



Just Harvest News

A PUBLICATION OF THE JUST HARVEST EDUCATION FUND

Federal Cuts Target Food Stamps

In late March, Congress passed House Budget Committee Chairman **Paul Ryan's** "Path to Prosperity" FY2013 budget by a party-line vote of 228-191. As presented, the Ryan budget put forth a plan so rife with draconian cuts to vital safety net programs like food stamps, Medicare and Medicaid that it had virtually no chance of passing the Democratically controlled Senate. Indeed, the Senate voted down the budget on May 22. Nonetheless, the document provided a strong indicator of current policy track espoused by political opponents of programs that help poor people.



Starting in 2016, Ryan's budget called for converting SNAP/Food stamps into a block-grant program – a move that proponents claim will "save" \$122.5 billion. By altering the structure from an entitlement-based program to one in which fixed grants are paid out to states, the proposal would destroy the program's ability to respond to increased need. As these block grants would take effect, 41 million nationwide would see an average \$400 reduction in benefits. And in Pennsylvania alone, the White House estimates that 130,000 people would lose access to food stamps altogether.

The second installment of this one-two punch came in the form of a House Agricultural Committee decision that whittled away another \$33 billion from SNAP/Food stamps over the next decade, through a series of "common sense reforms" to eliminate the oft-parroted (but seldom corroborated) incidence of "waste, fraud and abuse". According to the Center for

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Pa. Voter Photo ID Law Passes, Spurs Outcry

It's still your right to vote – but some restrictions may apply. Thanks to Pennsylvania's new Voter ID law, starting in November, all voters are required to present a form of approved valid photo ID at the polls.



Photo Voter ID Rally attendees listen as **Tim Stevens** of the Black Political Empowerment Project addresses the issue of voter suppression under the new Pa. law.

Calling it a "law of prevention," **Governor Corbett** stressed the need to combat "voter fraud." But we have yet to see any report on the incidence of such alleged "fraud." The policy we're now stuck with for the time being creates yet another barrier to participate in the political process for poor people, seniors, and even resident students who lack both valid photo ID and the documentation and other means to procure it.

Just Harvest joined the chorus of opposition locally, working with allies in the We Are One coalition of Western Pa. to organize an April 18 rally held outside the PennDOT Driver's License Center on Smithfield Street, Downtown. The aim of the action was to both raise awareness of the new law and to help low-income attendees through the process of getting free photo ID cards as offered through

Food Stamp Asset Test Returns in Pa.

On May 1, Pennsylvania reinstated an asset test for determining eligibility for SNAP/Food stamps. Championed by **Governor Corbett** and Department of Public Welfare Secretary **Gary Alexander** to ensure that Food Stamp benefits are reserved for the "truly needy" (in DPW's words) among low-income Pennsylvanians, the asset test will require households with over \$5,500 in assets to spend down their savings to that level before they qualify for food stamps. For seniors and persons with disabilities, the asset limit is \$9,000.

Former Governor Ed Rendell suspended the asset test in 2008, as many families sought Food stamp help for the first time. Initially, the proposed asset test limits were much lower: at \$2,000 and \$3,250. Following pushback from advocates across the state, the limits were raised to the current levels. Under the lower asset limits, DPW estimated that the asset test would reduce the food stamp rolls by 2 percent of current recipients. Under the new limits, that figure drops to **less than one percent** of the 1.83

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PennDOT. Typically, the cards come at cost of \$13.50, but the cost is waived if the customer signs a document affirming financial distress.

About 60 supporters of voting rights gathered outside the center, led by **Celeste Taylor** of Pa. Protect Our Vote. Celeste enlisted chaperones from the organizations in attendance (which included the Black Political Empowerment Project, One Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network, and others) to enter the office with low-income ID seekers to ensure that PennDOT followed the proper procedure in processing the no-cost IDs. About a dozen low-income area residents were assisted

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Pa. Budget Leaves Money on the Table

There has not been a lot of good news this state budget season, but an improving economy is providing fresh hope that lawmakers can restore some of the worst cuts proposed by Governor Tom Corbett.

With state revenues recovering, the Pennsylvania Senate took a good first step in early May by approving a budget that reflects the deep concerns that Pennsylvanians have about the cost of the Governor's cuts. Cuts to public universities were restored, and some funding for early childhood education and county human services was put back.

Still, the budget leaves money on the table, keeping loopholes and tax cuts that drain funds from schools, human services and other critical investments.

Altogether Pennsylvania will spend \$2.4 billion next year on business tax breaks that primarily benefit the largest corporations and come with no commitment to create jobs.

On the other side of the ledger, we know that underfunding schools and more cuts to health and human services come at the expense of Pennsylvania children, families and our economy.

SB 1466, the Senate-passed budget bill now before the state House, will continue nearly \$1 billion in cuts to classrooms enacted last year. Public schools that serve the poorest children were hit particularly hard with those funding cuts and will continue to struggle.

SB 1466 restores \$50 million of \$100 million cut by the Governor for Accountability Block Grants, which support full-day kindergarten and early childhood education. This is a big drop from the \$259 million provided just two years ago – meaning there are fewer opportunities for our youngest children to get a head start in life.

Also on the chopping block are county programs that help the homeless, protect children, provide mental and behavior health treatment, and help keep individuals with intellectual disabilities in lower cost community-based care. SB 1466 restores half of the Governor's cuts to these services, but overall funding is still reduced by \$84 million.

Funding is eliminated entirely for General Assistance, a modest temporary cash benefit provided to 68,000 low-income adults who are sick or living with a disability, victims of abuse, or completing drug and alcohol treatment. General Assistance has provided many struggling Pennsylvanians with a bridge to employment and a better life.

Lawmakers are right to tap into the state's revenue growth, but with so many deep cuts still looming large on the horizon, they need to go further. The Legislature should take steps to end special tax breaks and restore more of the investments that Pennsylvanians value.

For one, the Legislature should adopt the Governor's plan to close a loophole that allows big retailers to keep millions in sales taxes they collect from customers. Lawmakers should also delay a planned cut to the state's capital stock and franchise tax that will cost \$275 million over the next two years. Corporate tax loopholes that cost hundreds of millions each year should also be closed.

Pennsylvania cannot afford these costly tax breaks when schools and services for families are on the line. Instead of risking our future economic growth and quality of life, Pennsylvania needs to take a balanced approach to the budget that includes finding efficiencies and raising new revenue so that we can maintain critical public investments.

Sharon Ward is the Director of the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, a non-partisan policy research project that provides independent, credible analysis on state tax, budget and related policy matters, with attention to the impact of policies on working families. Keep up to date with budget developments at <http://pennbpc.org>.

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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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.

State News

Asset

(Continued from page 1)

million currently on food stamps in our state. And the Pennsylvania taxpayer money saved by this move? Zero dollars, since the SNAP/ Food stamp program is fully funded by the federal government, with the state only responsible for one-half of the total cost for administration.

What's more, the Corbett Administration has not ever discussed the real costs of implementation that will be incurred by the state. As the asset test screening process would require caseworkers at already understaffed and overworked County Assistance Offices to comb through the bank statements and calculate the car values of more than 880,000 families currently receiving food stamps (plus all new applicants), the test threatens to further overtax an already struggling department.

Perhaps the most fundamentally disturbing aspect of the asset test is how it removes the incentive for low-income households to even attempt to accrue savings - long recognized as a pathway out of poverty in the long term. By requiring households to expend their savings before asking for help, Corbett's DPW is effectively telling needy people "don't call us until you're destitute."

Just Harvest joined the opposition to the asset test early on, submitting an Op-Ed to the Post-Gazette written by board secretary **Mary Elizabeth McCarthy**, and joining with colleague organizations like the



Linda Davis speaks before Allegheny County Council about the Food Stamp Asset Test

Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger and Change.org to create an online petition opposing the asset test (linked and still live as of this writing here: <http://www.change.org/petitions/gov-corbett-help-stop-hunger-remove-barrier-to-food-stamps>).

www.change.org/petitions/gov-corbett-help-stop-hunger-remove-barrier-to-food-stamps).

On March 15, Welfare Advocate **Rochelle Jackson** traveled to Harrisburg with one of our food stamp clients, **Linda Davis** of Swissvale to testify with other advocates and



(L-R) Just Harvest client Karen Naeser and Welfare Advocate Rochelle Jackson delivered nearly 350 letters opposing the asset test to Gov. Corbett's downtown office

affected individuals at a hearing on the asset test convened by the House Human Services Committee. Linda shared her day-to-day experience as an unemployed senior with limited income and savings that she must use largely for housing and medical expenses. Following the hearing, Committee Chair Rep. Gene DiGirolamo (R-Bucks) wrote to Governor Corbett to request that he reconsider the policy. "Please think again about moving backwards to reinstate the SNAP asset test," he wrote. "It does not appear to be good policy for Pennsylvania."

Just Harvest also helped to keep the issue visible in local media, and on April 18 Rochelle and **Karen Naeser**, another of our client/partners, delivered 350 letters signed by area residents opposed to the asset test to Governor Corbett's Pittsburgh office.

On May 1 – the day the asset test went into effect - Karen and Linda both joined

Child Nutrition Advocate **Shauna Ponton** and Communications Coordinator **Adam MacGregor** to speak in support of a motion by Allegheny County Council opposing the

test. As we go to print, the motion is currently under consideration. We are hopeful that county council will take things a step further, as we requested during the May 1 public comment segment, by calling on Governor Corbett and DPW Secretary Alexander to put a stop this policy.

From our services side, we are bracing for impact. Our food stamp specialists report that there have already been several questions from current clients who are confused by the asset test requirements. We agree that the bottom line is an exponential increase in workload for the caseworkers, which translates to more frustration, more delays, and longer periods of simply doing without for people in need.

We're continuing to speak truth to power on this issue, and we encourage you to join us by calling Governor Corbett's offices in **Pittsburgh (412-565-5700)** or **Harrisburg (717-787-2500)** with the following message urging him to fight the real "waste":

"The food stamp asset test is a needless policy that will overburden DPW caseworkers with more paperwork, leading to delays and potential errors that will hurt our needy neighbors. As a taxpayer, I demand that you halt this expensive and wasteful asset test."

Comings and Goings

Co-Director **Tara Marks** announced her resignation from Just Harvest after a 2-1/2 year stint on our team. We wish her all the best in her new role as a student at the Ohio Northern University Law School, and look forward to being her favorite pro bono client.

Just Harvest also said farewell to long-time Child Nutrition Advocate **Shauna Ponton** who left in May to pursue both entrepreneurial plans and continued work elsewhere in the nonprofit sector.

A belated welcome to Food Stamp Specialist **Dawn Blair**, who joined us this Spring. Former Food Stamp specialist **Ann Sanders** is now our Volunteer Coordinator, and we congratulate her on filling a much-needed new role.

Interns **Emily Schmidlapp** and **Ian Childers** joined our team recently, and we also have been counting on the helpful volunteer hands of **Angela Martin** and **Russ Steinle** in assisting with our office processes.

We wish former Paid Work Experience employee **Mary Hefferan** all the best and thank her for her valuable service.

Policy News

Food Stamps & Farmer's Markets

Imagine you're a low-income city resident (and perhaps you actually are) who benefits from SNAP/Food stamps. The summer Farmer's Market season that's now upon us brings great sources of fresh, locally grown produce to most everyone in neighborhoods throughout the city. Everyone, that is, except you and others like you who receive SNAP benefits, which are disbursed monthly on Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards – not accepted at the cash-only markets.

Closing this gap has been a priority for Just Harvest ever since food stamps went electronic a decade ago. And a solution would be a winning situation for everyone involved – from the farmers looking to make some extra sales, to families in need. Efforts started in earnest in 2004, with a pilot program that equipped four individual farmer's market vendors with electronic point-of-sale equipment. Since then, Just Harvest has been working with local farmers, community partners and government to develop a wider-implemented, more practical solution.

In 2010, students at CMU's Heinz College helped us out by undertaking a study of low-income neighborhoods, titled "Fighting Hunger While Positively Impacting the Food System: Integrating SNAP Benefits at Pittsburgh Citiparks Farmers' Markets." The students developed a proposal that laid out a low-cost path for implementing a token-based system at city markets, wherein food stamp customers would use EBT cards to purchase tokens or scrip at a central kiosk to redeem for produce.

"It's really one of the easiest ways to make fresh, healthy food more accessible and affordable to those in need," says Just Harvest intern **Emily Schmidlapp**, who is now working with Co-Director **Ken Regal** on the EBT at Farmer's Markets project. Emily is a Graduate student at Chatham University's Food Studies program and the manager of the Strip District's Firehouse Farmer's Market, operated by Slow Foods Pittsburgh. She has

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Federal

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Budget and Policy Priorities, these cuts – in the very unlikely event that they are adopted – would shear 2 million individuals off the SNAP/Food stamp rolls immediately, while repealing the 2009 stimulus that provided a boost to food stamp benefits. This would reduce benefit amounts by an average of \$57 per month per family for those remaining in the program.

At the same time, SNAP/Food stamps is facing a set of potential flank attacks by way of cuts and policy changes proposed under the 2012 Farm Bill. This mammoth piece of legislation is in the early stages of formulation, but already there are amendments from House Agriculture Committee members proposing restrictions on SNAP/Food stamp eligibility.

Just Harvest made sure that Senator **Robert Casey** (who sits on the Senate Agriculture Committee) heard from us and other advocates statewide on this issue. In mid-April, we worked with our colleagues at the Food Research and Action Center in Washington D.C. to deliver a letter, signed by over 150 Pennsylvania advocate organizations, to Senator Casey's downtown office. "We urge you to speak to the strengths of these critically important programs and oppose any attempts to weaken them during Farm Bill deliberations," we wrote to Senator Casey, noting that a poll conducted by FRAC and Hart Research in January found that 77 percent of voters opposed cuts to SNAP/Food stamps as a means to reduce government spending. Accompanied by Just Harvest's **Adam MacGregor** and **Dennis McManus** of

the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food bank, Just Harvest volunteer **Angela Martin** hand-delivered the letter to one of the senator's staff and shared with him some of her own story as a food stamp recipient.

Just Harvest will continue to stand against these safety net cuts – with allies that span the country and include increasingly prominent voices. Please join us in the fight to protect these programs!

ACTION ITEM: Join the ongoing fight to maintain our public safety net!

Call your U.S. Representatives and Senators with the following message:

"We need a strong safety net as Americans continue to struggle under the effects of the economic crisis. I call on you to oppose any cuts or structural changes to SNAP and other nutrition programs, and to hold children harmless from any proposed program changes."

**Capitol Switchboard:
(202) 224-3121**

Photo ID

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through the process, and at least two incidences of overcharging for the IDs were averted thanks to the intervention of the chaperones. Representatives of the Pa. American Civil Liberties Union in attendance identified at least two potential plaintiffs for a lawsuit that was filed in Commonwealth Court a few weeks after the action.

Just Harvest's **Adam MacGregor** and volunteer **Mary Hefferan** spoke against the law and its chilling effect on those who would have trouble gathering the required documentation: A social security card, plus an additional form of ID (an original birth certificate that has a "raised seal", a U.S. citizenship certificate, naturalization certificate, or valid U.S. passport), plus two forms of proof of residency (tax records, a lease agreement, mortgage documents, a W-2 form, a current gun/firearm permit, or a current utility bill).

This is still a very much developing issue - in fact, in the weeks following the action, the state dropped the birth certificate requirement for the photo ID. If you have questions about requirements under the new law, call the Pa. Election Protection Hotline at 1-866-OUR-VOTE. More information on the requirements for getting a photo ID for voting through the PennDOT driver's license center is available at www.dmv.state.pa.us/voter/voteridlaw.shtml. You can find out more about future voter ID actions at Facebook.com/WEAREONEPA.

Service Roundup

Tax Season Recap

In our ninth year of offering free income tax preparation service to low-income filers, we completed 2,398 returns, totaling \$4.7 million in refunds among our four sites (Southside, CCAC Boyce Campus, Prospect Park, and our new site at the Bedford Hope Center in the Hill District). Earned Income Tax Credits accounted for about half of that total – underscoring the importance of that program for so many of our clients.

Getting our new tax prep site at the Bedford Hope Center up and running was the biggest addition to our services this year. The new site brought the total number of county sites operated by the United Way of Allegheny County's 'Money in Your Pocket Coalition' to 13. To highlight the site's opening, as well as

Earned Income Tax Awareness Day on January 28, District 6 Pittsburgh City Council member **R. Daniel Lavelle** sponsored a proclamation observing EITC Awareness Day in Pittsburgh.

At the end of tax season, we organized a media event at the First Source Center (also in the Hill District, and operated by MIYPC partner Family Resources) to raise awareness of the benefits of our campaign-wide partnership with PNC Bank, who offers free tax-refund debit cards to individuals who lack bank accounts. Councilman Lavelle toured the tax site and met with PNC Debit card client **Chemera Stanley**, who offered a shining endorsement of the debit card program.

Volunteers – making it happen!

Over 70 volunteers handled the steady flow of tax clients with diligence and cheer, and as the public face of Just Harvest during tax season, they earned high marks from clients – especially when they bear good news about a refund.

“You feel really appreciated,” said volunteer tax preparer and Just Harvest intern **Emily Schmidlapp**. “One very thankful lady who received a big refund came back in and gave me a four-page letter and an envelope full of poems that she wrote! These are the people who need money the most, and

hopefully we help to take the stress out of taxes,” she said.

Sam Mudarak, a semi-retired high-tech professional, was back for his second year as a tax volunteer. He first gained an interest in helping with a similar program through his church in Fairfax County, Virginia. “We had a janitor at the church who made \$12,000 a year. He went to a paid preparer with a question, and he was charged \$75,” he

said. “It bothered me that people on the low end of the income scale had to shell out additional money to have their taxes done. Here, I have the opportunity to make sure that clients get everything they are entitled to. And often times, taxes are even more complicated for low-

income filers, so it's great that we actually double-check every return [for applicable credits like EITC].”

In Memory of Jeffrey McKinney

Just Harvest mourns the loss of our friend and colleague **Jeffrey McKinney**, who passed away suddenly on May 24. Jeff joined our tax preparation team in 2011 and this year served as the site coordinator of our tax



Jeff speaks to Pgh. City Council, EITC Awareness Day 2012

assistance site at the Bedford Hope Center. We extend our profound sympathy to his wife **Charlese**, children **Jeffrey** and **Seantae**, and their entire family. Jeff brought smiles to many tax clients with both a friendly demeanor and a careful eye for tax credit eligibility. He will be greatly missed.

Clients in focus

This year, we added several testimonies from our tax clients to our growing client story bank. Waqass, a 32-year-old Iraqi citizen settled in Forest Hills with his family in 2009 after they left Iraq as refugees. A chemical engineer back home, he is currently working at a local grocery store until he can get his certification to restart his career in the U.S. Last year, he went to a paid preparer to have his taxes done, but a friend later referred him to us. After his appointment at our Southside office, he told us he could find no compromise of quality between our services and those he employed previously – and best of all, it's free. “It was easy to get an appointment,” he says. “To be honest, I didn't expect that – I called and left a message and within ten days was scheduled.”

Waqass plans to use his refund to help pay for his trip to California, where he'll complete his engineering certification. Filing accurately and on-time is important for him not only because of that refund, but since he wants to make sure he's in good standing when he applies for U.S. Citizenship. And, the taxes he does pay could make an important difference in some way, he tells us: “Part of it may help another person, maybe someone who was in an even worse situation than me and my family.”

Summer Food News

Just Harvest and the Southwest Pennsylvania Food Security Partnership have helped to start 12 possible new county summer food sites this year. Most of the new sites are located in and around the city, in neighborhoods including Milvale, West End, East Liberty and Downtown.

The Food Security Partnership is in its second year of work on summer food expansion, assisting us with the vital task of site development and awareness-building of existing sites. Plans are also underway to involve local Boy and Girl Scout groups to hold activities for children at the sites, and we've reached out to child literacy organization **Reading Is Fundamental** (RIF), to provide sites with educational and reading materials for children.

Just Harvest's Summer Food map will be going live on our website in coming weeks, and those interested in finding a summer food site in their area can now call the United Way's Southwest Pa. 2-1-1 Helpline (simply dial “2-1-1” from your phone).

In the Community

Thanks and Acknowledgements...

Just Harvest Education Fund gratefully acknowledges the generosity of several sources of grant support for our work in 2012. Major support from the United Way of Allegheny County has been a critical part of our current success and we are proud to be a United Way Partner Agency. We are thankful for grants to our Tax Assistance program from the Internal Revenue Service VITA Grant program, the United Way, and from PathwaysPA. Our Food Stamp Outreach and Enrollment program is supported by grants from the Pa. Department of Public Welfare and from the Allegheny County Department of Economic Development CDBG program. MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger provides a generous grant for operating support, the City of Pittsburgh CDBG program supports services for city residents in our tax, food stamp, and welfare advocacy efforts. A grant from the Women and Girls Foundation of Southwestern PA supports our WIC advocacy efforts, and support from the Food Research and Action Center is supporting advocacy on several

food and nutrition program issues. A new grant from the Motorola Mobility Foundation will support our project to local farmers' markets to accept food stamps.

Just Harvest: A Center for Action Against Hunger extends an enormous Thank You to the Attorneys Against Hunger campaign of the Allegheny County Bar Foundation for their generous grant and our congratulations for another successful campaign year.

Special thanks to Penn Brewery for their gift from the proceeds of their April "We Care Wednesday" at the restaurant, and to Greg Sinclair and many friends for their gifts in honor of Greg's completion of the Pittsburgh Marathon. Thanks also to our pledges through the United Way contributor choice program and federal employees who support us through the Combined Federal Campaign. Our gratitude also to all the sponsors, soup donors, bowl donors, friends, and 1,400+ guests who made the 17th Annual Empty Bowls Dinner a big success.

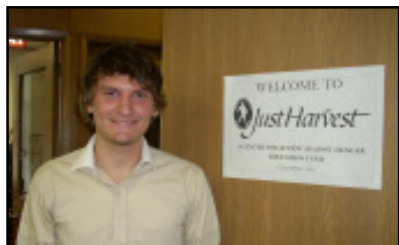
And, of course, thank you to our many individual members and supporters. Your gifts enable Just Harvest to be a strong and vital voice for hungry and poor people in our community and beyond:

Mary Arenth; Cindy Balchunas; Andy Bartholomew; Marvin Bellin; Sara Bennett; Arthur & Mary Bittner; Joel Bloom; Glenrose Bradford; John Burchfield; Jeanette Bussen; R. L. & Marie Byrne; David Caldwell; Antoinette Cardamone; Albert Caretto, Jr.; Stephanie Christian; Kate Clancy; Jonathan & Pamela Clark; Lois & Allan Cohen; Maren Cooke; Mike Crossey; Linda Davis; Michael Drohan & Joyce Rothermel; Peter Ennis; Nancy Evans; William Finch; Gloria Garcia; Benedict Gessler; Lynn Giordano; Marjorie Greenberger; Charles & Lianne Greve; Lisa Guido; Daniel Gup & Terri Klein; William Hashinger & Joan Isenberg; Eva Havliscek; Anne Hawkins; Ed Heath; Maxine Heller & David Mooney; Dennis Hennessey; Henry & Elsie Hillman; Braden Hunsaker; Shirley Jordan; Philip Joyce; Jessica & Adrienne Kaltman; Ellen Kaplan Goldstein; Amy Kellman; Sam & Marie Kocoshis; Lucille Koehler; Mary Konkiel; David Krupp *in memory of Barbara Krupp*; Eric Lingren; Andrea London & Ken Boas; Richard Lubell; Clark & Brigid Lund; Robert MacGregor; Robert & Kathleen Macie; Madelynn & Richard Macur Brousil *in honor of Dana Green*; Richard Margerum & Suzanne Broughton; Gaynell & Joseph Markowski; Victor Marquez; Joe McCarthy; Mary Elizabeth McCarthy; Dorlacy McCoy; Howard & Shirley McIlvried; Tom Michlovic; Karen Naeser; Thomas Newton; Deborah Noakes & Kerry Brace; John Oesterle; Fr. Jack O'Malley; Tom & Barbara Onieal; Theresa Orlando; Thomas Pandaleon; James & Catherine Parker; Frank Perrino; Suzanne Polen; Cecilia Pollock; Martin & Phyllis Pomerantz *in memory of Barbara Krupp*; Margaret Qualters; Harry Readshaw; Mike Richer & Mary Kellers; Sharon Lynn Rick; Virginia & Wayne Robertson; Grace Rudolph; Lorraine Sauchin; Marla & Harold Scheinman; Margaret Scott *in honor of Thomas Scott's birthday*; Joseph & Elizabeth Seamans; Amanda & Joshua Shapira; Albert Sharenko; Elizabeth Shelley; Karen Sinopoli *in memory of Harry Orlando*; Marjorie Spenser; Frank & Maureen Stagno; John Stember; Thomas Surdyk; Sandra Sweetland; Mark & Edie Swihart; James & Barbara Syphers; Phyllis Timins; Dave Vinski; Chuck Vukotich; Margie Ward; William Wegener; Eve Wider; Robert Wigginton; Ms. Williams; Gina Wilson; Jacqueline Wilson; Hannah Wolfson; Tobey Wolken; Janet & Terry Woodcock; Anonymous; Cries Advocacy Committee of St. Brendan's Episcopal Church; Our Lady of the Sacred Heart; Pittsburgh Dietetic Association; Religious Society of Friends; Sisters of Divine Providence; and Westminster Presbyterian Church.

An Intern's Progress

by James Tedrow, Just Harvest Policy Intern

On April 24, I ended my eight-month, 600-hour internship at Just Harvest. As an undergraduate Social Work student at the University of Pittsburgh, I was required to complete a field placement, which is intended to allow students to become more familiar with their communities while applying classroom skills and knowledge to real-life situations. My time spent at Just Harvest allowed for these opportunities time and again.



James Tedrow, former Just Harvest Policy Intern

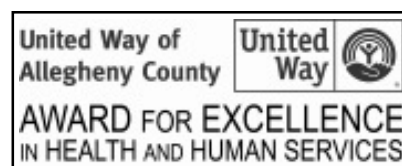
The first project I worked on was a client story bank. The goal of the project was to develop a collection of stories from current and past clients that could be used for media, advocacy, and donor-outreach purposes. Two clients who shared their stories with me were also given the opportunity to

share it in person with their State Senator, **Wayne Fontana**, during a Just Harvest legislative visit. In total, I helped to catalog over 20 client stories by the completion of my internship.

I also worked closely with the food stamp specialists at Just Harvest, from doing routine follow-up calls and faxing verification documents, to taking on client advocacy issues and doing food stamp screenings and applications. As part of the wider advocacy work of Just Harvest, I spoke before Pittsburgh City Council and participated in a meeting with Representative Jason Altmire to discuss food insecurity in Western Pennsylvania. My final research project drew from all of my experience here, as it examined the demographics of Just Harvest's food stamp clients.

As I graduate from the University of Pittsburgh, I could not be more grateful to have had the chance to spend my last collegiate year becoming part of the Just Harvest family. The experiences I've had and the friendships I've made will last a lifetime!

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



In the Community

Just Harvest Advocates for Stronger WIC Program

On May 3, Child Nutrition Advocate **Shauna Ponton** organized a delegation of WIC clients and advocates to testify at a hearing held at the Allegheny County Health Department's downtown WIC office. The hearing invited comments on all aspects of the WIC program for consideration in developing the state's WIC plan for the 2013 federal fiscal year. **Bonnie Mellott**, State Public Health Program Administrator, took testimonies and answered questions from advocates and several speakers organized by Just Harvest.

One significant goal of our testimony was to urge state WIC to implement the new one-year recertification option made possible by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. This option permits state WIC agencies to certify participation in WIC for one year requiring that participants submit their income and eligibility paperwork only once. Currently, WIC participants must be recertified every six months. It's a significant barrier to participation in the program, as the

frequent hassles associated with resubmitting documentation can lead otherwise eligible participants to drop out. Just Harvest also requested that WIC simplify the application process by allowing necessary medical forms to be completed in the office at the time of a client's WIC appointment.

Mary Heards, a WIC client whose children benefited greatly from the program, spoke from her own experience in favor of the one-year recertification. "This would make it much easier for working mothers to take part," she said.



WIC client **Mary Heards** shares testimony on her experience with the **Bonnie Mellott**, State Public Health Program Administrator

Markets

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just put the finishing touches on a grant proposal for the USDA's Farmer's Market Promotion Program that we hope will underwrite the first full year of operation, starting in 2013.

Our eventual goal is to get the project up and running at all seven CitiParks farmers markets throughout the city. Depending on funding availability, a pilot rollout of the program at one or two of the larger markets is possible later this summer. Efforts right now are focused on building support among vendors, whom Emily says are largely supportive of the effort. "Farmers like the token system, because it involves no extra effort on their part, and no processing fees that they'll have to absorb," she says.

"It gets at so many issues at once – you're helping local farmers and low-income people, and all with minimal inputs," says Emily. "There's really something for everyone at our farmers markets, and it counters that idea that they are just for 'foodies'."

Empty Bowls 2012 - A Look Back

The soup was on (and on, and on...) at Just Harvest and the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank's 17th Annual Empty Bowls Dinner, which was held at Rodef Shalom Congregation on March 11.

By shortly after the 2 p.m. start time, many of the 1200-plus attendees had already lined up around the hall, waiting patiently to sample soups from over 30 area restaurants and caterers. Host **Larry Berger** of the Saturday Light Brigade radio show kept the program moving along with his trademark family-friendly quizzes and games. The \$20 ticket entitled attendees not only to the simple meal of soup and bread, but also to their selection of one from thousands of handmade bowls, donated by local artisans and schools such as Carlow University, Winchester-Thurston School, Sweetwater Arts Center, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, and many more.

Ladling out soup at the head of the line were celebrity servers including PA State Senator **Jay Costa**, **D. Jermaine Husser** (CEO of the Food Bank), **Chris Fennimore** of WQED, Allegheny County Executive **Rich Fitzgerald**, and local alt-country musician **Slim Forsythe**. **Mr. "Speedy Delivery" McFeely** was on hand as well to sign autographs for the young and young-at-heart.

The Celebrity Bowl Auction this year featured bowls signed by rockers **Joe Grushecky** and **Bruce Springsteen**, the Pittsburgh Penguins, Poison singer (and Butler native) **Bret Michaels**, **Hines Ward** and **Kym Johnson** (his "Dancing with the Stars" partner), **Bono** of U2 and **Tom Cruise**. In all, the event raised over \$50,000 for the Food Bank and Just Harvest.

Mark your calendar for March 10, 2013 and please join us for Empty Bowls 18!

Get informed! Get involved!

I would like to...

- Receive Action Alerts via e-mail.
- Subscribe to the Welfare Agitator
- Have a speaker from Just Harvest talk to my group
- Volunteer!
- Become a member.

(I have included a donation in the enclosed envelope.)



Name: _____

Address: _____

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Upcoming Events

Author David K. Shipler to Speak at 24th Annual Harvest Celebration Dinner, Oct. 30, 2012

Our annual Harvest Celebration Dinner gives us the opportunity to recognize the efforts of true champions – local and national – in the fight against hunger and poverty.



This year we welcome Pulitzer Prize-winning author **David K. Shipler** (“The Working Poor: Invisible in America”) as our keynote speaker and 2012 George Becker Memorial Awardee.

Mr. Shipler was a Foreign Correspondent for the *New York Times* from 1966 to 1988, reporting from New York, Saigon, Moscow, and Jerusalem before serving as chief diplomatic correspondent in Washington, DC. In 1987, Mr. Shipler won the Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction for his book “Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land.” He continues to contribute to the *Times* regularly.

In researching “The Working Poor,” Mr. Shipler interviewed low-income

Americans from myriad walks of life to gain a true perspective on the daily trials and often insurmountable challenges that come with being poor in America.

Mr. Shipler’s writing and lectures present ‘the invisible poor’ as engaged in the activity most respected in American ideology—hard, honest work. But their version of the American Dream is a nightmare: low-paying, dead-end jobs; the profound failure of government to improve upon decaying housing, health care, and education; the failure of families to break the patterns of child abuse and substance abuse. He exposes these interlocking problems by taking us into the sorrowful, infuriating, courageous lives of the poor—white and black, Asian and Latino, citizens and immigrants—and makes pointed, informed recommendations for change.

Just Harvest will also present our Seeds of Justice award to **East Liberty Presbyterian Church**, for their outstanding and persistent commitment to social justice.

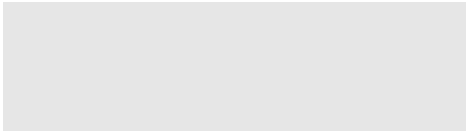
Be sure to check www.justharvest.org and Facebook/JustHarvest for ticketing information as the date approaches!

Annual Meeting & Picnic Set for June 23

Just Harvest’s Annual Meeting and Summer Picnic is scheduled for 3 to 6 pm, Saturday, June 23 at the Veterans’ Shelter in Schenley Park, Oakland. The shelter is located off Overlook Drive and you can take the 58 bus to get there.

We’ll hear a state-of-the-organization address from board president Sr. Barbara Finch as part of our brief general meeting. After our board election, there will be games, potluck food, music and entertainment for all ages!

Call us at 412-431-8960 for more information. This event is free and open to the public, and guests are welcome. We hope that you can join us!



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