resources (“assets”). They catalogued the substantial bodies of work in the community that are related to this priority. The experts also identified names and contact information for decision makers for the resources that were identified. They considered such focus

areas as *awareness/promotion, advocacy/policy, safety/environment, nutrition, and hunger*. The stakeholders who were identified also became the names on the invitation list for the [community gathering](#) (see description on p. 2, below).

More than 100 community resources were identified and categorized as:

- *grassroots*
- *non-profits*
- *support groups/coalitions/work groups*
- *for-profits*
- *education/school-based*
- *policy-based*
- *government programs*

See the complete list of identified [assets](#), on pp. 6-8, below.

### ***Experts analyze the work in the community***

Following the identification of the assets, a second subset of experts was convened to perform an analysis of the assets. Through a facilitated process, these experts were asked *why isn't the current work taking place in the community enough to achieve the Healthy Polk 2020 priority*. Some of the questions they considered were: *Are there insufficient policies or policy barriers in place? Insufficient financial resources? Insufficient coordination of resources?* The experts identified seven key barriers to achieving *access to affordable, healthy food for everyone*:

These are the seven key barriers that were identified by the experts:

- Inadequate locations for healthy food retail and pantries to serve people of limited income
- Lack of awareness/participation of general public of USDA-funded and emergency food sources and eligible people (especially seniors/immigrants) who don't know they're eligible for programs
- Lack of a healthy food environment in schools
- Lack of desire, will, support and personal responsibility to make healthy nutrition choices
- Lack of policies to address dwindling land that is available for production of food
- Lack of supply of raw and processed locally-produced healthy foods
- Lack of coordinated communication and established networks across the food system sectors in Polk County

From the barriers, they produced a comprehensive set of 19 proposals for new initiatives and policies designed to bring the community qualitatively closer to *affordable, healthy food for everyone*.

See the complete list of these [proposals](#) for new initiatives and policies, on pp. 8-10, below.

## **Stakeholders decide what happens next**



### ***Community gathering***

The stakeholders identified during the asset identification process were invited to a five-hour community gathering on February 18, 2011. A select number of leaders from the Healthy Polk movement were also invited. The goals of the gathering were to:

- celebrate the work toward achieving all of the Healthy Polk 2020 priorities
- provide an opportunity for food stakeholders to network
- confirm, prioritize and advance the elements of the agenda proposed by the experts

### ***Priority Setting***

Forty-three individuals participated in the community gathering, and were seated at tables of between 6 and 8 people. Each table worked alone with its members, and was charged with the following:

- **Answer the question:** *Do these 19 proposals, taken together, bring us qualitatively closer to achieving this priority*
- **If yes:** organize all the priorities in a timeline to reflect
  - *which proposals need to happen immediately (in 2011)*
  - *which proposals could begin later (up until 2020)*

Ten minutes before completing the exercise, each table was allowed to share with the entire gathering any proposals they felt should be added to the list of 19, so that other tables could add them to their charting. (Four proposals were named, but none received any support beyond the table that mentioned it).

Each table was then allowed to transfer its timeline of priorities to a large wall chart so that it was possible to see the collective sense of all the stakeholders.



### ***Five projects launched***

The pattern that emerged on the wall chart pointed to five proposals that were important to begin immediately (see pp. 8-10 for the [full list of proposals](#)—where these five are highlighted—for a complete description of these proposals):

- Put in place policies and incentives that support a mobile food pantry
- Build infrastructure to do additional work
- Develop some means to facilitate regular communication among the food sectors
- Create a community food plan
- Develop a campaign to get agencies to help with online sign-up for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

After these five proposals were identified, stakeholders were allowed to gather around the proposals they wished to get involved with. Each of the five groups identified work that could begin over the following 90 days, and identified a point person. The entire group of attendees, plus all additional stakeholders related to this priority, will gather again on May 13, 2011 to assess progress and determine next steps.

### ***Broadening the reach and measuring results***

#### ***Example of ways individuals/organizations can get involved***

During the asset analysis process, the experts also recommended the following ways for individuals and organizations to advance the food priority:

##### **IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD**

- Look in your own 10-block area to see if healthy food is available
- Activate your neighborhood organization to support local food options in your area

##### **TO HELP OTHERS WHO HAVE BASIC FOOD NEEDS**

- Volunteer to do trainings about food assistance programs at congregate meal sites
- Volunteers to do outreach to churches about food assistance and emergency food programs and eligibility
- Help build momentum behind a mobile food pantry

IN YOUR WORKPLACE

- Become a corporate sponsor of food nutrition programs
- Host a staff training to learn about food programs your clients could access

TO JOIN YOUR FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES IN HEALTHIER EATING

- Get members of your sorority or similar service organization to pledge to each other their commitment to make healthy eating choices
- Get your organizations or workplace to make a corporate pledge to help their workers improve their healthy nutrition choices

TO HELP SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN MEET THEIR FOOD AND NUTRITION NEEDS

- Be a partner in activities to attract youngsters to the (school) summer feeding program
- Be a mentor or volunteer in the summer feeding program

TO SUPPORT LOCAL FOOD GROWING, PRODUCTION AND SALES

- Ask your church with an inspected kitchen if they would be willing to process locally-grown food
- Work with neighborhood organizations to revise covenants that restrict the growing of local food
- Participate in the startup of a food cooperative

TO UNDERSTAND AND IMPROVE THE OVERALL FOOD AND NUTRITION PICTURE

- Serve on a local or regional food policy council

***Measurable indicators***

The following indicators have been proposed to track the progress in the community toward the priority *ensure access to affordable, healthy food for everyone*:

- Per capita local consumption of healthy fruits and vegetables
- Percentage of the population that believes they live within X minutes (TBD) of a location where they can get healthy fruits and vegetables
- Percentage of population that believes the amount of money it costs to feed their household healthy fruits and vegetables is affordable

Separate program measures that will be used to track the progress of the initiatives that have been launched will be developed later.

**Defining the Elements of the Priority**  
**“Ensure Access to Affordable, Healthy Food for Everyone”**

<b>Access</b>	<b>Affordable</b>	<b>Healthy Food</b>	<b>Everyone</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readily/conveniently available</li> <li>• In a form the user knows how to use</li> <li>• Knowledge of how to prepare</li> <li>• Food literacy</li> <li>• Diverse product selection (for all cultures)</li> <li>• The built environment has a positive influence and message</li> <li>• There is time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price/cost of food</li> <li>• Good value received</li> <li>• People understand value they receive</li> <li>• Reasonable time/ value/ opportunity costs that allow people to compile a healthy diet</li> <li>• Food compared to other essential needs as a percentage of income</li> <li>• Is the food <u>system</u> affordable to all: it benefits the wealthy more than the poor</li> <li>• Food system is expensive to deliver as it's currently structured</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low salt/sugar / fat</li> <li>• Whole grain</li> <li>• Nutritionally (vs. energy) dense</li> <li>• High in fruits and vegetables</li> <li>• Healthy proteins</li> <li>• Whole, fresh and un- or less-processed</li> <li>• Has outcome of living life fully</li> <li>• Being in good relationship with our food</li> <li>• Interesting food</li> <li>• Brings joy</li> <li>• Balance of foods</li> <li>• Breast milk</li> <li>• Promotes sustainability of the environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other/all cultures (including lifestyle cultures)</li> <li>• Special diets</li> <li>• All incomes/ professions/ ages</li> <li>• 100% (including outcasts)</li> <li>• All geographic areas</li> <li>• Consideration for people who can't make their own choices</li> </ul>

## Polk County Food Assets

### Grass Roots

- Hope for the Hungry conference
- Faith-based gardens
- Faith-based education and advocacy
- Private local growers
- Ethical eating classes

### Non Profits

- Iowa Human Needs Advocates
- Urban Ambassadors
- Des Moines Area Religious Council
  - Movethefood.org
- Practical Farmers of Iowa
- Iowa Environmental Council
- Boys/Girls Club food education
- Wellness Council of Iowa
- Primary Health Care, Inc.
- Meals on Wheels
- Homeless meal sites
- Food pantries
- Food pantry nutrition education
- Church meals
- Food Bank of Iowa
- Empowerment Gardens (Polk County Master Gardeners)
- Hospital Policies on Breastfeeding
- Mercy Health Coaches
- Lactation Consultants
- Commodity Groups
- Angel Food Ministries
- Buy Fresh Buy Local
- Live Healthy Iowa (Iowa Sports Foundation)
- Soil and Water Conservation Society
- Mom's Meals (Young Women's Resource Center)
- Non-profit senior care centers
- Iowa Food co-op

### Support Groups/Coalitions/Work Groups

- Healthy Urban Food And Farming (1000 Friends of Iowa)
- Breastfeeding Coalition
- La Leche League
- Non-profit disease support groups (hospitals, YMCA)
- Eating disorders programs
- Breastfeeding support groups and breastfeeding rooms
- Iowa Food Access & Health Working Group

### **For-Profit**

- Job training in food production
- Web resources
- Local Mass Media
- Health food stores
- Ethnic grocery stores and restaurants
- Dietitians at stores
- Food labeling
- Private coaches and trainers
- Farmers Market
- Local distributors of fresh produce
- Community Supported Agriculture subscriptions
- Dollar stores
- Private label organic food certification
- Worksite cafeterias/vending/meals
- Senior care centers

### **Education/School-based**

- Healthy Schools Partnership (American Dietetic Association, PE4 Life, American Council for Fitness & Nutrition)
- School-based gardens
- Federal requirements on wellness and food policies in schools
- Central Campus horticulture program
- DMACC and Central Campus culinary arts programs
- Public school adult education
- Environmental learning courses in schools
- School breakfast
- School lunch
- Summer meals
- Food bank of Iowa :Backpack Buddy
- Training tables for student athletes

### **Policy**

- Hospital policies to support breastfeeding
- Iowa Environmental Council
- Iowa Food Systems Council (statewide)
- Federal requirements on wellness and food policies in schools
- Iowa Healthy Kids Act
- DHHS Early Childhood Standards for health/safety
- Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture
- Health Care Reform Bill (Food labeling, Community-based efforts)
- Soil and Water Conservation Society

### **Government programs**

- Community gardens
- IDPH Iowa Nutrition Network
- IDPH Iowa Nutrition Program

- SNAP
- Iowa food stamp education program (BASICS)
- Social marketing
- ISU Extension: Say Yes to Family Meals
- ISU Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)
- ISU Family Nutrition Program (FNP)
- ISU Food Handler training (SafeFood© non-certification program)
- ISU Food Safety Certification Training (ServSafe® program in partnership with Iowa Restaurant Association)
- ISU On Farm Food Safety and GAPs Training
- IDALS organic food certification
- IDALS/Polk County Soil & Water Conservation District
- IDALS Farmers Market Nutrition program
- IDALS/DHS EBT program for Farmer’s Market & Iowa Food coop
- Head Start
- USDA Team Nutrition program
- USDA Urban Agriculture
- USDA-NRCS Urban Soil program
- USDA –Heartland RC&D- Food systems
- USDA - WIC
- USDA /Polk County Supplemental Foods
- Polk County “Better Choices/Better Health” program
- Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- Child care nutrition programs (Polk County?)
- SHARE food program, West Des Moines
- Polk County congregate meal site programs
- Des Moines Park/Rec Gardening Support program

## **Comprehensive Proposals to Achieve the Priority**

*Highlighted items reflect projects launched at Community Gathering on February 18, 2011*

**1. Mobile food pantry.** Put in place policies and incentives that support a mobile food pantry- Proposed champion: DMARC; needs a campaign plan

**2. Increase sales of healthy foods.** Develop incentives that help people of limited income buy healthy foods. Stimulate more for-profit businesses that sell healthy foods – needs a champion and a campaign plan

**3. Produce a definition of “healthy food retail”** for our community- Proposed assignment for Angie Tagtow; as a start see report, page 36, *Cultivating Resilience: A Food System Blueprint that Advances the Health of Iowans, Farms and Communities* ([www.IowaFoodSystemsCouncil.org/cultivating-resilience/](http://www.IowaFoodSystemsCouncil.org/cultivating-resilience/))

**4. Build infrastructure** to do additional work.

- Form a Polk County Food Policy Council
- Convene a “Food Assistance Working Group” of food assistance programs and food pantries (ISU Extension & DMARC)
- Convene a discussion among schools to identify ways to collect and share information on an ongoing basis about available funding opportunities to pay for nutrition education

- Facilitate and create partnerships with existing businesses, agencies and non-profits to address infrastructure to support local growers
- Partner with parents and mentors who could help with the summer feeding program. Partner with other organizations that could provide food for parents and older siblings at the summer feeding program

*Proposed champion: Heartland RC&D, DMARC or Drake Ag Law; Iowa Food Systems Council; and an organizational chart*

5. Develop a tool to facilitate regular **communication** among the food sectors- *an assignment*

6. **Community Food Plan.** Do a community food assessment. Catalog all the community assets of the food system, including non-traditional sources. Create a community food plan. Address ways to integrate Food Policy recommendations with local laws and codes. City/County should incorporate a “food access” element into their comprehensive plans. *Needs a champion*

7. **Eligibility education and awareness.** Develop a contact list of all food assistance programs people could be eligible for, so that providers could use this for referrals, and include a strategy for distribution to agencies and web posting. Create opportunities to educate staff at food-related agencies about other food programs. Develop “Food Assistance 101” training online for providers. *Needs a responsible party*

8. **Population-specific education and awareness.** Develop a campaign to educate SNAP program beneficiaries about benefit that allows them to purchase garden seeds and plants. *Proposed responsible party: Healthy Urban Food & Farming (HUFF) group*

9. Develop a campaign to get agencies to help with online **SNAP sign-up** at Food pantry sites, WIC, Headstart, BMC, PHC, etc. – *Proposed responsible party: DMARC and/or Food Access and Health working group*

10. **Co-locate** food assistance **programs** with health, human services offices. *Champion: community planning office of some kind*

11. Develop a **social marketing campaign** to influence consumers to make better nutritional choices.- *needs a champion and a campaign*

12. Convene and coordinate with nutrition education and assistance programs to help **promote the summer feeding program**- *needs a campaign*

13. Develop ways to **promote environments** that support healthy nutrition choices (e.g., the *FOOD and FITNESS* Initiative in King County, WA)- *needs a champion*

14. **Create a healthy school food environment.** Develop a list of best practices on how to creatively incorporate nutrition education into the classroom; a list of available programs that provide nutrition education; and a list of other ways to promote nutrition in schools, and make those lists available to all schools. Incorporate nutrition education into school wellness policies and classroom curriculum- *needs an advocate and a plan*

15. **Integrate dietitians into public health.** Ensure a revenue stream for dietitian’s services to be incorporated into public health, especially in clinical settings and prevention activities- *needs an advocate and a plan*

16. Assess the number and locations of sites and propose ways to **expand the summer feeding program.** Create partnerships with other agencies and organizations that could draw youth to the summer feeding program. Incorporate a gardening curriculum into the summer feeding program. Identify and address programming and transportation issues that prevent kids from using the summer feeding program. Seek a waiver from rule that all food must be consumed on site (summer youth program)- *needs a champion and a plan*

17. **Increase local food production and processing.** Partner with community garden advocates to support plots for growing food at summer feeding program sites, or as part of the summer feeding program. Survey and quantify the current spaces available for growing food. Facilitate more light processing from the faith-based community

(and others) that already have inspected kitchens, through training and other resource needs. Involve more faith-based community gardens and local growers in local production through recruitment and training. Survey, report and produce recommendations on covenants, zoning and other restrictive instruments that prohibit food production. Implement policies that encourage food production in new developments. Promote policies in City/County comprehensive plans that encourage local food production and preserve land for food production. Address barriers in local comprehensive plans to local food growing and processing – *Proposed champion the gardening portion: Alicia Kates, empowerment garden planning; Proposed champion for barriers: HUFF group; needs a champion for faith-based and processing portions; needs a plan*

18. Provide **technical assistance** for small growers and businesses. Facilitate Small Business Development training for growers and processors- *needs a champion*

19. Create ways to quantify, coordinate and jointly-**market produce** from faith-based and other local growers- *needs a champion*