



# Just Harvest News

A PUBLICATION OF THE JUST HARVEST EDUCATION FUND

## Pennsylvania's Poor in the Crosshairs

The shift in power in state government brought an unsettling, renewed push for welfare reform - with an eye on reducing program participation in state-administered federal safety net programs, such as cash assistance and SNAP/Food Stamps through the creation of yet more bureaucratic barriers. These proposed legislations threaten to change the structure and function of the public safety net that so many of our neighbors have come to rely on in these troubled post-recession times. Just Harvest has been following developments in Harrisburg closely over the past several months in order to inform our advocacy strategies.

### Welfare-to-Work Targeted

Of particular concern to advocates across the state is H.B. 1312, the Special Allowances bill (see story above). Currently, Special Allowances for Supportive Services are administered as a grant; H.B. 1312 would convert it to a "Job Transition Loan," making it harder and more expensive for clients to move from welfare to work. Clients would be required to repay the loan within 24 months. Loan forgiveness would be enacted only in cases where the individual does not require cash assistance or food stamps "for eighteen months subsequent to the disbursement of the loan." Effectively, this bill would penalize participants for failing to find work - which itself should be a sufficient penalty.

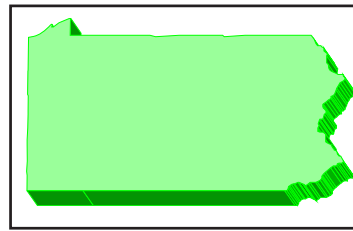
To justify H.B. 1312's restrictions, lawmakers again cite findings from the 2009 Wagner audit. The Auditor General alleged that the Special Allowance program suffered from "mismanagement and poor oversight," and carried a potential for fraud. But since then, a number of oversight improvements have been made to the Special Allowances program. As Co-Director Ken Regal told the Pittsburgh City Paper, "It's a stretch to take those audit findings and make the proposed changes to Special Allowances."

In late February, the House Majority Policy committee unveiled the WelFAIR ("Fairness, Accountability, Integrity and Responsibility") package of bills. The eight-bill package comes as a response to a 2009 report by State Auditor General **Jack Wagner** that alleged widespread "waste, fraud and abuse" across programs administered by the state department of Public Welfare. If enacted along with deep cuts to the DPW per the Pa. House's proposed budget (see below story), these bills could devastate the public safety net as we know it.

Among changes that would take effect under the WelFAIR package are measures to require placement of photo identification on Electronic Benefit Transfer cards (and possible "two-digit finger imaging" of applicants), and - under H.B. 1297 - random drug screenings for certain welfare applicants who have been convicted of drug-related felonies within the past five years. In the debate preceding H.B. 1297's passage on April 27 by a 164-23 vote, House Minority Leader **Frank Dermody** (D-

Allegheny) called the bill "a solution in search of a problem."

Just Harvest staff and volunteers immediately mobilized once learning of these new threats, mailing an action alert letter to our supporters, members and allies. Several



*Our "Common Wealth" ?*

concerned recipients responded with offers to meet with legislators. One presented a copy of the action alert letter to Representative **Dom Costa**; another helped to spread the word by distributing copies of the letter throughout her

neighborhood. Welfare Advocate **Rochelle Jackson**, along with Community Legal Services of Philadelphia, provided crucial information on the progress of the bills and related developments as they happened.

Though it was not officially included in the WelFAIR package, Senate Bill 9 (which would require individuals to provide proof of citizenship such as a passport, driver's license, or state ID when applying for public benefits) posed additional concern to us. Again, the policy casts too wide a net in pursuit of those illegal aliens

*(See 'Poor', Page 4)*

### A Pound-Foolish State Budget

Governor **Tom Corbett** unveiled his proposed budget on March 8, pledging to balance the budget solely by cutting state-funded programs (namely, public education) and with a strict "no new taxes" approach. However, the governor's budget did not hold the line altogether on DPW spending. His proposal calls for \$56 million in cuts to county assistance operations and programs (namely, the New Directions welfare-to-work program) that help transition families to viable employment. In addition, the governor's budget eliminates 168 currently unfilled jobs statewide at the County Assistance Offices - positions that could be filled by caseworkers to meet the continuing, historic demand for public assistance.

On May 10, the Pa. House released its counterproposal - a budget that restores cuts to education with a tremendous funding shift from the Department of Public Welfare. Of the \$471 million in cuts to DPW, \$161 million are being projected as savings based upon errors in Medicaid eligibility and provider payments as well as from "waste, fraud and

*(See 'State', Page 4)*



## To Prove Bi-Partisanship, End U.S. Hunger

In a land not too far away and a time not too long ago (in the United States, in the 1970's, actually), Republicans and Democrats worked together to solve major national problems.

In the late 1960's, a team of doctors found pockets of third world-style starvation in low-income communities nationwide. In response, Senator George McGovern, a liberal Democrat from South Dakota, and Senator Robert Dole, a conservative Republican from Kansas, forged a congressional consensus across party and ideological lines to create the modern nutrition assistance safety net (including the Food Stamp, WIC, and School Breakfast programs).

Domestic hunger has returned in full force. In 2009, more than 50 million Americans, including more than 17 million children, lived in households that suffered from hunger or food insecurity.

During his campaign, Obama pledged to end domestic child hunger by 2015, and his first budget proposed extra funding for child nutrition programs as a down payment on that goal. The federal stimulus bill pumped billions of extra dollars into the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/Food Stamps), preventing the recession from further worsening hunger.

The president and the Democratic leadership in Congress showed great courage in fighting for this vital funding.

Yet that progress was soon reversed, as both parties sought to re-cast themselves. Despite creating mountains of debt during the Bush years, through tax cuts for the wealthiest and a corporate welfare spending spree, Republicans tried to convince the public that their top concern was deficit reduction. Despite the fact that low-income voters — and particularly low-income non-white voters — were the only socio-economic group to consistently vote for Democrats in both good times and bad, the Democrats, spooked by the Tea Party's shadow, scrambled to deny any involvement in anti-poverty efforts.

Both sides were convinced that any poverty-related discussion would scare away middle-class voters, ignoring the reality that tens of millions of Americans, formerly solidly middle-class, were teetering on the edge of poverty and hunger themselves.

Amidst this frenzy of denial, Congress, with support from the White House, voted for an earlier phase-out of the recovery bill's increase in SNAP benefits, in order to pay for teachers' salaries and state bail-outs. Even worse, despite the reality that half of SNAP benefits go to children, Congress, also with White House backing, voted to phase out the SNAP increases even earlier, to pay for a Child Nutrition Re-authorization bill, which funds school lunches. That's right: Washington cut kids' dinners to pay for lunches. In order to round up the votes in the House for this effort, the President and Democratic congressional leaders have promised to work to restore that funding in the future, but that promise may be very hard to keep given the new make-up of Congress.

Both parties should reinvigorate the tradition of working together to fight hunger. Republicans must give up the myths that more tax cuts for the ultra-rich, along with a few crumbs given by faith-based charities, will somehow solve the long-term, structural problems with our economic and social policies that impoverish tens of millions of Americans. Democrats will need to stop clinging to the notion that the one and only way to improve decades-old programs is to give them more money.

Rather, both parties should work together to modernize, streamline, and reduce duplication in the 15 federal nutrition assistance programs, while also ensuring that the programs have enough resources to provide truly nutritious meals to all Americans in need.

*Joel Berg is the executive director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger and author of "All You Can Eat: How Hungry is America?"*

### *Just Harvest: A Center for Action Against Hunger*

#### **Our Mission Statement**

Just Harvest is a membership organization which promotes economic justice and works to influence public policy and to educate, empower, and mobilize the citizens of our community toward the elimination of hunger and poverty.

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**Just Harvest News** is published several times per year by the **Just Harvest Education Fund** and is sent to all members.

A copy of Just Harvest's official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

# Federal News

## Federal Budget, Food Stamp Policy Concerns Loom

“Hold the poor harmless.”

That should be the guiding principle of any federal budgeting activity; but sadly, experience has shown us that the opposite is often true. Whether they are being used as a slush fund for other programs or as a political football, programs meant to help the poor and hungry have come under attack from either side of the aisle.

In the fall of 2010, we mobilized our client-partners to speak out against the funding scheme for Child Nutrition Reauthorization under the “Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.” The act provides for enhanced nutritional quality of school meals, but at a great cost. It cuts future food stamp benefits by \$2.2 billion to pay for its programs, leading advocates to question the prudence of a policy that could make low-income children hungrier by cutting dinners at home to pay for lunch at school. Child Nutrition Advocate **Shauna Ponton** arranged visits with Congress members **Jason Altmire**, **Tim Murphy**, and **Mike Doyle**. Accompanying her were Just Harvest staff



and board members, and officials from the Pittsburgh Public Schools and Bethel Park School District. In addition, Shauna arranged a meeting between Rep. Altmire and a client-constituent who spoke candidly on how the average \$59 cut in monthly household food stamp benefits would impact the well-being of her family.

When he signed the “Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act” into law on December 13, 2010, President Obama pledged to restore the food stamp cuts. And indeed, his own proposed budget for 2012 reinstated the cuts to SNAP/Food stamps. But one of the most prominent new threats to SNAP/Food Stamps comes in the House GOP budget as touted by Rep. Paul Ryan.

The House GOP budget proposal would convert SNAP/Food stamps into a block-grant program – as well as cutting its funding by a staggering \$127 billion in the 2012-2021 period. The so-called “Roadmap

for America” budget could spell a “Road to Ruin” for low-income families who rely on this program, as block-grants to states could literally run dry under heavy demand.

The first few months of 2011 saw an assertion of Republican power in the House, as the newly elected clamored for radical spending cuts through the end of the fiscal year, as put forth in February by H.R. 1 – a continuing resolution that would have trimmed spending by \$65 billion through the end of the fiscal year (Sept. 30, 2011). Of particular concern to Just Harvest and anti-hunger advocates across the country was a \$758 million cut to the Special Supplemental Nutritional Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), upon which 16,000 in Allegheny County depend to purchase high-nutrition food for women, infants and children up to age 5.

To push back, we collected over 300 signatures on our Petition to Save WIC from supporters, tax clients, Empty Bowls attendees, and online friends. The petition,

(See ‘Federal’, Page 4)

## Renowned Anti-Hunger Activist Tony P. Hall to Speak at 2011 Harvest Celebration Dinner

Just Harvest is pleased and honored to announce that **Tony P. Hall** (former Member of Congress and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Agencies on Food and Agriculture) will be the keynote speaker at our 23rd Annual Harvest Celebration Dinner, scheduled for October 4, 2011.

Mr. Hall is a lifelong anti-hunger activist whose work has taken him far beyond his Ohio home district. He visited over 100 hunger-stricken countries over his tenure as chairman of the House Select Committee on Hunger, and even fasted in protest for 22 days when the committee was dissolved in 1993. Mr. Hall wrote about these experiences in his 2007 book, *Changing the Face of Hunger: One Man’s Story of How Liberals, Conservatives, Democrats, Republicans, and People of Faith Are Joining Forces to Help the Hungry, the Poor, and the Oppressed*, which presents the policy response to chronic hunger as a solidly nonpartisan issue. He continues his dedication to the fight against hunger as Director of the Washington D.C.-based Alliance to End Hunger.

Recently, along with Bread for the World President **David Beckman** and **Jim Wallis**, president and CEO of Sojourners (a Christian social justice organization), Mr. Hall led another national fast campaign to protest the cuts to the Special Supplemental Nutritional Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which was under threat of deep cuts through the end of this fiscal year per the congressional spending bill H.R. 1.

Just Harvest will be proud to honor Mr. Hall with the 2011 George Becker Memorial Award. And, we will be presenting the 2011 Seeds of Justice Award to retiring Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank CEO **Joyce Rothermel**. Ms. Rothermel was one of the founders of the GPCFB’s predecessor organization, the Jubilee Kitchen, in 1979. She subsequently helped to create the Pittsburgh Community Food Bank in 1980, taking over as CEO in 1987.

Please plan to join us for what promises to be a special and inspiring program!



### READ MORE...

About Mr. Hall’s recent fast and his ongoing work to end hunger at [hungerfast.org](http://hungerfast.org)

# Budget News

## Federal

*(Continued from Page 1)*

along with a number of postcards urging a “No” vote on WIC cuts, were presented to Senators Pat Toomey and Robert Casey. In addition, the Women and Girls Foundation organized a press conference that shed light on H.R. 1’s potential damage to human services. Just Harvest received mention in the Feb. 25 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (“Agencies Decry GOP-proposed Spending Cuts”), owing to an appearance at the press conference by WIC client (and Just Harvest Paid Work Experience professional) Teeoina Hall and her 17-month-old daughter, Sakiyah. Teeoina and Sakiyah accompanied Rochelle to the conference as she offered testimony on just how WIC would be impacted detrimentally by H.R. 1. As a follow-up, Teeoina wrote a letter to officials and accompanied Shauna to a meeting with Representative Mike Doyle.

Though H.R. 1 was defeated, a budget resolution did pass in April that included some smaller but still potentially harmful cuts in WIC funding. Credit is due, however, to Rep. Doyle for specifically expressing his opposition to the WIC cuts publicly in the April 14 edition of the Post-Gazette.

Just Harvest: A Center for Action Against Hunger will be fully engaged in advocacy and lobbying efforts as the Senate considers the 2012 federal budget. As discussion picks up steam over the 2012 Farm Bill (which, among other agricultural policies, sets the guidelines governing SNAP/Food Stamps), we’ll also be keeping the pressure on our elected officials to maintain a robust food safety net.

## Just Harvest in the News

Just Harvest has been making more frequent appearances in the pages of local press over the past few months. That we are regarded as a trusted local authority on issues surrounding hunger and poverty is a testament to your support as a member!

Our 22nd Annual Harvest Celebration Dinner last October garnered attention from the McKeesport Daily News, the New Pittsburgh Courier and KQV radio, each of which conducted interviews with keynote speaker **Arlene Holt Baker**.

As the Great Recession continued to create a serious drag on working families in our region, co-directors **Tara Marks** and **Ken Regal** were quoted by the Tribune Review and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on those continuing challenges faced by many of our clients (Ann Belser, Nov. 7 P-G; Rachel Weaver, Dec. 12 Pittsburgh Tribune Review).

The Pittsburgh City Paper published a series of in-depth investigative pieces by reporter Kate Giammarise on the obstacles faced by food stamp applicants, Just Harvest’s tax preparation services, and the recent WelFAIR package of reform bills being considered by the state. In the Dec. 1 issue, Kate examined the barriers to participation (overloaded DPW staff, unanswered voice mail messages, long office waits, misplaced and misfiled documentation) that many clients face when applying for assistance. An article in the Feb. 9 City Paper shed light on the Money in Your Pocket Coalition’s free tax services as an alternative remedy to the costly services and predatory Refund Anticipation Loans offered by paid preparers.

City Councilwoman **Natalia Rudiak** was profiled by the Pittsburgh Tribune Review’s Bill Vidonic over a pair of articles that ran Dec. 7 and 9. The focus of the articles was her early December, 2010 attempt at eating on a \$6-a-day food stamp budget as part of the Food Stamp Challenge coordinated by Just Harvest. In addition, Councilwoman Rudiak herself offered some great insights about her experience as it unfolded on the Just Harvest blog (as well as her own Twitter feed).

And sometimes, it’s we ourselves who are newsworthy. Columnist Sally Kalson noted our capacity-building work with welfare caseworkers in a Feb. 2 article about a new study by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy that, intriguingly, placed a dollar value on the efforts of Just Harvest – and what a value it is! Ms. Kalson, noting the NCRP study’s findings, wrote: “Every dollar spent on behalf of the disadvantaged by these and other nonprofit advocacy groups brought a return of \$122 in benefits to local communities.”

You can read all of these stories - and more - in the ‘Newsroom’ section of [www.justharvest.org!](http://www.justharvest.org!)

## State

*(Continued from Page 1)*

abuse.” Acting DPW Secretary **Gary Alexander**, when pressed by the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee as to the credibility of that figure, admitted that he could not produce a bottom-line estimate on savings attributed to rooting out waste, fraud and abuse.

What’s more, conspicuously absent from the House’s proposed budget is a \$506 million budget surplus announced in early May by the Department of Revenue. House Majority Leader Rep. **Mike Turzai** was quoted saying that he “takes issue with the term surplus,” preferring to call it a “revenue overestimate.” The house majority seems thus intent on leaving resources on the table, rather than rolling them back into maintaining vital programs. At press time, the state budget remains front-and-center with the Pa. House’s passage of its budget proposal on May 24 in a vote of 109-92.

We’re not yet finished with this fight, on either the policy or budget fronts. You can stay informed – and get involved – by connecting with us on Facebook or checking the Just Harvest website for frequent updates.

## Poor

*(Continued from Page 1)*

who are allegedly defrauding the welfare system. Requiring documents that an applicant may not currently have places an unfair financial burden on them (for ID processing fees) as well as a delay in receiving benefits.

Rochelle’s tenacious lobbying work paid off when State Senator **James Brewster** agreed to remove his name from the bill as a sponsor and rescind his support of Senate Bill 9. We thank Senator Brewster for leading by example!

Fortunately – for now – many of the most threatening bills (as well as several other restrictive welfare reform bills not included officially in the WelFAIR package) are held up in Senate committee and do not appear to be up for vote anytime soon. However, H.B. 1312 (a bill altering the state Special Allowances for Supportive Services program, which helps clients to transition from welfare to work - see related story on page one) and H.B. 1297 are slated for a Senate vote as we go to press.

# Service Roundup

## Tax Season 2010 Yields \$4.6M in Returns

Tax season 2010 ended on April 18 – and what a busy one it was this year! As a lead organization in the United Way of Allegheny County's Money in Your Pocket Coalition, Just Harvest operated three volunteer income tax preparation sites: at our South side office, the Community College of Allegheny County Boyce Campus, and at the Prospect Park housing community in Baldwin.



Just Harvest tax client Percina Grier (left) speaks to Pittsburgh City Council. Listening (L-R) are Council President Darlene Harris, Councilman Bruce Kraus, Board Member Mary Elizabeth McCarthy, and Communications Coordinator Adam MacGregor.

Among those sites, we prepared and filed 2,303 returns, which yielded \$4.6 million in refunds. Earned Income Tax Credit payments to 1,146 eligible households accounted for \$2,052,393 of that total. *And, 307 households received EITC payments that boosted their annual incomes by 25 percent or more!*

A total of 231 of our clients this year told us that they had paid commercial preparers to do their taxes last year, and 44 of them had taken costly Refund Anticipation Loans at that time. One of the aims of our free tax service is to keep clients' money out of the hands of paid services that routinely charge predatory interest rates and fees for offering instant "access" to tax returns via Refund Anticipation Loans.

We also took part this year in a nationwide push among IRS-certified Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites to raise awareness of the Earned Income Tax Credit. With input from Just Harvest, District 3 City Councilman **Bruce Kraus** sponsored a proclamation in observance of Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day on January 28.

Along with staff and board members from Just Harvest and the United Way of Allegheny County, one of our tax clients, **Percina Grier**, attended council's January 25 meeting to share her own EITC story. Ms. Grier said that the free help she received from Just Harvest in claiming her 2009 EITC was "a great help and a blessing."

Congratulations to all of our hard-working tax volunteers and paid staff for helping to keep these valuable household resources in the hands of our low-income neighbors! Just Harvest is grateful to Pathways PA, the United Way of Allegheny County, the Internal Revenue Service, The City of Pittsburgh, and the Corporation for Enterprise Development.

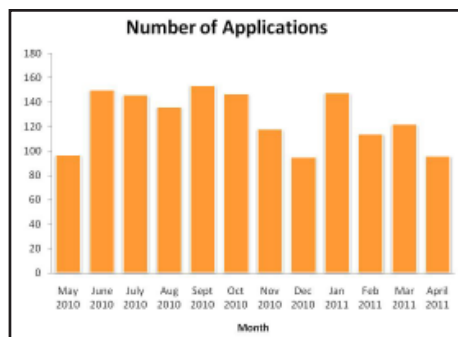
## Food Stamps in Review

Our food stamp application assistance program is as busy as ever, especially in the wake of the Great Recession.

According to the Department of Public Welfare, this past December Pennsylvania hit the 1.7 million mark for participation in the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)/Food Stamps for the first time ever.

Allegheny County hit another all-time high of 157,956 participants in the program as of April.

**Just Harvest ended 2010 with a grand total of 1,704 applications (up 12% from 1,520 in 2009).** And the calls continue to roll in. Since July, 2009 we have helped roughly 1,850 households to receive an estimated \$2,472,000 in food stamp benefits.



Food Stamp Specialists **Ann Sanders** and **Ken Munz** continue to help each applicant who calls into our food stamp assistance line to overcome the barriers to participation they face – from completing the application, to making sure that the required paperwork is filed, to getting through to the proper personnel at the County Assistance Office.

Listen to Just Harvest on 'The Union Edge' (hosted by Charles Showalter) at 2:00 p.m. every third Friday of the month on WPYT 660AM!



## Summer Food on the Way

Continued advocacy and partnership-building by Just Harvest Child Nutrition Advocate Shauna Ponton ensures that this summer will be a promising few months for Summer Food Programs administered by the City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County and other sponsors.

Shauna has been working with the Southwestern Pennsylvania Food Security Partnership to reach out to potential site partners in preparation for the summer feeding months. Together with Pittsburgh CitiParks and the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, we are hoping to add six to 10 Summer Food sites around the area this summer.

"We're very pleased that there has been so much interest in participating in the Summer Food program from sites that currently coordinate the Child and Adult Care Food programs," said Shauna.

County Summer Food sites are set to open on June 13, and city sites will open June 20. The Summer Food sites can be found by consulting our Summer Food Google Map linked from Just Harvest's website at [www.justharvest.org](http://www.justharvest.org), or by calling 1-888-FOOD-210.

# In the Community

## Thanks and Acknowledgements...

Just Harvest Education Fund is proud to acknowledge recent grants from the United Way of Allegheny County, the Self-Employment Tax Initiative of the Corporation for Enterprise Development, the City of Pittsburgh, and MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger. Just Harvest: A Center for Action Against Hunger extends our thanks to the Allegheny County Bar Foundation for their major annual support

through the Attorneys Against Hunger Campaign. And we are grateful to all the recent donors to the Education Fund and the Center for Action. Thank you to . . .

Madalon Amenta; Mary Arenth; Mary Ruth Aull; Starlett Bailey; Cynthia Balchunas; David Balsler; Andy Bartholomew; Clare Beer; Sara Bennett; Carol Bernick; Arthur Bittner; Sandra Brake; James Breier; Joseph & Joan Bruno; Sr. Jeanette Bussen and the Sisters of St. Joseph ;Richard & Marie Byrne; David Caldwell; Rick Claypool; Pat & Jeannie Cleary-Burns; Allan Cohen;

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## Empty Bowls 2011 Recap

Aside from filling bellies and warming hearts, this year's 16th Annual Empty Bowls Dinner (held on March 6 at Rodef Shalom Congregation, Oakland) raised a record \$59,129 for Just Harvest and the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank.

Over 1500 attendees filled the venue, enjoying the best in homemade soups, handmade ceramics, and good family fellowship. Just a half-hour after the doors opened, the foyer was crowded with folks

soup – that long line itself a reminder of how some of our needy neighbors often must wait hungrily to be served – they were entertained by strolling violinist Barbara Lowenstein and Master Magician Robbie Wise. Emcee Larry Berger of the Saturday Light Brigade radio program interviewed those in line and engaged the kids with the show's trademark trivia and puzzles. Several local luminaries took up ladles as soup-servers, too. At the head of the line, WQED's Rick Sebak and Chris

Fennimore, as well as City Councilman Bill Peduto took shifts serving piping-hot soups such as red lentil, tomato risotto, chicken tortilla, and roasted red pepper bisque, all kindly provided by

dozens of local restaurants.

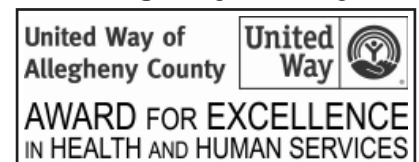
Co-Director Ken Regal commented, "For 16 years now, Empty Bowls has had a unique spot in our community's heart. It is truly a joy to have the generous support of our volunteers, guests, bowlmakers, soup donors, sponsors, hosts, entertainers, and everyone who keep making Empty Bowls bigger and better each year."

Thanks to everyone who attended, donated, or helped to spread the word – we'll keep the soup on for you 'til next year! Mark your calendars for Empty Bowls XVII, March 11, 2012!

We are most grateful to Paul Stewart and Looking In Looking Out at the 905 Penn Gallery for inviting donations to Just Harvest during the April 2011 Gallery Crawl, and to Kathleen Sheehan for organizing our recent PartyLite fundraiser. We thank the Pittsburgh Foundation for their kind donation of several Flip Video cameras.

And a special thanks to all our payroll campaign donors through the United Way Contributor Choice Campaign and the Three Rivers Combined Federal Campaign.

Just Harvest Education Fund is now a proud partner agency of the United Way of Allegheny County



Over 1500 attended Empty Bowls 2011

waiting to buy and redeem tickets, and the soup line had already begun to snake around the perimeter of the auditorium. The congregation's wintergarden served as a repository for the hundreds of handmade bowls donated by over 40 area artisans and schools, as well as outstanding ceramic items that were up for silent auction. The auctioned bowls, autographed by many sports and entertainment celebrities, raised a record \$7,600, including top bids of \$1,755 for a bowl autographed by Sir Paul McCartney and \$888 for one signed by local American Idol sensation Jackie Evancho.

While attendees waited for their

# Partnerships toward Justice

“There’s strength in numbers,” as the adage goes. To that end, Just Harvest has joined forces with likeminded organizations in a number of coalitions that are advocating for responsible budgeting at the state level, as well as better policies for the working poor and newly unemployed.

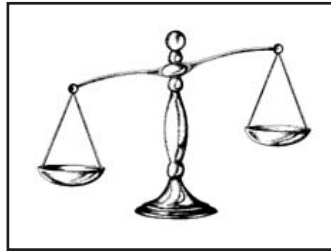
Just Harvest took part in the inaugural rally on May 18 for ‘Why Cut What Works?’ According to its website, “‘Why Cut What Works’ is a coalition of United Ways, community foundations and nonprofit organizations across the state with the overarching purpose to provide a vehicle for voices of the vulnerable, the underserved and the disadvantaged” in state budgeting priorities. Locally, ‘Why Cut What Works’ is coordinated jointly by the Greater Pittsburgh Nonprofit Partnership, the Pittsburgh Foundation, and the United Way of Allegheny County. You can watch video footage of the May 18 rally at [www.whycutwhatworks.org](http://www.whycutwhatworks.org).

Better Choices for Pennsylvania ([www.betterchoicesforpa.com](http://www.betterchoicesforpa.com)) is a similar statewide coalition united in the assertion that “The worst thing that a state can do in a recession is weaken the public services that a strong economy needs, like education, health care, transportation, and public safety.” According to the organization’s website, Better Choices advocates for a “balanced approach that includes new revenue to solve our state’s budget crisis. Rather than relying solely on spending cuts, a balanced approach will allow Pennsylvania to help working families through hard times, preserve our long-term financial stability and put the state in a good position when the economy recovers.”

Western PA Better Choices includes Just Harvest, the Greater Pittsburgh Nonprofit Partnership, SEIU Healthcare PA,

Pennsylvania Wants to Work, United Food and Commercial Workers No. 23, SEIU 32BJ, Pittsburgh United, and many more area faith-based, labor and human services organizations.

Partners in the Western Pennsylvania We Are One Coalition ([www.facebook.com/WEAREONEWPA](http://www.facebook.com/WEAREONEWPA)), which includes Just Harvest along with a variety of other labor, social justice and environmental organizations, traveled to



Harrisburg for the May 3 Rally for a Responsible Budget organized by the Coalition for Labor Engagement and Accountable Revenues (CLEAR). Over 5,000 advocates from all over the state gathered on the steps of the Capitol building to speak out for a state budget that focuses on revenues rather than on the devastating cuts to vital services and education per Governor Corbett’s proposed budget. Western Pa. We Are One Coalition is organizing future actions and events around state budget issues, so please be sure to check the Just Harvest Facebook page for frequent updates.

For information on how you can take part in any of the aforementioned coalitions, please contact Just Harvest, or ‘Like’ their respective pages on Facebook.

## Advocacy: A Team Effort!

Just Harvest is proud to be part of a great network of organizations that share the resources we need to do our job much more effectively. Here’s a quick look at a few of them.



### Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)

Founded in 1970, Washington, D.C.-based FRAC is the “leading national nonprofit organization working to improve public policies and public-private partnerships to eradicate hunger and undernutrition in the United States.” FRAC’s policy studies, position papers, survey and statistical data sets, and calls to action are frequently localized for use by Just Harvest in our outreach, education and lobbying work. Just Harvest has most recently shared FRAC-compiled data on food insecurity rates – broken down to incidence by congressional district – with our legislators during lobbying visits.

### Coalition on Human Needs



CHN is “an alliance of national organizations working together to promote public policies that address the needs of low-income and other vulnerable people.” Aside from providing analysis and in-depth discussions of issues relevant to the poor and hungry

via conference calls and web-based seminars, CHN has partnered with Just Harvest: A Center for Action Against Hunger, in its recent lobbying activities. In February, we took part in a February conference call organized by CHN with Congressman Mike Doyle’s chief of staff in Washington D.C. For our part, we were asked to offer local perspectives on cuts to the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and the Special Supplemental Nutritional Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) proposed under the congressional spending bill H.R. 1.



### Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center

PBPC has been working since 2005 as a “nonpartisan, statewide policy research project that provides independent, credible analysis on state tax, budget, and related policy matters, with attention to the impact of current or proposed policies on working families.” PennBPC has provided vital insight to Just Harvest in its speedy analysis of Governor Corbett’s proposed state budget in terms of its impact on funding to the Department of Public Welfare.

## ‘We’re Ready for Our Close-up!’

Now you can watch video content created by Just Harvest staff! In addition to having launched our Youtube channel in November of 2010 ([youtube.com/JustHarvestPgh](http://youtube.com/JustHarvestPgh)), we’ve been doing some exciting things with the kind support of staff of the Pittsburgh Foundation’s “Pittsburgh on Video” online community.



Ken, Tara, and other Just Harvest staff recently were interviewed by POV’s **Christopher Whitlatch** for the first episode of ‘Unsung’, an online nonprofit news program. You can view this show, as well as some other clips filmed at this year’s Empty Bowls, by pointing your browser to [www.pittsburghonvideo.org](http://www.pittsburghonvideo.org).

# Upcoming Events

## New Documentary Film 'Food Stamped' to Premiere at Annual Meeting

Just Harvest will premiere the documentary film "Food Stamped" at our annual meeting, 6:00 p.m., June 21 at United Steelworkers (60 Blvd of the Allies).

The film chronicles the experiences of husband-and-wife filmmaking team Shira and Yoav Potash of San Francisco, Calif., as they attempt to eat a healthful diet on a food stamp budget of about \$1.00 per meal.

Locally, City Councilwoman Natalia Rudiak took on a similar Food Stamp Challenge last December, in order to become familiar with the daily struggles facing food stamp participants.

Through interviews with low-income recipients of assistance, policymakers, and anti-hunger advocates and agency staff, the Potashes explore why unhealthy food is cheaper than healthy options, and the

difficulties of navigating state bureaucracy when applying for food stamps. In addition, they cover community strategies against hunger, such as farmers' markets that accept food stamps, and programs like free and reduced-price school meals. The Potashes have done a remarkable job in weaving their own narrative throughout a thorough, personable and often funny examination of these broader issues.

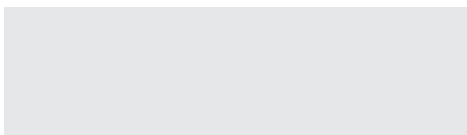
"Food Stamped" will follow our annual board election and state-of-the-organization address. The meeting and screening are free and open to the public.



**LEARN MORE...** View the trailer for 'Food Stamped' here: [youtube.com/foodstampedmovie](http://youtube.com/foodstampedmovie)

### Important 'Just Harvest News' Announcement...

**In an effort to both "go green" and save on costly postage, we offer all of our members the option of receiving Just Harvest News electronically.** If you would like to be removed from the print mailing list and added to our e-newsletter list, please send an e-mail to [info@justharvest.org](mailto:info@justharvest.org) with the word "**Subscribe**" in the subject line.



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