

ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, HEALTHY FOOD FOR EVERYONE

Issue Brief



Volume III, March 22, 2012

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Food Stakeholder Regathering	1
Food Group Highlights – Mobile Food Pantry	1
Food Group Highlights – A Community Food Plan	2
Partners in Food Assistance	3
Save the Date	5
References	5

Food Stakeholder Regathering

Hunger and nutrition leaders are gathering every three months to check in on work related to the Healthy Polk 2020 priority *Ensure access to affordable, healthy food for everyone.*

Discussion and problem solving was held to advance five new projects related to the priority.

relationships within the food community

- Improve communication within the food community
- Create a community food plan
- Develop a campaign to get agencies to help with online-sign-up for food (SNAP)



- Establish a mobile food pantry
- Strengthen

“One of the things we have discovered as a result of opening several additional pantry sites over the last couple of years is that every time we do so, we activate an almost entirely new group of users. What this says to us is that there continue to be people needing emergency food who do not live close enough to a pantry site to be able to access food there. Mobile food pantries enable us to meet some of that need by going weekly to spots that are not close to current pantries, thus serving, for the most part, people who are not already being served.” -Sarai Rice, Executive Director, DMARC

GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

WANT TO SEE ALL THE DETAILS? SEE THE SUMMARIES OF NEW PROJECTS ON THE HEALTHY POLK 2020 FOOD PAGE.

The Mobile Food Pantry is operated by the Dream Center of Des Moines <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Des-Moines-Dream-Center/78998675828>

Dream Center is an independent, faith-based non-profit organization focused on meeting the practical

and spiritual needs of the Greater Des Moines Area.

DMARC is one of the Dream Center’s partners and provides some food when they have it available. They are giving away over 700 grocery bags of food per event. The pantry goes out twice a month on Saturdays to Evelyn Davis, Bates and Pete Crivaro Parks.



MORE GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

WANT TO SEE ALL THE DETAILS? SEE THE **SUMMARIES OF NEW PROJECTS ON THE HEALTHY POLK [2020 FOOD PAGE](#)**.

“Food is a sustaining and enduring necessity. Yet among the basic essentials for life — air, water, shelter, and food — only food has been absent over the years as a focus of serious professional planning interest.”

“The following are a few converging factors that explain the heightened awareness among planners that the food system is indeed significant:

- Recognition that food system activities take up a significant amount of urban and regional land
- Awareness that planners can play a role to help reduce the rising incidence of hunger on the one hand, and obesity on the other
- Understanding that the food system represents an important part of community and regional economies
- Awareness that the food Americans eat takes a considerable amount of fossil fuel energy to produce, process, transport, and dispose of
- Understanding that farmland in metropolitan areas, and therefore the capacity to produce food for local and regional markets, is being lost at a strong pace
- Understanding that pollution of ground and surface water, caused by the overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture adversely affects drinking water supplies
- Awareness that access to healthy foods in low-income areas is an increasing problem for which urban agriculture can offer an important solution
- Recognition that many benefits emerge from stronger community and regional food systems.”

**American Planning Association -
Policy Guide on Community and
Regional Food Planning**

A Community-Based Food Plan

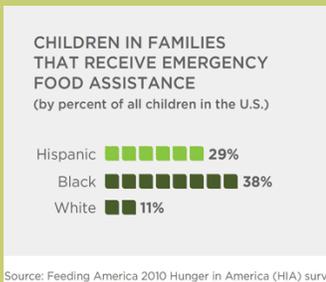
A *draft* food plan vision prepared for Healthy Polk 2020 by Linda Gobberdiel, MA RD LD, President, Food and You, LLC and Partner, Health Discovered, LLC was shared at the March food group meeting. *A Polk County Food Plan – The New Norm A Community Based Food Plan* will include agreed-upon goals, data, and timelines. The thought behind the plan is that there is a lot of important work occurring in Polk County that ultimately impacts our local and regional food system. Opportunities exist for our work to positively impact economic and health-related indicators. Without measures and feedback it has been difficult to know whether the work that we do individually and in collaboration is having any effect. At times we unintentionally compete or duplicate efforts.

This proposed community-based food plan builds on our current work to ensure access to affordable, healthy food for all Iowans with the addition of documenting impacts on health and the Iowa economy. It includes capturing baseline and on-going data agreed upon by the Healthy Polk food specialist group in collaboration with other organizations, locally and state-wide, so we are consistent in our measures and data results are meaningful. The plan includes the development of two new entities to maintain focus and build momentum at the community and the regional level. The food plan also includes possible funding sources including companies and organizations that will benefit from healthier Iowans and a healthier economy.

Currently hunger and nutrition leaders are providing input and comments to the draft plan.

Food assistance programs are designed to help people with little or no income to have access to food for a healthy diet.

Food Pantries, SNAP, WIC Nutrition, county Commodity Supplemental Food, community meal sites, schools' free/reduced lunch programs, summer feeding programs, Backpack Buddies program, meals at shelters, Salvation Army's Sally Wagon, and local congregations, are all local food assistance assets.



www.healthypolk.org



Priority #10 - "Ensure equal access to safe and affordable and healthy food for all Polk County residents."

Partners in Food Assistance

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Primary Health Care is a federally qualified health care center. They network with DMARC (Des Moines Area Religious Council) and they also have a food pantry in one of their offices, or they will even take food to homeless camps on emergency basis. Primary Health Care works with the Iowa Food Bank in purchasing their food. They buy the food in bulk, but they have limited grant money and will be trying to save money until the end of the year. They encourage those who are eligible for food stamps and WIC to apply.

"Everybody has a right to health care, to housing and to basic needs of life, such as food." **Deirdre Henriquez**, Primary Health Care

IOWA HOMELESS YOUTH CENTERS

Iowa Homeless Youth Centers is a community based center program of Youth and Shelter Services Inc. Their organization is located on 7th & Grand in Des Moines, which has the highest concentration of homeless people in the state of Iowa.

IHYS works with the DMARC food pantry in the delivery of food. The biggest challenge IHYS have is the numbers of people who are in need are going up while the amount of food they can provide is declining.

Along with delivering food, there is also the availability of food in set locations such as the Connection Café (provides a meal at noon and an evening meal) and also food provided by Central Iowa Shelter Services (their main outlet, mostly ran by volunteers)

"You have to recognize people in their current situation; it requires a lot of patience from us and for us not to judge. If people show the need for food and follow the rules then we have an obligation to provide that for them." **Jim McWeeny**, Resource Coordinator Iowa Homeless Youth Centers,

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 12.1% of Iowa households, on average, experienced "food insecurity" in 2010. The 2010 National average was 14.5%.

PARTNERS IN FOOD ASSISTANCE

“If you can’t feed a hundred people, then just feed one.”

Mother Teresa

“If there is anything that is the most fundamental thing that people really need is food. It is the thing that makes everything else possible, if you are eating the food that you need then you can think, work, go to school, and have a relationship with your family.” **Sarai Rice**



County-level profiles containing hunger related data can be found at:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/hunger/existingdata.htm>

DES MOINES AREA RELIGIOUS COUNCIL (DMARC)

DMARC is an interfaith organization whose members are congregations. They are interfaith (beyond Christian) because they have Christian, Muslim, and Unitarian congregations. DMARC started in 1952 and they are having their 60th anniversary this year.

“Because we come from so many faith traditions, we’ve always had an emphasis not primarily on what we believe, but on what we can do together. We have this specific focus, one that Healthy Polk is interested in, which is actually providing **healthy food**. We have a really strong commitment to not just filling people’s stomachs, but to actually improve their health.”

Emergency food has been, since the sixties, mostly the work of retired people. Our most consistent donors are fairly older donors. The Move the Food and Facebook/Twitter is our attempt to reach out to multiple younger generations and keep them in this emergency food interest over their lifetimes.”

“Through the work of DMARC, I have learned that “low income people who do not have access to healthy food love healthy and fresh food”. . . . it isn’t just people who never work, its people who have always worked, and there just aren’t enough jobs that pay enough to sustain a family, to sustain a life”.

“What we are really seeing is the ability to affect how people eat by giving them food that is good for them. Every time we open a pantry we activate an entirely new group of people. They essentially didn’t have access, even though in theory they did, because they were too far away, and with low income people, transportation is always an issue.”

“There is a woeful disconnect on how we measure poverty and what is actually sustainable.

- “You have to make 300% of poverty to be considered a sustainable family.”
- “There are 29,000 people in Des Moines that are at poverty level.”
- “At 200% of poverty there are 100,000 people.”
- “Every decision that we make as a society creates this problem, we have these hundreds of thousands of people who do not make a sustainable living, even though they work really hard.”

“A big part of our message, recently, is that money is better than food. People’s first instinct is to give food when we can buy so much more food with their dollars at the retail level when we are spending it at the food bank or with our wholesale distributors.”

The community and stakeholders can help with the movement of Priority #1. “What I tell congregations, is that in order for low income people to be able eat healthy food, you have to eat healthy food yourself. Because the weight of the marketplace will do more for this than we ever can. If the marketplace shifts more towards healthy food then there will be more access to it and more interest in eating that way.”

“I need people to care about their health so we can carry that into the low income community as well.” **Sarai Rice, Executive Director, DMARC**

SAVE THE DATE

Please Join Us for the next Re-Gathering of the Food Stakeholders!

Friday, June 15th at 8:00 AM

Location TBA

For More Information Contact:

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Healthy Polk 2020

www.polkcountyiowa.gov/healthypolk

JOIN THE MOVEMENT!

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Reference Sources for Issue Brief

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Feeding America's Hunger in America 2010 Study
American Planning Association
Des Moines Area Religious Council

Chair, Healthy Polk 2020
Chris McCarthy, Project Manager, the Center for Healthy Communities,

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