



Local Leaders Working with National Partners to End Hunger

Chapter Summary

Ending hunger in the United States requires leadership not only at the federal level but also at the state and local levels. There are countless examples of locally led initiatives that are achieving great success in their communities. At their core, these initiatives are formed around the belief that to end hunger at the community level, a broad range of stakeholders must unite behind a common vision and strategy. Community ownership is critical to achieving sustainable solutions to hunger. Partnerships at the local level and between local initiatives and state and federal government build that ownership. Local partners do more than feed people; they feed information to leaders in government and show them how together they can fight hunger more effectively. A national goal to end hunger would place their independent local efforts within a wider framework, connecting them with the many other community led anti-hunger efforts, so that together they develop a shared narrative about the critical need to end hunger in America.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS CHAPTER

- The president should convene a bipartisan White House summit on Hunger, and Congress should reinstate the House and Senate select committees on hunger and nutrition.
- Local leaders and their national partners should bring community groups together to work toward ending hunger.

Independent initiatives to end hunger range in scale, from small towns and counties to major metropolitan areas and states. This chapter highlights a handful of initiatives that are representative of different approaches. Some are led by governors, mayors, or state or local elected representatives, while others are entirely volunteer-run. The aim of the chapter goes beyond showcasing these efforts to showing the numerous contributions that local efforts make when they partner with the federal government. First, let's put the federal role in this

partnership in perspective and consider the political environment in which local efforts must operate.

In 2013, the nutrition safety net comes under attack

For more than half a century, federally funded nutrition programs have been the mainstay of the nation's fight against hunger here at home. It is worth a quick reminder of how these programs came to be. During World War II, a surprising number of young men were rejected for military service because when they arrived for their physicals, they turned out to be malnourished.¹ Congress and the

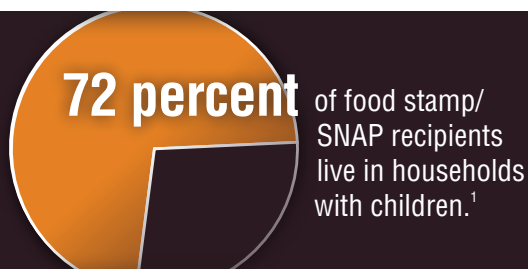
White House saw the need for a permanent federal nutrition program. In 1946, the National School Lunch Program was established to ensure that U.S. national security would never again be jeopardized by malnutrition.

Since then, Congress has established other nutrition programs to reach targeted populations at appropriate access points.² They are administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The biggest federal program is food stamps, now known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which is accessed with a debit card at most food retailers. School lunch, breakfast, and afterschool programs serve tens of millions of school-age children with meals that must meet strict nutrition guidelines. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, or WIC, targets pregnant and nursing women and their young children, both those in the critical 1,000-day "window of



USDA /Lance Cheung

International School Meals Day at Harmony Hills Elementary School in Silver Spring, MD.



According to a Gallup poll in August 2013, Americans earning \$75,000 a year or more are **more likely to eat fast food** than are lower-income groups. Those earning less than \$20,000 a year are the **least likely** to eat fast food.²



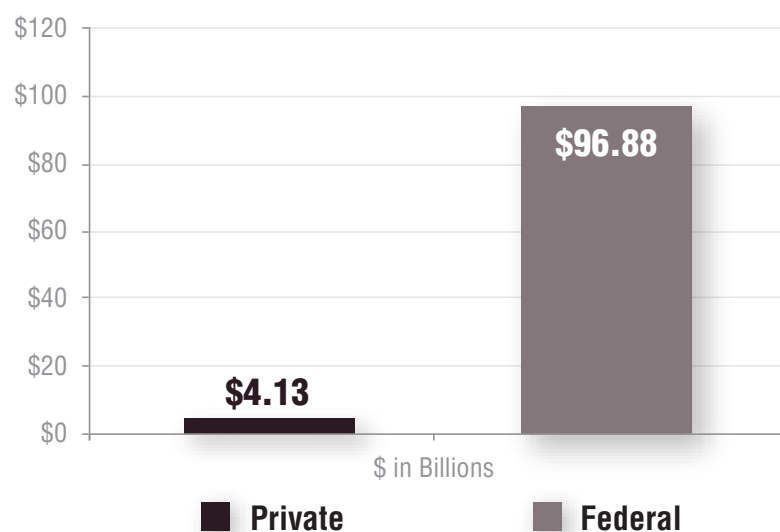
opportunity” between pregnancy and age 2 and those ages 2 through 5. Food distribution programs send packages of bulk commodities to local providers who serve meals in congregate settings, such as in long-term care facilities for low-income seniors.

Nearly three-fourths of USDA’s entire operating budget now goes to nutrition programs.³ In 2012, Bread for the World released a fact sheet that showed how much the federal nutrition programs contribute to fighting hunger compared to all the food contributed by private charities. For every 24 bags of food assistance in the United States, government nutrition programs provide 23.⁴ See Figure 4.1. The fact sheet was not intended to downplay the role of charities in fighting hunger or to minimize the value of their efforts. Rather, it was to highlight that private charity couldn’t possibly expand by enough to compensate for proposed cuts to the federal nutrition programs.

SNAP is often called the nation’s first line of defense against hunger. In 2013, more than 47 million Americans per month participated in the program—that is nearly one in six of us. The size of the program fluctuates as the needs rise and fall, because SNAP eligibility depends on income. Since the Great Recession ended in 2009, demand has remained at an all-time high. This makes SNAP a very clear indicator that the post-recession economy is still quite weak. SNAP participation will shrink once the economy improves and more good jobs that pay a living wage are created.

In 2013, some members of Congress used reauthorization of the farm bill to propose massive cuts to the SNAP program. The farm bill is the authorizing legislation for SNAP. Nobody arguing for these cuts could show that the program was not effective—the issue was its cost, nearly \$81 billion in 2012.⁵ The cuts that the House proposed for a 10-year appropriation cycle would result in less than 1 percent (0.086) savings in federal spending over this period.⁶ Meanwhile, anywhere from 4 million to 6 million people would lose their SNAP benefits.⁷

Figure 4.1 Private vs. Federal Food Assistance (2011)



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Feeding America.

In July 1998, **22.1 children** received meals through the summer nutrition program for every 100 who received free or reduced-price school lunch in the 1997-1998 school year.³



In July 2012, only **14.3 children** received meals through the summer nutrition program for every 100 who received free or reduced-price school lunch in the 2011-2012 school year.⁴

Bills that Congress is considering at the time of this writing would make accessing the nutrition programs more difficult. A House bill would limit SNAP benefits to three months over a three-year period to any unemployed person between the ages of 18 and 50 who was not raising children. An amendment approved in the Senate-passed farm bill would bar people convicted of certain crimes from receiving SNAP benefits for life—regardless of whether they had finished serving time decades ago. The amendment would also impact children and

other members of the household by reducing the family's total food budget.

A decade ago the SNAP program seemed to finally be getting some respect on Capitol Hill. Although it was called the Food Stamp Program until 2008, its image had vastly improved since administrators replaced the old paper coupons (the “food stamps”) with an electronic debit card. The debit card has reduced payment errors (both overpayments and underpayments) to the point that it is not an exaggeration to describe SNAP as a model of efficiency. Participation rates climbed because there was less stigma, thanks both to the use of the debit card and to the general acceptance by policy-makers at the national and state levels that SNAP serves an essen-



Courtesy Minneapolis Health Department

SNAP recipients can use their EBT-debit cards to shop for food at farmers markets, thanks to wireless technology provided to farmers markets by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

tial countercyclical role in an increasingly low-wage economy.

Now, however, SNAP is under attack more than it has been in decades. Ironically, this is not because of program deficiencies, but because it is performing too well. Groups such as the ones featured in this chapter have helped to increase SNAP participation in their communities. Neighbors have reached out to neighbors to say there is no shame in seeking help through this program if you are unemployed, or you don't earn enough to buy nutritious foods for your children, or you've become ill and your medical bills make it difficult to pay for the food you need to get well. Local anti-hunger advocates are not acting as Republicans or Democrats. They are simply members of a community who want to help their neighbors who've fallen on hard times. As they've learned more about how to help them effectively, they have realized that the federal nutrition programs are the best tools they have.

“Groups such as the ones featured in this chapter have helped to increase SNAP participation in their communities.”

Indianapolis, Indiana: Hoosier Pie



The Indianapolis story illustrates how local leaders are working to build a broader coalition of stakeholders fighting hunger in their communities by raising public awareness—not only of the problem, but also the solutions.

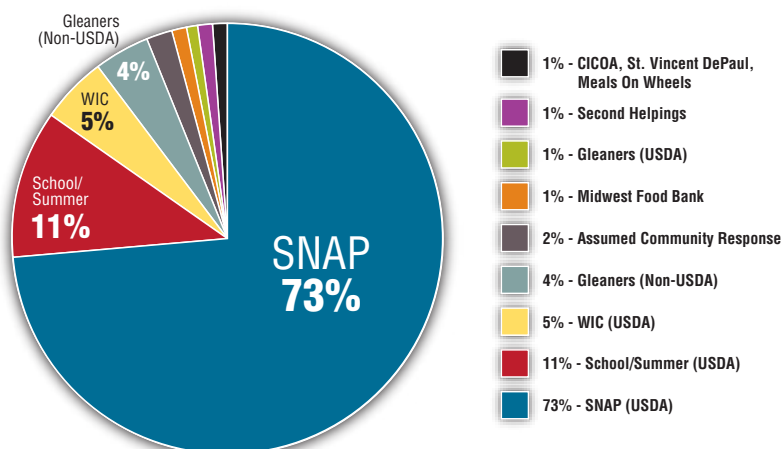
People who fight hunger at the local level have a gut feeling that the United States would be a hungry country indeed without SNAP and other nutrition programs. In Indianapolis, Dave Miner, chair of the Indy Hunger Network (IHN) and former board chair of Bread for the World, wanted something more than a gut feeling when he talked with people in the community. His wife Robin collected information on all the major sources of food assistance in Indianapolis. Data were readily accessible. Federal nutrition program data were available from the state agencies that administer them. Figuring out the rest required some phone calls and emails to private charities, but this didn't prove difficult either.

By crunching the numbers, the Miners discovered that federal nutrition programs accounted for more than 90 percent of the food assistance in Indianapolis in 2012. SNAP's contribution alone was 73 percent. The largest contributor on the private sector side was Gleaners, the Indianapolis area food bank that is the face of hunger relief for many Indy residents. Gleaners represented 4 percent. See Figure 4.2.

Robin developed a simple pie chart so that anyone can visualize where Indianapolis' food assistance comes from. When they show it to the people they hope will support IHN's work, most of them are taken aback by the size of the federal government's contribution. A typical reaction is, "Does it look like this everywhere?" In fact, it does. Indianapolis is not an anomaly when it comes to the amount of work the federal nutrition programs are doing to end hunger.

When people think about food assistance in their community, the pictures that come to mind are neighbors providing food to neighbors, children collecting canned goods for a food drive at their school, the food pantry in a church basement, a soup kitchen for homeless people. A government program does not seem the same as a neighbor, and media visibility for SNAP is mostly congressional rhetoric. Another reason SNAP is not recognized as the vital program

Figure 4.2 Sources of Food Assistance, Indianapolis (2012)



Source: Indy Hunger Network (2013).

that it is: those who need SNAP have been made to feel ashamed of “taking government assistance.” The anonymity of using a SNAP debit card helps them feel less embarrassed, but it also makes the program’s contributions to the community much less visible.

Indianapolis has set a goal of ensuring that by 2015, anyone who is hungry will be able to get the nutritious food they need.⁸ The role of IHN is to provide a space for all the parts of the anti-hunger infrastructure in the city to come together and solve problems. In a city the size of Indianapolis, any social infrastructure will be fragmented—not by intent, but by sheer numbers and logistics. Churches may be talking to other churches, but they may not be coordinating with groups outside their neighborhood. The heads of key government offices like the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services may not know anybody on the volunteer side. People who know programs for seniors may not know those for children and vice versa.

The pie chart has galvanized support for the contributions that SNAP, WIC, school meals, and other federal nutrition programs will make to achieving the “hunger-free” goal. Being able to look at the pie chart also makes it easier for people who might not be inclined to pick up the phone to call their member of Congress or visit the member’s local office to advocate for the program—and to persuade their friends and family to do so as well.

“Research shows that 42 percent of the food-insecure people in the Indianapolis region have incomes too high to be eligible for federal nutrition programs.”

BOX 4.1

HOOSIER HEROES

Dave Miner, executive director of the Indy Hunger Network, and his wife Robin have been anti-hunger activists for more than 30 years. From 2007 to 2012, Dave chaired Bread for the World’s board of directors. In 2008, he retired after a career with the pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly, first in science, then in management. Now, he is using the skills he learned over a career in leadership positions at Lilly and its affiliate company Elanco, plus his 30 years of advocacy training through involvement with Bread for the World, to help Indianapolis become a hunger-free community. Robin is a board member at Indy Hunger Network, applying a career’s worth of experience in computer science and engineering to the cause of ending hunger. Dave and Robin continue to lead their local Bread for the World chapter in Indianapolis.



Dave and Robin Miner of Indianapolis, IN.

Laura Elizabeth Pohl for Bread for the World

IHN estimated it needed about 27 million additional meals per year to achieve its goal of feeding everyone in the Indianapolis region who is hungry. To realize this goal, contributions are needed from both public and private programs. SNAP can fill some of the meal gap, but it cannot do it all. Feeding America's research shows that 42 percent of the food-insecure people in the Indianapolis region have incomes too high to be eligible for federal nutrition programs,⁹ which means their only sources of food assistance are private charities.

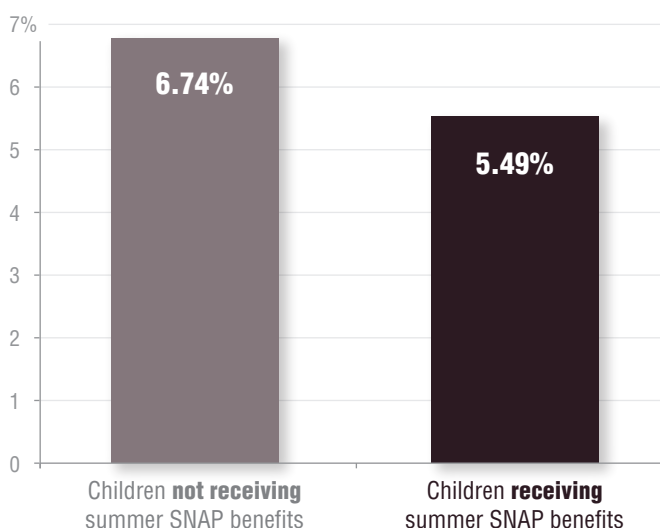
Food drives and pancake breakfasts to raise charitable contributions are fun group activities and opportunities to educate the community about hunger, but they are not going to fill a 27-million-meal gap. That's where the business community comes in. Dave Miner shows the pie chart to business leaders in the community, and they can see how much their contribution matters. Indianapolis may not have any more than its share of big-hearted business leaders who want to help end hunger, but many business leaders in Indy are inspired by the fact that someone is using data and analysis to solicit their support. "So many have told me how grateful they are we're quantifying," says Dave. "They find the goal of ending hunger inspiring but the fact that we are quantifying it has inspired their confidence." That confidence translates into financial and human resources and greater levels of commitment to working with IHN.

In Indianapolis as everywhere else in the nation, the summer meals program is the weakest link in the child nutrition programs. The program is intended to reduce the risk of child hunger during the months when school is out of session, but participation rates are one-sixth those of the school lunch and breakfast programs. The barriers to increasing participation in the summer meals programs are well understood. The main barrier in Indianapolis is that parents don't know the program exists. Lack of transportation is also a barrier.

In 2011, IHN set out to rebrand the summer meals programs in Indianapolis, giving it a new name, Summer Servings, a website, and a high-profile launch via the mayor's office. There isn't much that Indy's mayor, Greg Ballard, can do to improve the program on the policy side since federal officials make most of the policy decisions that affect program

Figure 4.3 Summer Boost in Children's SNAP Benefits Reduces Hunger

Share of children in study with very low food security*



*Very low food security = hunger. Results shown here cover the three states where benefits were delivered through SNAP.

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2013). Based on U.S. Department of Agriculture Summer Survey, 2011.

operations. But the mayor can improve participation through his office's support for and promotion of the program. Mayor Ballard was happy to help. By launching Summer Servings with Mayor Ballard and Congressman André Carson, IHN knew it would attract local media attention and that would help build awareness among parents that a program exists.

IHN also needed a strategy to inform parents about summer meal sites near their homes. Sponsors of summer feeding sites, usually churches or

small community groups, haven't got the budget to pay for advertising, so IHN is doing it on behalf of all 200+ sites. Resources from its partners in the business community provided the needed support. They also worked with 211, a service that connects people to local human service providers through their phone. IHN contracted with a marketing firm to conduct a survey and found very few people with knowledge of 211. Now they are promoting awareness of 211 as well.

IHN's work is showing that innovation at the

BOX 4.2

WHY A PUBLIC/PRIVATE SYSTEM IS OUR NATION'S BEST CHOICE FOR FEEDING THE HUNGRY

Dave Miner, Indy Hunger Network

Some say that all food assistance should be handled by private charities, while others say it should all be done by government. Our experience in Indianapolis suggests both public and private resources are vital to ending hunger.

We meet the needs of the hungry in our community with federal programs administered through state government (SNAP, WIC, school meals, senior nutrition) and with food provided by private charities (food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, food recovery efforts). Together these solutions meet much but not all of the need for food assistance.

Let's look at why we need government to help fight hunger.

1. Size of the problem—Sadly, the need for assistance is so great it requires comprehensive approaches that are only possible with the federal programs. Figure 4.2 illustrates this.
2. Efficiency—Overhead in SNAP is low because benefits are transferred automatically onto debit cards that people use at food retailers.
3. Uniformity and fairness—Rigorous review of income and assets means that those qualifying for federal programs are truly the neediest.
4. Rapid scalability—Private charities are still trying to ramp up after the Great Recession, whereas the federal programs can promptly meet people's needs regardless of the strength of local charities.

“Our experience in Indianapolis suggests both public and private resources are vital to ending hunger.”

local level makes a difference. A 2013 study by the Washington, DC-based Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) found that from 2011 to 2012, Indiana had the country's largest increase in participation in the summer meals program, moving from 34th in the nation to 20th.¹⁰ Indianapolis can't take credit for improvements across the entire state, but it accounts for over half of the improvement in this metric.

Based on the difficulties communities face in reaching kids through summer feeding sites,

USDA is now trying something different: a pilot program that would increase SNAP benefits during the summer months by \$60 to families with children who received free or reduced price meals during the school year.¹¹ Evaluations of the first year of the pilot found that it cut child hunger by 20 percent.¹² See Figure 4.3. This is one among several pilot programs around the country launched because local leaders feed information back to federal policymakers about what's working, what isn't, and what kind of solutions they could try.

Because there are federal programs, private charities can focus on what they do best.

1. Filling the gaps—Private charities can serve people at risk of hunger whose income is too high to take advantage of federal programs.
2. Rescuing food—We waste a lot of perfectly good food. Volunteers reclaim what would have been wasted and distribute it through the appropriate channels.
3. Saying that it's okay to ask for help—Neighbor-to-neighbor contact and concern for each other helps to overcome the stigma associated with poverty.
4. Community engagement—Hands-on activities are critical as they allow the more fortunate to interact with less fortunate members of the community and learn first-hand about their circumstances.
5. Rehabilitation and development—Churches and others use food assistance as a step in the process of helping individuals and families in need deal with broader poverty-related issues.

The public/private system works well, but there are still too many hungry people in our communities, especially children and seniors. Let me offer some suggestions that would make the system more effective everywhere.

1. We need to measure unmet need, not just food insecurity, and that requires a measurement system that will allow us to see where the various federal programs and volunteer efforts are falling short.
2. We need a nationally supported 211 system to help people at risk of hunger find the services that are right for them.
3. We need to make healthier food more available: On the public side, for example, more funding to improve the quality of school meals; and on the private side, classes that teach families how to eat healthier on a budget.
4. We need an expansion of the Hunger Free Communities network, a nation-wide platform for sharing best practices (www.hungerfreecommunities.org).

Looking at the problem systemically, I believe there is a strong case to be made that a public/private partnership is essential if we are going to end hunger in the United States once and for all.

Dave Miner is the executive director of the Indy Hunger Network and a former chair of the Bread for the World board. Find out more about the Indy Hunger Network at www.indyhunger.org.

Dayton, Ohio: Bringing Hunger Home



This example is less recent than the previous one or the ones that follow, but it is important because it shows how an elected leader, a member of Congress, was able to draw attention to hunger in his community and mobilize people to join in a community-wide effort to end it.

FRAC is one of America's leading national anti-hunger organizations, and FRAC president Jim Weill is one of the most thoughtful people in the country on the subject of hunger. In 2013, at the annual Hunger Free Communities Summit in Washington, DC, sponsored by the Alliance to End Hunger, Weill was asked how to end hunger in America. He said we should think of it in terms of golf. The economy is the drive, where we will make up the most ground. The federal nutrition programs are the chip shot, getting us closer to the hole, but not all the way. Finally, there are the local efforts, which he compared to the putt.¹³

The audience was made up mostly of the putters in his analogy, people representing organizations from around the country trying to end hunger in their communities.

Some may have been surprised to hear themselves described as coming into the picture so late in the game. Many would say that, for most if not all of their time as anti-hunger advocates, it seems as though they've been lining up for their shot hundreds of yards from the hole. Tony Hall, executive director of the Alliance to End Hunger, who had invited them to the conference, said the analogy needed some additional explanation. He doesn't disagree with it, but he says we should remember that the putt is the most difficult stroke in golf, and it is not possible to get the ball in the hole without an accurate putt, just as it is not possible to end hunger without a strong effort at the local level.¹⁴



Courtesy of Tony Hall

From 2002-2006, Tony Hall served as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture. Here he is shown testifying on Capitol Hill.

When Hall was a member of Congress, representing Ohio's 3rd district in Dayton from 1978-2002, hunger was his signature issue as a legislator. From 1989 to 1993, he was the chair of the Select Committee on Hunger in the House of Representatives. In 1994, the House leadership decided to eliminate the committee on the pretext of saving taxpayers money. Hall disagreed and protested by fasting for 21 days.¹⁵ In a sense, it was to no avail since the committee no longer exists, but bringing attention to the issue and forging stronger ties with

his constituents in Dayton made a big difference. In 2002, Hall was appointed by President George W. Bush to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Programs in Rome. Presently, as the executive director of the Alliance to End Hunger, he engages a diverse group of organizations in building the political will to end hunger. The Alliance is a secular affiliate of Bread for the World.

As a member of Congress, Hall visited some of the most poverty-stricken and war-ravaged countries in the world. He saw people die of hunger right before his eyes. That literally changed his life, he says. He was committed to helping Dayton residents understand why ending hunger was so important to him and why it should be important to them. Leadership is a subject that comes up again and again in this chapter, and one couldn't ask for more leadership from an elected official than Dayton got from Tony Hall. Early in his congressional career, Hall's office surveyed voters in the district; the surveys showed that voters did not consider hunger one of their main concerns. Hall realized it was up to him to change that. He went about that by leading a community-wide effort to end hunger in Dayton.

One of the first things he did was start a gleaning program. Hall had long been a fan of gleaning, the salvaging of unharvested fruits and vegetables from farmers' fields, a practice that he knew about from reading the Bible. "You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien." (Leviticus 19:10, NRSV) "When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow." (Deuteronomy 24:21, NRSV) The gleaning program he started brought people from vastly different backgrounds literally together in the fields. It was the first time some wealthy people had ever talked with people living in poverty. "Those were remarkable conversations," Hall says. "People who never worried about missing a bill payment in their lives learned how people who struggled to pay their bills managed to get by on a pay-nothing job and not much help from government."¹⁶

He had little problem getting people to follow his lead. "People will follow if they sense you're sincere and want to do good," he says. "When you lead by example, others will take up the cause, and some of them will become leaders too."¹⁷ A utility company sponsored 25 employees each year to participate in projects on behalf of the company. In subsequent years, says Hall, the people who had held those positions wanted them back. "As we carried out projects and received publicity for them, we inspired more people to get involved. As people in Dayton learned about our anti-hunger efforts and saw that they worked, the volunteers' efforts begat more volunteers. Some of them invented new projects that I never would have



Amanda Lucidon for Bread for the World

Adlai Amor, director of communications at Bread for the World, and Barbie Izquierdo, featured in *A Place at the Table*, watch clips from the film in the breakout session, "Voices of Poor and Hungry People" during the National Hunger Free Communities Summit.

ENDING HUNGER, ONE STEP AT A TIME.

Matthew Hackworth and Maurice A. Bloem

“When you participate in a CROP Hunger Walk, you provide food to our community and people around the world,” says Karen Ellers, director of Clemson Community Care in Clemson, South Carolina.

The food assistance agency is one of more than 2,500 local feeding programs that benefit from CROP Hunger Walks across the United States each year. These events—where participants get friends and family to sponsor their participation in order to raise funds—have grown in popularity. Sponsored by Church World Service (CWS), CROP Hunger Walks have been raising money to fight hunger for more than 40 years. Walks often serve as an intersection—the “putt”—where people of different faiths, no faith, businesses and community groups coalesce to fight hunger.

Communities that hold CROP Hunger Walks determine which local hunger agency (or agencies) will receive 25 percent of the event’s proceeds, with the remainder funding the life-sustaining work of CWS around the world. Long-time CWS staff member Kevin McCoy says in his region of the Carolinas people know about world hunger but want to do something about local needs as well. “I’ll hold up the work of the local agencies that are supported by the Walk and give their statistics about how many

clients they serve or how much need they are seeing,” McCoy says. There are 80 local agencies supported by CROP Hunger Walk in the Carolinas alone.

Volunteers in more than 1,600 communities participate in a Walk to fight hunger each year, strengthening ties between communities and the local agencies they support. In a recent CWS survey of local hunger agencies supported by Walks, every agency that responded—from Berkeley, California to Exeter, New Hampshire and spots in between—reported increased demand, with some estimates as high as 20 percent. All indicated a client base that relied heavily on SNAP and school lunch programs.

In the case of Clemson Community Care, the CROP Hunger Walk helps to fund food assistance programs for the 3,563 families it serves each year. Clemson Community Care estimates three out of every four of its clients depend heavily on SNAP and other safety net programs that have become political targets. That makes the assistance Clemson Community Care provides all the more critical. “The CROP Hunger Walk is the single largest fundraising event we rely on,” Ellers says.

Matthew Hackworth is the director of marketing and communications and Maurice A. Bloem is executive vice president for Church World Service.



Courtesy of Church World Service

A CROP Walk in Durham, North Carolina, in 2012.

dreamed of. All of these projects produced the twin benefits of helping the poor and the hungry and teaching the people of Dayton about problems and ways that individuals can help. We were building a constituency for the hungry. In addition they also served as models for other communities to emulate.”¹⁸

By the time Hall left office, there were still people in Dayton who were hungry. The stubbornness of hunger and poverty in the city and surrounding areas is inseparable from the economic fortunes of the region. Deindustrialization has pummeled Dayton’s manufacturing base, the foundation of the local economy since World War II, as it has other areas of the Rust Belt. It’s what Jim Weill was saying about the economy being akin to the long game in golf.

“What’s important,” says Hall, “is that many people in Dayton are committed to helping the less fortunate.” By the end of his career in Congress, when his office surveyed people in the district about the issues they cared most about, hunger had risen to the top of their concerns. “In my later years in Congress,” he says, “we asked people what they would want to talk about if they had a chance to talk with me. Almost 80 percent said they’d like to talk about hunger.”¹⁹

A Leadership Challenge

Every community has people who are leaders against hunger. Tony Hall thinks the odds of defeating hunger increase many times over when elected officials provide the leadership. We shouldn’t expect the intense hands-on leadership as he provided in Dayton from every elected official; however, there are other ways for individuals to be leaders in this fight.

The loss of the Select Committee on Hunger in the U.S. House of Representatives was a blow to leadership at the policy level. As Hall described in his 2006 book, *Changing the Face of Hunger*, “It had been the vehicle that empowered me to call public attention to the problems of hunger, poverty and oppression at home and overseas. It enabled me to summon witnesses to hearings that caused Washington-based media to report about tragedies—such as famine in Africa, oppression in Haiti, and hunger on U.S. Indian reservations—they otherwise might have ignored...It helped me convince other committees to consider legislation that the hunger committee devised but did not have the authority to bring before the full House for passage.”²⁰ Reinstating the Select Committee on Hunger in the House would be a sign that Congress is serious about ending hunger in America. In the Senate, the Select



Courtesy Alliance to End Hunger

As executive director of the Alliance to End Hunger, Tony Hall traveled to the world’s largest refugee camp, Dadaab, on the Kenya-Somalia border.

Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, led by Senators George McGovern and Robert Dole, was eliminated in 1977. It should also be reinstated. Setting a goal to end hunger will draw attention to the problem, which is essential, but achieving the goal will require oversight in Congress.

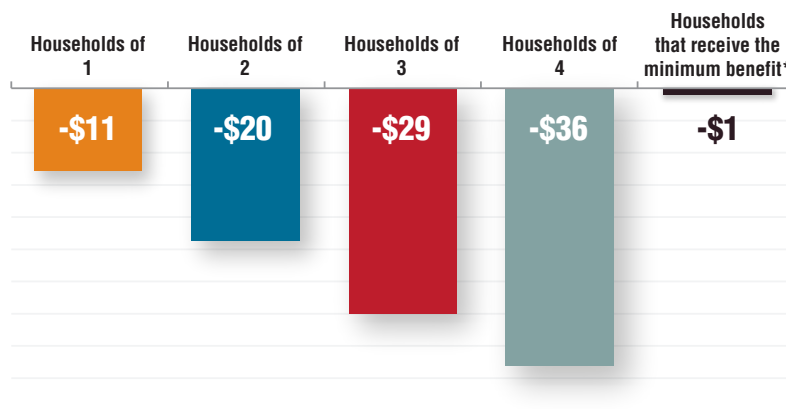
One of the most visible ways for elected officials to draw attention to hunger in their communities is to take the SNAP/Food Stamp challenge. Members of Congress, governors, state legislators, and mayors have taken the challenge, and so have hundreds—if not thousands—of others who are not elected to public office: religious and community leaders, students, and people from all walks

of life. Here's how the challenge works: for a week or more, participants spend no more on food than the average SNAP benefit. This comes to about \$4.50 per day.²¹ In November 2013, SNAP benefits will decrease unless Congress preserves the increases approved in the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvest Act (Recovery Act). See Figure 4.4. The challenge will be more difficult, but far more important, the lives of families who struggle to buy groceries will be more difficult.

In March 2013, Dr. Lewis First, a pediatrician in Vermont, took the SNAP/food stamp challenge with other doctors, nurses, and staff at Vermont Children's Hospital. On his blog, Dr. First reported: "Although the challenge ended for

Figure 4.4 All SNAP Households Will See a Cut in November 2013

Monthly cut in SNAP benefits by household size



*Households of size 1 or 2 that qualify for less than \$16 have their benefits rounded up to the minimum benefit. That amount will drop to \$15 in FY2014.

Source: Stacey Dean and Dorothy Rosenbaum (August 2, 2013), "SNAP Benefits Will Be Cut for All Participants In November 2013," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Based on U.S. Department of Agriculture, "SNAP—Fiscal Year 2014 Cost of Living Adjustments and ARRA Sunset Impact on Allotments," August 1, 2013.

me after seven days, I don't think I can ever forget the feelings it generated in me—and as a result, I will now advocate even more for our patients and families who experience food insecurity and hunger, and whose "challenge" is not just living on food stamps for seven days—but every day."²² It's especially encouraging to hear from doctors and others in the medical profession. Hunger is a public health problem, and the more we talk about it this way, the sooner we may be able to reduce the stigma that makes it a much harder problem to solve than it should be.

The consequences of child hunger, particularly hunger experienced by very young children, are so serious in terms of stunting their physical and intellectual development that people with a wide range of political views have generally been able to agree on support for child nutrition programs. The WIC program targets pregnant women and children in their earliest years. The 1,000-day window between pregnancy and age 2 is the most critical period in human development. Babies whose mothers are food insecure during pregnancy are more

likely to enter the world with a low birth weight, a condition associated with higher health care costs and worse health outcomes for the rest of the person's life.²³

Children's brains—and the rest of their bodies—don't stop developing once they enter school. In elementary school, children who are hungry are four times more likely than non-hungry children to need mental health counseling.²⁴ By the time they are teenagers, children are twice as likely as their peers to have seen a psychologist.²⁵

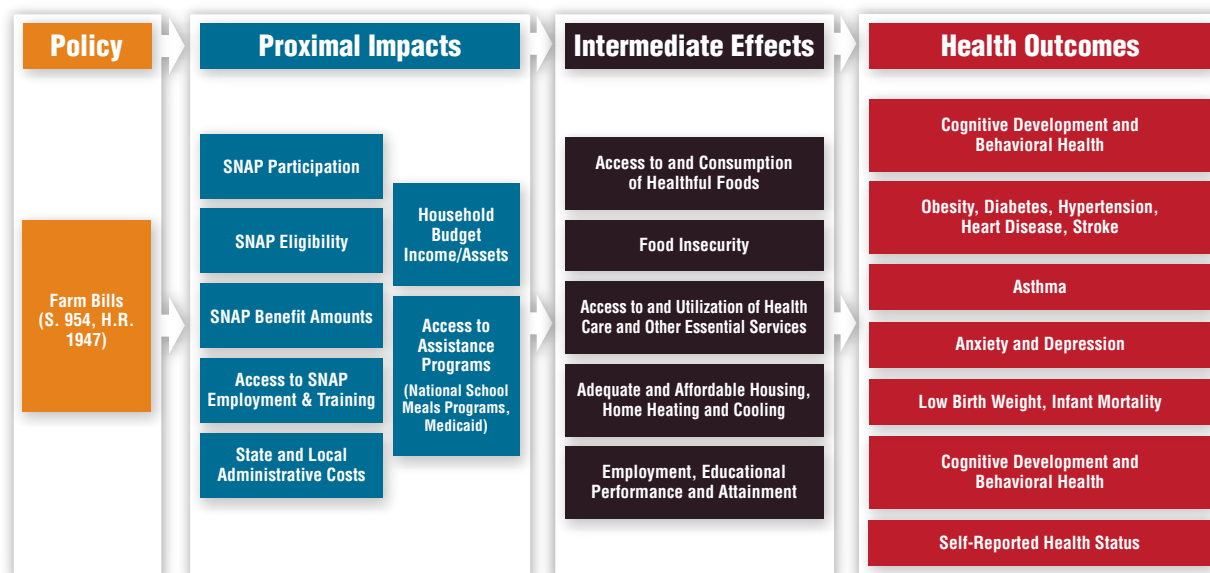
Adults who were malnourished as children are also more likely to have mental health problems than peers who were well nourished. "Society, in turn, bears the costs of increased health problems, lost worker productivity, and lost tax revenue as individuals achieve and earn less," write John Cook and Karen Jeng in their report *Child Food Insecurity: The Economic Impact on our Nation*.²⁶

Cook, an associate professor of pediatrics at the Boston University School of Medicine, is also a research scientist with Children's HealthWatch, a pediatric clinical research program. Children's HealthWatch argues that the federal nutrition programs are one of the most cost-effective investments in public health. In a 2004 report, Children's HealthWatch found that a single hospitalization for a pediatric illness cost an average of \$11,300, equivalent in value to "almost five years of food stamps for a family receiving the average household benefit."²⁷

"I have never been so hungry or food conscious in my life as I was during the week of the SNAP/food stamp challenge."

— Dr. Lewis First

Figure 4.5 The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Eligibility, Benefits, and Health Pathway



A pathway diagram is a tool used to display the hypothetical links between a proposed policy and health that is often used in HIA practice to guide research and analysis. This pathway diagram maps out the possible health outcomes that could result from the proposed policy changes.

Source: The Health Impact Project (July 2013), *Health Impact Assessment on Proposed Changes to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Decades of studies document the public health benefits of SNAP/food stamps. In 2013, a health impact assessment of the changes proposed to SNAP in the Senate and House versions of the farm bill found that both would lead to adverse public health outcomes. The House version would cause more serious damage since it proposed larger cuts. The assessment, conducted by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts, concluded that the cuts in the House version could lead to an additional \$15 billion in costs over 10 years for diabetes alone.²⁸

“At a stronger dose,” SNAP could do a much better job of protecting public health. That was the finding of a 2013 report by the Institute of Medicine and National Research

“Decades of studies document the public health benefits of SNAP/food stamps.”

Council.²⁹ The report called for updating the formula used to calculate benefits. The formula is fundamentally the same as when the program was established in the early 1960s, while the cost of living for families with children, including such expenses as child care, housing, health care, and transportation, has increased. In addition, the real value of the minimum wage has decreased significantly, so

people must work longer hours to meet their basic needs. This, in turn, translates into less time available for parents to cook meals from scratch. All of these factors demonstrate how much modern life has changed since the formula for calculating food stamp benefits was created a half-century ago.

The SNAP/food stamp challenge brought Dr. First to a realization. “While I cannot begin to experience or understand what families on food stamps experience on an ongoing basis, I do know how important it is to advocate on their behalf at the federal, state, and local level to insure that we do all we can to eradicate hunger and food-insecurity.”³⁰ Completing the SNAP/food stamp challenge should do more than give us a chance to feel what it’s like to walk in the shoes of someone in poverty. We need to move beyond feeling what it is like to talking about it and then changing it. And that is why we need a sentinel group in Congress, such as the Select Committees on Hunger that used to be active in both the House and Senate, to make sure there is a platform for changes to be introduced and enacted.

BOX 4.4

EYEWITNESS TO HUNGER, AN ACCOUNT BY PEDIATRICIAN DR. LEWIS FIRST

“I have never been so hungry or food conscious in my life as I was during the week of the [SNAP/food stamp] challenge. Instead of looking at people’s faces in the halls or the cafeteria (which I would pass by since I could not afford to buy food there), I looked at the food people were carrying or eating, thinking what that food might taste like if I could afford it. By two days in, I had lost two pounds, and found myself constantly thinking how many hours until I could afford to eat my next meal. It only took a few days until I began to worry whether I would have enough food to make it through the week and I realized that I too was becoming food insecure.”

Arkansas: No Kid Hungry



Here in a state-level initiative, a national nonprofit lends its expertise to support local partners, building their capacity to ensure that progress is sustainable. The national partner is a conduit to best practices that have worked for other local initiatives, saving time and resources.

Candidate Barack Obama, while campaigning in 2008, pledged to end child hunger by 2015. Candidate Obama's pledge naturally fell on receptive ears in the anti-hunger community. What one hopes will happen when a president or presidential candidate tells the nation that an issue matters to him or her is that the nation will respond in kind. States and localities will embrace the commitment to end child hunger, deploy their own resources, and communicate to national leaders that they need to keep talking about the goal. The conversation rises in pitch, more people are drawn in, and the goal becomes a national priority.

Since entering the White House, President Obama has spoken ever so softly about ending child hunger. In fact, the 2008 pledge would be a footnote to his presidency by now were it not for national organizations, such as Bread for the World, the Alliance to End Hunger, FRAC, and Feeding America, that continue to remind the White House that the president's pledge is still on their agenda.

Perhaps no national anti-hunger organization has done more to promote the goal of ending child hunger and to keep the pledge alive than Share Our Strength. Through its No Kid Hungry Campaign—a national effort to achieve candidate Obama's pledge to end childhood hunger in America by 2015—Share Our Strength is working with governors and mayors, faith and business leaders, and nonprofit organizations to connect families at risk of hunger with the programs that can help them.³¹

No Kid Hungry Campaigns have been started in all 50 states. Maryland, Colorado and Arkansas are Share Our Strength's "proof of concept" states, where it is investing the greatest effort. Governor Martin O'Malley of Maryland was the first governor in the country to embrace a goal to end child hunger by 2015. O'Malley helped persuade Governor Mike Beebe of Arkansas to do the same. Conditions in the two states are quite different. Maryland



Courtesy of Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance

Breakfast in the Classroom at Franklin Elementary School, Little Rock.

is one of the richest states in the country, Arkansas one of the poorest. In fact, in 2010, when Governor Beebe agreed to focus attention on ending child hunger, Arkansas had the highest child hunger rate in the nation.

Share Our Strength will eventually reduce its footprint in Arkansas because it sees its role as supporting the state through the startup phase of the Arkansas No Kid Hungry Campaign. The start-up phase is important, but what matters more is sustainability, and the sustainability of a campaign depends on state and local capacity. Share Our Strength is building capacity in Arkansas by working with the governor's chief nonprofit partner in the state, the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, a coalition of more than 200 member organizations including the state's six Feeding America food bank members, local hunger relief agencies, and other hunger advocates from around the state.³²

In Arkansas, a difficult fiscal situation has hamstrung the governor's ability to commit many new resources. Share Our Strength, through the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, is working with the governor's office to show that progress is still possible. The school breakfast program is a good example. Arkansas has a participation rate of 56 percent. If it can reach 70 percent, federal reimbursements will cover the costs of administering the program, saving the state money while making it possible to provide meals to all children. The governor's office and other Arkansas No Kid Hungry campaign stakeholders supported the push for legislation that would authorize schools to receive financial assistance

BOX 4.5

THE ARKANSAS NO KID HUNGRY CAMPAIGN

Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance

The Arkansas No Kid Hungry campaign is all about partnerships. The partnerships we've built will make this a sustainable campaign long after Share Our Strength has stepped back—and regardless of changes in the political landscape. Add to this the commitment of the Arkansas Legislative Hunger Caucus, of which 98 percent of state legislators are members, and you have a solid, statewide commitment to ending hunger in Arkansas.

Arkansas No Kid Hungry Partners:

*Lead partner: Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance

1. Gov. Mike and First Lady Ginger Beebe and staff
2. State agencies:
 - a. Department of Human Services
 - b. Department of Education
 - c. Department of Health
 - d. Department of Agriculture
3. Community partners:
 - a. University of Arkansas Medical Sciences
 - b. Arkansas Children's Hospital
 - c. Arkansas Regional Food Banks
4. Corporate support:
 - a. Wal-Mart
 - b. Tyson Foods
 - c. Mid-West Dairy

to start an alternate breakfast delivery program. As a result, the Arkansas Department of Education has authorized the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance to administer the Arkansas Meals for Achievement pilot grant program, which will provide funding to schools serving a free breakfast to all students through an alternative breakfast delivery model such as Breakfast in the Classroom.

Another example of Share Our Strength's work with the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance is its training of local staff to implement a program that Share Our Strength has developed to help low-income families prepare healthy meals on a budget. The Cooking Matters program is more than a cooking class; it includes trips to the grocery store to show parents how to shop strategically and how to decipher nutrition information to make healthier food choices. Eighty percent of low-income families prepare dinner at home at least five times a week. The overwhelming number of parents in Share Our Strength's Cooking Matters program say they want to serve their children healthier meals but view the cost of healthy foods as the main barrier.³³

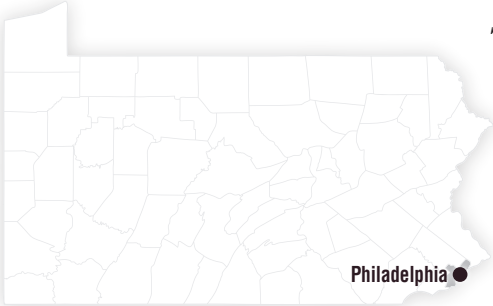
If the No Kid Hungry Campaign succeeds in Arkansas, or any of the other states, it will be because Share Our Strength has helped put in place an infrastructure to carry on the innovations it has shared and the partnerships it has helped to nurture among government, nonprofits, and the private sector. See a list of partners in Box 4.5. The success of the program in Arkansas is due to the support of the governor and his staff and the unprecedented cooperation between the Department of Human Services and the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. This cooperation includes direct data sharing as well as strategic planning, open communication, and commitment to a shared goal of ending childhood hunger in Arkansas.

Hunger must be solved at the local level, but it takes national partners to bring resources to bear to support partners at the local level. There are things that a national organization like Share Our Strength—or Bread for the World—can do that support the efforts of local affiliates. For example, June 21 is National Summer Learning Day, a day of advocacy sponsored by the National Summer Learning Association. Children lose the equivalent of two months of mathematics instruction over the summer.³⁴ An organization such as Share Our Strength can forge a partnership with the National Summer Learning Association to draw attention to how hunger during the summer months contributes to lack of retention among low-income students.

A Cooking Matters class at First United Methodist Church of Little Rock.



Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Witnesses to Hunger



So far, the protagonists in this chapter have been leaders in government, nonprofits, and the private sector, working on behalf of people in their communities at risk of hunger. In this example, we learn about how one initiative developed leaders among the most affected—those who know what it feels like to be hungry.

It is hard to think of a movement for social change that was not led by the people whose well-being was most affected by the outcome. In the 1960s, victims of racial oppression led the Civil Rights Movement. Today, gay and transgender people lead the LGBT rights movement, immigrants the immigration-reform movement.

Seldom, however, are people with the most knowledge about hunger asked to do more than tell their stories and then vanish before the discussions of policy take place.

Dr. Mariana Chilton, a researcher in Drexel University's School of Public Health, was thinking about this as she was testifying before Congress in 2007 on the importance of the Food Stamp Program for the health and well-being of young children. It was at a hearing on the reauthorization of the upcoming farm bill, and she was there to talk about the research she and her colleagues at Children's HealthWatch sites around the country had done. "I literally watched the Congress people's eyes glaze over, and I thought, 'Well this isn't doing it,'" she said.³⁵

When she returned home to Philadelphia, she decided to steer her research in a different direction. It started by giving cameras to low-income mothers in Philadelphia, asking them to document their personal experiences of hunger. The project was called Witnesses to Hunger, and the pictures were posted on a website of the same name.



Courtesy of BillMoyers.com

Kristi Jacobson (center) and Dr. Mariana Chilton (right) explain to Bill Moyers how hunger and food insecurity hit people from every walk of life.

It grew to include 40 women. When the photographs began to appear on the website, they drew immediate attention in Philadelphia and then across the country. In 2009, an exhibition of the Witnesses photos was held in the rotunda of the Capitol in Washington, DC. The women who took the pictures were on hand to talk about them. Since then, policymakers, anti-hunger groups, and the national media have turned to these women regularly, including when members of Congress threaten to cut funding for nutrition programs, to ask them to comment on what cuts to these programs would mean in the communities where they live.

In 2013, the focus of the Witnesses to Hunger project was changing. The women aren't just sharing stories—they are advocating and informing the debate about policy in their home state and in Washington, DC. “The true experts on maternal and child health and poverty are the mothers of young children,” says Dr. Chilton. “They are teachers with valuable lessons to impart.”³⁶

One of the most valuable lessons their photographs have taught us is how often hunger is associated with more than just food: bus stops, medicine bottles, domestic violence, blood stained streets, unstable housing, homelessness, the tattoo of a murdered father, a child lying in a hospital bed. To be sure, there are plenty of images of children with loving mothers smiling over them, the same as in any family. Those are momentary breaks from the near-constant hardships. These images ought to be on display anytime debates about food policy appear to be veering off into the predictable or eyes begin glazing over.

“It is hard to think of a movement for social change that was not led by the people whose well-being was most affected by the outcome.”

in the neighborhood where she lived. Today, she understands how the image could provoke the reaction it did from Chilton. She is outraged at slumlords—and at the city government for allowing them to get away with this degree of neglect. “That picture was the beginning of the rest of my life,” she says.³⁷ “Witnesses has given me the blessing to open my eyes and see things in a different light.”



Rev. Gary Cook, director of Church Relations at Bread for the World, holds up “A Place at the Table,” the 2013 Offering of Letters handbook during a session with Barbie Izquierdo, at Ecumenical Advocacy Days, held April 5-8 in Washington, D.C. Izquierdo is featured in the documentary film of the same name.

To understand the difference between her reactions then and now, we have to realize what it was like to be in her situation then. A 20-year-old woman raising two children by herself puts up with conditions like that out of fear. What she feared most then was losing custody of her children. She'd seen other women lose custody of their children. When their

children were taken from them, it seemed that the women were being punished for the crime of being poor.

Barbie has come far, probably the farthest of any of the Witnesses. She is going to college, studying criminal justice, and she hopes someday to start her own nonprofit for victims of domestic violence. It's a long way from the days when she used to look at pizza menus, trying to stave off hunger by imagining that a delivery was on the way. Today, there is scarcely a more poised, articulate person with firsthand knowledge of hunger, real stomach-aching hunger, than she. She has spoken in front of Congress and at the White House. As much as anyone, with the exception of Chilton, she has become the person most iden-



Laura Elizabeth Pohl for Bread for the World

Barbie Izquierdo walks her son and daughter to school in 2013.

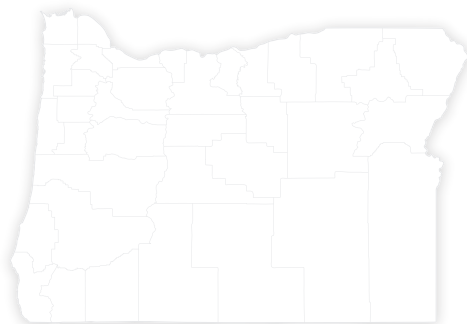
tified with Witnesses to Hunger. Her involvement in Witnesses has catapulted her into the spotlight of the national anti-hunger movement. In 2013, she and her children were featured in the documentary *A Place at the Table*. The film chronicles a year in her life after she loses a job and struggles to put food on the table for the family. At one point in the film, Barbie is shown landing a job with the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger. It should have been a happy ending to a year of struggle—but the new job's salary put her over the income threshold for SNAP. The family was no longer eligible.

At the 2013 Hunger-Free Communities Summit in Washington, DC, held by the Alliance to End Hunger days before the release of *A Place at the Table*, Barbie talked about her journey to advocacy. "Being able to go through all of that and still be able to stand as a person, whether I'm ashamed at times or not, whether I'm embarrassed at times or not, I can still say that I got through it. That's why I do what I do, why I chose to share my story."³⁸

"The true experts on maternal and child health and poverty are the mothers of young children."

— Dr. Mariana Chilton

Oregon: FEASTING in Rural Food Deserts

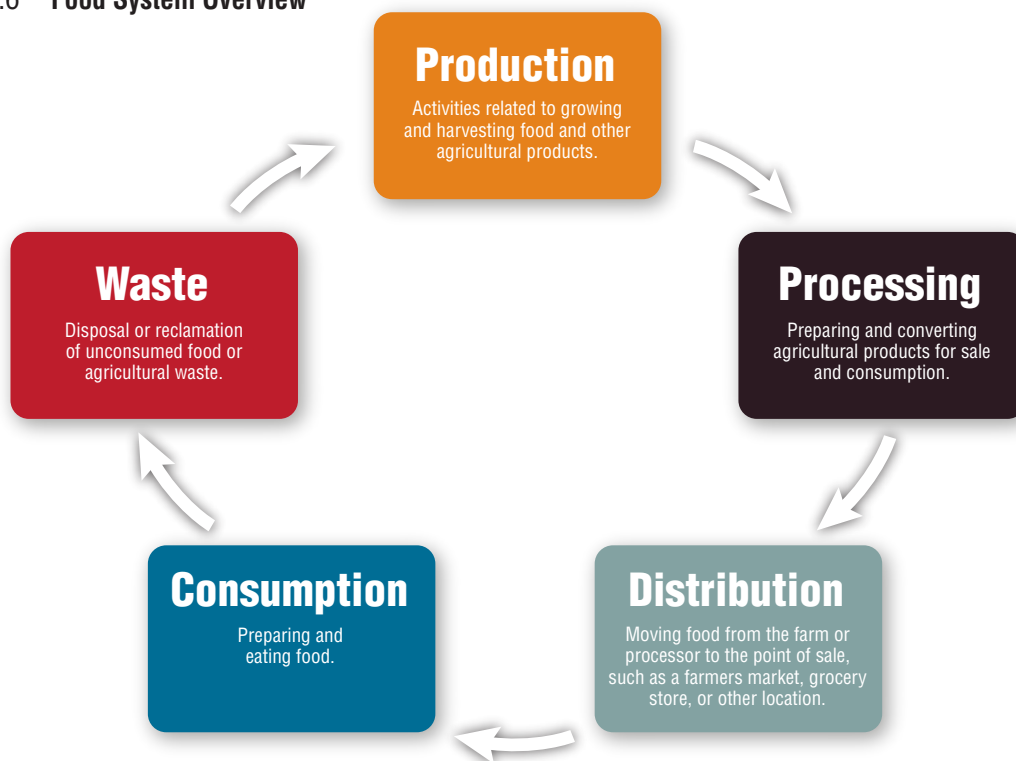


When food choices are limited, everyone in a community is vulnerable to food insecurity. In this example, rural communities that are entirely “off the grid” confront the barriers to accessing the healthy foods they are missing. Because the food system isn’t working for anyone, the solutions they come up with have to work for everyone, including people who are hungry.

Oregon is the 9th largest state in the country, more than 96,000 square miles.³⁹ Rural areas account for 99 percent of the landmass, while Portland and a handful of smaller urban enclaves are home to 80 percent of the population.⁴⁰ The 20 percent who live in rural Oregon are scattered far and wide, and it is not uncommon for people living in the more sparsely populated areas to have to drive more than 50 miles each way to visit a full-service grocery store. The cost of fuel to get back and forth a couple of times a month bite hard into the value of a family’s SNAP benefits.

It seems strange that people should have to drive so far to purchase food with so much arable land all around them. Oregon is one of the most agriculturally diverse states, yet there are food deserts all over the state—sometimes right where food is being produced. Thousands of

Figure 4.6 Food System Overview



head of cattle are shipped out of state and overseas from ranching communities, while people living in those communities never see so much as a pound of ground beef. In some towns, the emergency food pantry is the best place to look for healthy food, including fresh produce.

Oregon has long had a reputation for promoting a culture of sustainability, and more recently has been associated with America's growing population of "locavores," people who try to eat foods grown locally as much as possible. The trend is much easier to see flourishing in Portland and other population centers along the I-5 corridor. The rest of the state has a food system that looks like the one in the rest of the country. As the U.S. food system has become concentrated in the hands of fewer producers, the distances from farm to intermediary stops to table have widened. A food system is the sum of all the processes related to feeding people, from growing, harvesting, processing (transforming or changing), packaging, marketing, distributing, consuming, and even reclaiming food that would otherwise be wasted.⁴¹

In rural communities in Oregon, residents are trying to gain back some control of their local food systems, and they realize they need help. There's more to it than saving money on gas, or a craving for something grown by one of their neighbors. People in these communities are worried about their health and their children's health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 60 percent of the adult population is overweight and 26 percent are obese.⁴² Among children between the ages of 2 and 5, 15 percent are already obese.⁴³ Obesity, diabetes,



Courtesy Sharon Thornberry

Sharon Thornberry of the Oregon Food Bank is shown here working with a steering group that has sought her help to improve their local food system.

and other diet-related illnesses are food system-related.

Sharon Thornberry, the Community Food Systems Manager with the Oregon Food Bank, works with a team to organize communities that are looking for help in filling the gaps in their food systems. In 2009, Thornberry was honored with the Billi Odegaard Public Health Genius Award from the Community Health Systems of Oregon in recognition of her dedication in expanding access to healthy foods in underserved rural communities of the state.⁴⁴ In 2013, the Oregon Food Bank was presented with Feeding America's annual Innovation Award in food banking, singling out Thornberry's work as "empowering community members to build healthier, more equitable, and more resilient food systems through a community organizing model."⁴⁵

When Thornberry begins to work with a new community, she first engages with a local steering committee of five to 10 people to discuss how they want to address the gaps in their food system. The steering committee is not passively waiting to be told what to do; its members have already formed ideas about how they want to improve the food system. Over time, others in the community join as their interests are piqued. Leaders emerge. People are

passionate about food in ways you would never see if they were being organized to take action on some other problem.

Thornberry approaches food systems work as a community building exercise. She doesn't give outsized attention to ending hunger, because it would jeopardize some people's participation. Instead, everyone has to see the benefits for themselves. "A food system is something the whole community experiences," says Thornberry. "Hunger is not." How does she ensure that hunger gets the attention it deserves? "—by making sure to get the right people at the table," she says.

Food security is the goal of all food systems. We know that households are food secure when they are able to stop worrying about getting the food they need. Community food security is a little more complicated. USDA expresses it in terms of "the underlying social, economic, and institutional factors within a community that affect the quantity and quality of available food and its affordability or price relative to the sufficiency of financial resources available to acquire it."⁴⁶ If that sounds a bit too much like academic jargon, it will be a relief to learn that USDA, to its credit, has also developed a Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit that practitioners can use to get at the issue in much more concrete ways. The toolkit has been used by groups all over the country. It is a good example of a public-private partnership since government can support community anti-hunger leaders while leaving a light footprint itself.

In Oregon, an AmeriCorps volunteer conducts the food security assessment under Thornberry's guidance. The University of Oregon sponsors the AmeriCorps participant through RARE—Resource Assistance for Rural Environments. There are at least three RARE participants dedicated to supporting Oregon Food Bank's work on food systems. AmeriCorps volunteers, the domestic counterparts of Peace Corps volunteers, are largely underutilized in supporting anti-hunger initiatives around the nation. RARE is indeed a rare example of how to use volunteers to provide technical assistance in food system and anti-hunger projects.

Once the Community Food Security assessment is completed, the AmeriCorps volunteer produces a report with an analysis of the area's food system, noting food-related assets as well as deficiencies. Assets may be farms, commercial or otherwise, and the crops they produce; individuals who do value-added processing, such as canning or baking, and are interested in marketing their products to consumers; infrastructure such as commercial refrigerators and freezers; community gardens; fish and game. Churches that keep a stocked pantry are assets. Assets are anything with the potential to improve community food access, and there are more kinds of food-related assets than we could possibly list here.



Oregon Food Bank

Oregon Food Bank's two Portland-area locations hosted 616 volunteers for a day of service in honor of Martin Luther King Jr.

The most important step runs parallel to the assessment and analysis: Thornberry leads members of the community in what's called a FEAST, a facilitated discussion about **Food, Education and Agriculture** in their community, and they begin to work toward **Solutions Together**.⁴⁷ Groups who participate in the FEAST range in size from as little as a dozen to several dozen. Thornberry is strictly a facilitator. She offers feedback but doesn't tell participants what their solutions in their communities should be. Nothing that is decided will be sustainable unless it is locally driven and owned by members of the community. The ultimate goal is to build a healthier, more equitable, and more resilient local food system.⁴⁸ At the end of the FEAST, they define what their specific goals are and discuss how they plan to implement them. Thornberry's work is basically done. Now it's up to members of the community to follow through.

FEASTs have produced many and varied results. Some examples are: the establishment of gleaning programs, farmers markets, and/or community gardens; farm-to-school partnerships between local farmers and rural school districts; new partnerships between food donors and emergency food providers; and the formation of coalitions to carry forward community-based food system projects.⁴⁹ Here is what some participants have said about the FEAST they participated in: Jan Neilson, a farmer in Sweet Home, says, "We developed a larger community base with resources to actually get things done." Emily Ritchie, the farm to school coordinator in Tillamook, says, "We're moving forward on issues that will hugely impact our community." Dawn Jensen Nobile, a nutrition therapist from Albany, says, "I was inspired to find more ways to participate in schools, community, and neighborhood. The network being built via this effort is a source of strength and comfort."⁵⁰ Rural food deserts aren't turning into oases overnight, but the FEASTs are making it possible for people to find more of the foods they want without having to drive long distances.



Sharon Thornberry and colleague Megan Newell-Ching lead the Oregon Food Bank's work on community food systems.

BUILDING WELCOMING COMMUNITIES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER

Church World Service

For newly arrived refugees, accessing an adequate supply of nutritious food in the United States is not always easy. Like many immigrants, refugees often live in neighborhoods with limited access to retail grocery stores, and have limited purchasing power and information on healthy food choices. These factors, along with the influence of U.S. food practices, often lead to increased fat and sugar consumption, increased utilization of processed foods, and decreased consumption of fresh vegetables and fruits among refugee families.

Limited access to nutritious food in the United States can exacerbate health problems, particularly among refugees who have suffered inadequate nutrition while living in camps for extended periods of time. For example, 63 percent of Bhutanese refugees arriving from camps in rural Nepal—one of the largest refugee groups that have resettled to the United States in the past five years—are vitamin B12 deficient.

As a faith-based humanitarian agency, Church World Service (CWS) is addressing these nutrition and food security needs through the involvement of local congregational supporters and civic groups. In Greensboro, North Carolina, CWS has launched two community gardens, one with the support of a local Presbyterian church and the other in partnership with a local agricultural extension cooperative.

These gardens provide newly arrived refugees an opportunity to grow fresh produce, including both crops from their home countries and crops that are local to their new communities. “Through community gardens,” notes Sarah Ivory, Director of the CWS Immigration and Refugee Program in Greensboro, “our clients have the opportunity not just to nourish their families with fresh foods, but also to nourish their spirits through the land and the community of the gardens. This project reminds us that when we work together in the fight against hunger, we often succeed in impacting our communities in ways that are more far reaching than we know.”

Andrew Fuys, Sarah Ivory, Jennifer Smyers, Sarah Krause, Matthew Hackworth, and Erol Kekic of Church World Service contributed to this article.



Courtesy Church World Service

The community gardens in Greensboro, North Carolina, not only improve refugees' access to nutritious food, they also create a space where newcomers to the community can meet one another.

Toledo, Ohio: Prescribing a Cure for Hunger

Hunger persists in part because of how we talk about it as a problem. New partners with a different perspective on hunger can get us to see beyond the same old strategies and solutions. In this example, a leading health care provider tries to recast hunger as a health care crisis that could possibly be dealt with more effectively if we treat it as we do other chronic illnesses.

Silicon Valley is a cutting edge place for technology development, New York City for the arts. Toledo, Ohio—not a place we usually think of as cutting edge—certainly qualifies as an avant-garde leader in the anti-hunger movement.

Toledo is the headquarters of ProMedica, the largest health care provider in northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan. The company wants to change the way policymakers in the region look at the problem of hunger in their communities. The idea is to recast hunger as a health care priority, on

par with fighting illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. If ProMedica succeeds in doing this in the region, it could inspire other healthcare institutions around the country to do the same. Before long, this concept could change the way many more policymakers view the importance of eliminating hunger in their communities.

ProMedica has considerable influence on policy development in northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan, not only by virtue of being the largest healthcare provider but also because it is the region's largest employer. It operates 11 hospitals and more than 300 other healthcare facilities, employing 1,700 physicians, 14,000 other staff, and an additional 1,600 volunteers.⁵¹ When its government relations office talks to the governors of Ohio and Michigan, or to the mayors of cities where it provides services, and says that hunger and nutrition deserve their attention, the elected leaders may be inclined to listen in a different way than they do to traditional anti-hunger lobbyists.

Barb Petee, ProMedica's chief advocacy officer and head of its government relations department, is in charge of developing ProMedica's anti-hunger strategy. As a not-for-profit healthcare organization, its goals are to provide high quality, affordable care to everyone in the community, including underserved populations.



ProMedica and other community partners have joined forces to ensure a growing number of youngsters have meals after school.



Courtesy ProMedica

Underserved populations include, by definition, the low-income households most at risk of hunger. “Think about how many pill bottles say ‘Take with Food,’” says Petee. “If there is no food in the home, that could slow a patient’s recovery or lead to readmission to the hospital.”

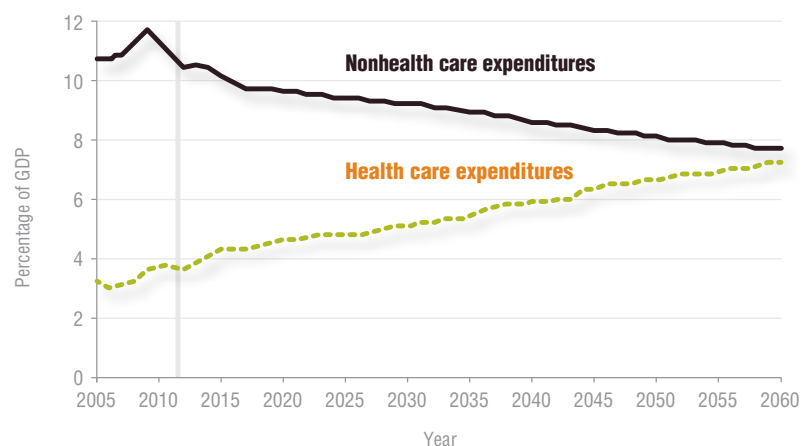
In analyzing readmissions, ProMedica discovered that food security issues affected many of its patients.⁵² Under the Affordable Care Act, hospitals will be penalized for readmissions. Healthcare reform has given doctors and healthcare organizations more reason to focus attention on hunger. It means doctors putting far more emphasis on prevention and wellness. That is a good thing, but will it change the way policymakers look at the tools at their disposal to promote prevention and wellness? As they take another look at the options, their eyes should land on the incredible return on investment offered by the federal nutrition programs.

Health care is the fastest growing cost in government budgets at any level—federal, state, or local—and officials are well aware of the challenges they face in trying to control its costs. According to a 2013 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), “The primary driver of fiscal challenges for the state and local government sector in the long term continues to be the projected growth in health-related costs.”⁵³ See Figure 4.7. Anything that can slow the rise of healthcare costs should be welcome news.

ProMedica’s internal campaign to raise awareness about hunger began by sharing information on the effects of hunger with employees, doctors, and board members. It meant going into healthcare facilities and talking to staff about what they could do at the different touch points in the delivery of care—at admission, in the doctor’s office, over the phone, on a home visit, or during routine procedures like a blood draw.⁵⁴ “If I’m a nurse,” says Barb Petee, “It’s probably not on my radar to ask the patient if she’s hungry.” Now it is. ProMedica also trains hospital staff to provide information and encouragement for eligible families to apply for SNAP benefits.

Petee realized that ProMedica needed to develop an external strategy to match its internal one. She has strengthened relations with partners in local and national anti-hunger infrastructure. She works with national partners like Share our Strength and the Alliance to End Hunger. In Toledo, she is working closely with local partners in the schools and groups involved in emergency feeding programs. These partners recognized the value of what ProMedica could bring to their efforts, and they have welcomed the new partner as more like a gentle giant than the 800-pound gorilla it could be perceived as. The sheer gravity of the

Figure 4.7 Health and Nonhealth Expenditures of State and Local Governments, as a Percentage of Gross Domestic Product



Source: U.S. Government Accountability Office (April 2013), *State and Local Government's Fiscal Outlook*, April 2013 Update.

situation led to an “all hands on deck” attitude. In the aftermath of the Great Recession in 2011, Toledo’s child poverty rate was 44 percent.⁵⁵

The impact that an institution the size of ProMedica could have on hunger in Toledo became clear at once when it joined its efforts with the other partners to increase the number of summer meals served. In 2010, Toledo served only 1,500 summer meals. A year later, the number rose to 45,000. The next year, it climbed to 100,000. A major reason for the

program’s fast growth was a public information campaign. Most anti-hunger organizations don’t have a lot of spare money for marketing. Nor do they usually have people in the organization with those skills. Marketing is a core component of what ProMedica does, so it was able to draw on resources from within the organization to build a successful campaign around summer meals.

Rebranding hunger as a health-care issue doesn’t change the fact that it is a problem rooted in poverty. Rebranding could, however, move local residents who would be predisposed to make quick judgments about poverty and poor people to consider solutions to hunger in terms of health care rather than “welfare.” If we talk about hunger only as an extension



Courtesy ProMedica

The Afterschool Meal Program focuses on serving meals in neighborhoods where more than half of the children qualify for subsidized school meals.

of poverty, it’s much easier to think of it as solely a personal problem that people need to solve themselves. It’s not society’s problem. The results can be seen in ordinary conversations: while many people consider it perfectly acceptable to excoriate “welfare recipients,” it’s almost never okay to make similar derogatory remarks about patients with chronic health problems.

One reason there is so little stigma attached to WIC compared to SNAP is because WIC includes health care checkups, leading the mothers who participate to see it as something completely different from welfare. Nutrition is so clearly associated with young children’s health and growth that it is natural for pediatricians to promote WIC. Doctors can write a prescription for WIC. What if they could write a prescription for SNAP? New York City has recently started allowing doctors to write a prescription for low-income patients with certain health conditions to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables at local farmers markets. The program is being financed privately. Similar privately financed efforts have been piloted in California, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Texas, and Washington, D.C.⁵⁶

Healthcare professionals have been increasingly aware that they must do a better job of addressing the social determinants of disease, which include diet-related chronic health problems. For every dollar spent on health care, 75 cents goes to the treatment of chronic disease.⁵⁷ Between 1995 and 2010, the rates of diabetes increased by more than 50 percent in 42 states, according to the Centers for Disease Control.⁵⁸ At this rate, by 2050 one in three Americans will have diabetes, and most of it will be Type 2 diabetes, a diet-related condition.⁵⁹ Diabetes is associated with obesity, and obesity is not just the result of a preference for unhealthy foods. Often, it's about not being able to afford healthy foods.

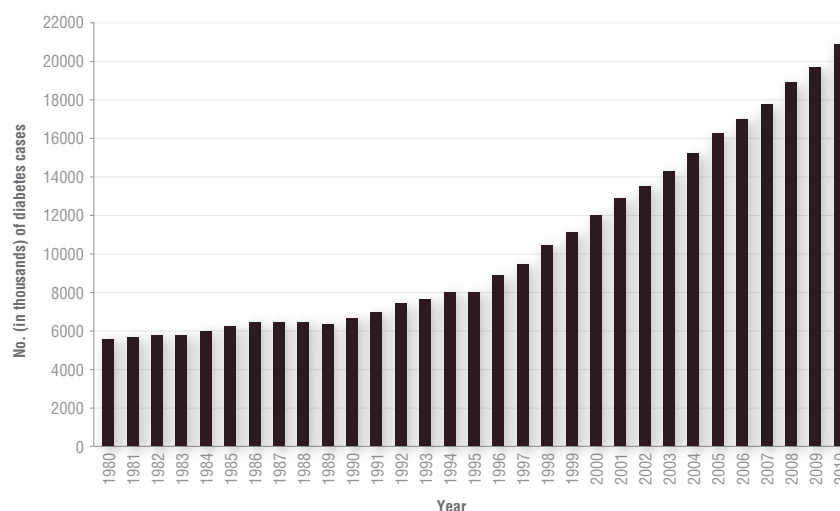
ProMedica is not a lone voice in the healthcare sector attempting to change the way we think and talk about hunger. The American Pediatric Association (APA) and the American Association of Pediatrics

(AAP) “have both made reducing childhood poverty in the U.S. and alleviating the effects of poverty on child health and wellbeing a strategic priority.”⁶⁰ In a 2013 report by the APA taskforce on child poverty, written jointly with the AAP, the two groups call for a White House Conference on Children and Youth, reminding readers that between

“Rebranding hunger as a healthcare issue doesn’t change the fact that it is a problem rooted in poverty.”

In October 2013, ProMedica and the Alliance to End Hunger, led by Tony Hall, convened the first-ever summit on hunger and health on Capitol Hill, *Come to the Table*. The main goal was to persuade more members of Congress to become anti-hunger champions by illustrating the relationships among reducing hunger, improving health outcomes, and holding down healthcare costs.

Figure 4.8 Annual Number of U.S. Adults Aged 18-79 Years with Diagnosed Diabetes, 1980-2010



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012), Diabetes Report Card, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

1909 and 1970, seven such conferences were held in Washington, DC—roughly one every decade. The conferences involved the White House, branches of the administration, Congress, state-level leaders, and leaders in the medical field. The meetings contributed to major reforms in social policy that benefit all children in America, such as laws against child labor, enactment of maternal and child health programs, and the deinstitutionalization of children with disabilities.⁶¹

DATA DO-GOODERS: A NEW FORCE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER

Derek Schwabe, Bread for the World Institute

In Washington, DC, a local non-profit, DC Action for Children, had years' worth of city-wide data on poverty, food access, SNAP participation, education, and health. What they needed was a way to make all that data accessible to community and city leaders who can change policy.

Enter DataKind—an energetic new organization that convenes pro-bono data scientists, developers, and designers to help non-profits unlock the power of their data. Through a weekend event called a DataDive, DataKind pooled the skills of local volunteers to create an interactive map that put all of DC Action's data in one place. The map disaggregated the data to the neighborhood level for the first time, enabling anyone to pinpoint statistics on poverty, education, and health in their community and see how they overlap. The DataDive signaled a transition for DC Action—away from lengthy static PDF documents and toward a cleaner way of communicating that makes information attractive and fits more in less space.

“Civic-minded techies are coming together in cities around the country and the world, giving concerned people with advanced computer skills a chance to address community problems like never before.”

DC Action was overwhelmed by the community's response to their new mapping tool. It drew unprecedented attention to the organization's work, driving up webpage views by 620 percent in one day. The innovative work has garnered recognition and innovation awards from respected organizations like the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Global Editors Network. Most important, it has helped influence real changes in the allocation of city funding, targeting money to where the need is greatest. Since the map's debut, the city has increased funding for early intervention services, child care subsidies, and school-based mental health centers. Local policy

makers are now asking how the tool can be regularly updated to track the impact of policy decisions and publically funded programs and bring stronger accountability. DC Action has even gotten calls from city agencies looking to verify their own data.

Another data-minded group called Code for America matches talented web developers, designers, and entrepreneurs with forward-thinking city governments to help them harness technology to improve public services and government transparency. Through a fellowship program, these civic-hackers spend one year working in a sector of city government on a specific challenge. One team of fellows in New Orleans was asked to take on a growing problem of neighborhood blight. There were over 35,000 vacant properties scattered across the city that threatened neighborhood safety and economic vitality. Tracking down information on these properties was time-consuming, involving numerous calls to city agencies and trips to city offices.

In six weeks, the team of fellows and city officials pulled the data together into a one-stop online application called BlightStatus that made it easy for communities to map exactly where blighted properties were located, find out who owns them, and what their history was. The app was so successful that it spun out into a full-fledged startup called Civic Insight that now helps people track and solve blight in a number of cities.

Civic-minded techies are coming together in cities around the country and the world, giving concerned people with advanced computer skills a chance to address community problems like never before. They are building apps, maps, visualizations, and networks, and bringing this entirely new set of tools to the fight against hunger and poverty in their communities.

Derek Schwabe is the Hunger Report Fellow in Bread for the World Institute.

Volunteers collaborate on DC Action for Children's interactive map at a DataKind DataDive in Washington, DC.



DC Action for Children