



# Just Harvest News

A PUBLICATION OF THE JUST HARVEST EDUCATION FUND

## Tax Season Begins



*Farrab Rahimzadeh, a Just Harvest intern and University of Pittsburgh student, prepares another tax return for a satisfied client.*

Just Harvest's most anticipated tax season ever opened on January 11th, welcoming hundreds of new and returning tax clients to our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Site. As a result of expanded tax credits from The

American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) our clients received \$1,900,000 in refunds in just the first 5½ weeks of operation. 2010 will be a year unlike any other; and our busiest tax season yet.

Additionally, the ARRA increased eligibility for our nation's largest anti-poverty program - The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Already accounting for over \$900,000 into the pockets of our clients, the EITC is a crucial economic stimulus for working families in our community. Expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and Education Credits similarly benefit a wide variety of our clients.

With technical assistance from Just Harvest, the Money In Your Pocket Coalition (MIYPC) established two new VITA sites: one at CCAC-Boyce, and another in Prospect Park. We hope to bring many new community members into the tax system while simultaneously educating them about financial literacy.

This tax season, Just Harvest and the MIYPC undertook asset-building initia-

tives for our clients. A partnership with Kansas City-based Advent Financial allows our tax clients to load their tax returns directly onto a low-fee prepaid debit card. As a result, our clients avoid check cashers and their exorbitant fees. Furthermore, this year our clients are able to have their refund checks cashed free of charge at PNC Bank. Just Harvest helps to put money back into the pockets of working families and individuals with a variety of methods.

## Historic Leadership Transition at Just Harvest

**Joni Rabinowitz**, one of our founding Co-Directors, retired in January after 23 years as Just Harvest's leading advocacy voice on public policy issues. The Board of Directors announced the selection of **Tara Marks** as our new Co-Director, after a search process that reviewed more than 100 candidates. Tara arrives with several years of political campaign consulting experience, but got her start in policy advocacy as a client speaking out for fair treatment of welfare recipients in Just Harvest's Welfare Justice Project. *(Read more from Joni and Tara in our Perspectives column on page 2.)*

## Just Harvest is Everywhere!

Don't miss a beat! Stay in the loop and up to date on Just Harvest's work, events and ways to take action on hunger and poverty issues.

Check out our website:

[www.justharvest.org](http://www.justharvest.org)

Follow our blog:

[www.justharvest.blogspot.com](http://www.justharvest.blogspot.com)

Be our fan on Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/JustHarvest](http://www.facebook.com/JustHarvest)



*Event sponsors ladle out lots of help: WYEP-FM General Manager Lee Ferraro (far left), Fifth Third Bank President, Jay Ferguson (third from left) and Tom Gordon (right) were among the volunteers serving soup to guests at Empty Bowls.*

*(See more on page 7.)*

## Perspective



### Looking Back and Pushing Forward

#### Joni Rabinowitz:

Looking back over my 25 years at Just Harvest I can truly say they were the best years of my life. I learned a lot and I taught a lot. I met many wonderful people – if not for people, I wouldn't be in this business. And I/we accomplished a lot.

I already knew that the massive gap between rich and poor wasn't fair nor necessary. But I learned how things work and how to change them, how to reach the public through media, how to listen and observe, how to organize and advocate better. Most of all I learned how millions struggle daily to keep food on the table and I knew I must act to change this.

To the wonderful staff and board, interns and volunteers at Just Harvest – present and past—and all the inspiring people I've met through my work here. To the people who persistently struggle with me daily to make decision-makers do what they must do. And to all the people doing their best for their families—in spite of the powerful corporate and military powers arrayed out there. You have enriched my life immeasurably.

Horace Mann, an esteemed educator in the early 1800's and the first president of Antioch College, urged us to "Be ashamed to die until you have achieved something for humanity." I'm not ready to die, but I believe I achieved a lot in my years at Just Harvest. And I know Just Harvest will continue to make a difference.

#### Tara Marks:

Led by Joni and Ken, Just Harvest has been marching down the path toward economic justice for over 20 years – advocating for policies that help elevate families out of poverty, and strengthen food security. Unfortunately, much work remains. Hunger and poverty are still oppressing low income people.

There are still stereotypes about people accessing public benefits. More progressive and fairer tax policies are still needed, children are still missing meals and some folks still have no access to a grocery store or fresh fruits and vegetables.

And now, Ken has been paired with a new Co-Director that is committed to Just Harvest's mission, and has been affected by its guiding principles.

Eight years ago I was told that my son and I did not qualify for food stamps or cash assistance. For the next year and a half I lived on student loans, credit cards and the grace of God. I was tired of being poor, tired of worrying and most of all I was tired of being tired. I was ready to give up and drop out of school. Staff at Just Harvest worked with me to obtain public benefits so that I did not need to end my pursuit of an education. This great organization helped me establish a foothold so I could begin to climb my own career ladder leading to this incredible opportunity.

I look forward to continuing the good fight alongside you all, and helping others in the way Just Harvest helped me.



*Joni Rabinowitz and Tara Marks.*

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**Just Harvest Board of Directors:** Sara Bennett, Alexander Carlisle, Barbara Coffee, Sr. Barbara Finch, Fran Gruden, Mary Elizabeth McCarthy, Ken Munz, Theresa Orlando, Anna Redmond, Ann Sanders, Kathleen Sheehan, Mike Stout, DeWitt Walton.

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Staff and Interns: Jessica Burgan, Rochelle Jackson, Tara Marks, Ken Munz, Maria Muzzie, Shauna Ponton, Ken Regal, Ann Sanders, Heather Seiders, Anne Wachtel, Kristie Weiland Stagno, Noah Whelan.

**Just Harvest News** is published by the **Just Harvest Education Fund** four times each year and is sent to all members. We hope you will join **Just Harvest** by sending in membership dues: \$25, or \$5 for low-income.

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.

### *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.

# National News



Tara Marks and Scott Wolf, of Feeding America's Entertainment Council and star of the ABC television series *V*, lobbying at the Capitol for strong anti-hunger policies.

## Ending Childhood Hunger by 2015

**T**ara Marks represented Just Harvest at the Food Research and Action Center's 2010 Anti-Hunger Policy Conference March 7-9 in Washington, D.C.. In addition to educational workshops and inspiring plenaries, the conference also included a Lobby Day on Child Nutrition Reauthorization, during which Tara met with Pennsylvania **Senators Casey and Specter** and staff for **Congressmembers Altmire, Dahlkemper, Doyle and Murphy**.

## Demand for Charitable Food Up Nationwide

Feeding America, the National Network of Food Banks, reported in February that last year an estimated 37 million people in America received charitable food assistance through food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. This total represents a 46% increase over previous estimates from four years ago. Vicki Escarra, President and CEO of Feeding America described it as "morally reprehensible" that tens of millions must choose between food and other basic needs. *Learn more at [www.feedingamerica.org/hungerstudy](http://www.feedingamerica.org/hungerstudy)*



## IRS Regulates Paid Tax Preparers

**T**he IRS recently announced its intent to license the nation's tax preparation industry. Just Harvest and the Money in Your Pocket Coalition advocated for this long-overdue regulation and we expect an immediate impact on the quality of tax preparation services available to everyone.

The IRS regulations, which will be phased in over a number of years, include registering with the IRS, passing a competency exam and completing 15 hours of

continuing education. The IRS will also convene a working group to study the refund anticipation loan (RAL) and refund anticipation check (RAC) industry.

Anyone, regardless of their qualifications, can charge a fee for tax preparation services. Paid and volunteer tax preparers at Just Harvest and all VITA sites must pass a competency exam each year and all returns are reviewed by an experienced preparer. We applaud this effort by the IRS to hold paid tax preparers to similar standards.

## Child Nutrition Reauthorization

**E**very five years, lawmakers have the opportunity to advance, fine-tune and reauthorize the federal Child Nutrition Programs in an effort to improve access, meal quality and nutrition for children across the nation. So far, a number of progressive bills have been introduced:

**Universal Classroom Breakfast Expansion Act H.R. 4325**, introduced by *Rep. Paul Tonko* (D - NY). This bill will establish a grant program to allow schools that serve a high number of low-income children to provide breakfast in the classroom after school starts.

The **Hunger Free Schools Act of 2009 S. 1343**, sponsored by *Senators Sherrod Brown* (D-OH), *Bob Casey* (D-PA) and *Michael Bennet* (D-CO) and **H.R. 4148**, sponsored by *Rep. David Loebsack* (D-IA). This bill will increase access to child nutrition programs by requiring school districts to utilize direct certification based on Medicaid and/or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) eligibility. It will also allow school districts who serve a high number of low-income children to serve free meals to all students.

The **Paperless Enrollment for School Meals Act of 2009 S. 1226**, introduced by U.S. *Senators Bob Casey* (D-PA) *Arlen Specter* (D- PA), *Michael Bennett* (D-Colo.) and **H.R. 2803**, introduced by *Representatives Chaka Fattah* (D-PA), *Allyson*

*Schwartz* (D-PA), *Robert Brady* (D-PA). This bill will allocate funds for schools and school districts that serve a large number of low-income children and in high poverty areas to serve free school meals to all children.

*President Obama's* FY 2011 budget proposal makes important investments in children's health and takes steps to ending childhood hunger by 2015 by providing \$10 billion over the next ten years for Child Nutrition Reauthorization.

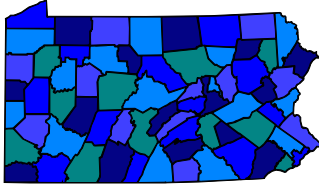
**ACTION:** Congress is debating Reauthorization right now! Call Senators Specter and Casey and your Congressperson urging them to increase the funding for CNR to \$1 billion/year. Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121.

## Lower Benefits Equal Higher Child Poverty

**T**he Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund released a multi-nation comparison of welfare benefits and child poverty. According to the study, the United States has a higher national child poverty rate (21%) than other high income countries. The study shows that we have a less generous social welfare benefits rate of 14-23%. Fifteen other countries are offering more welfare benefits – while maintaining a lower rate of children in poverty.

# State News

## Give Cash Assistance a Raise



With unemployment in Pennsylvania higher than it's been in several years, more families are turning to cash assistance for help. Helping those who are having a rough time benefits everyone. Everyone faces challenges and needs a helping hand at some point in their lives.

Cash Assistance has provided help for Pennsylvania families for many years and up until 1990 the General Assembly ensured that the cash grant kept pace with inflation. But the maximum cash grant for a family of three in PA has been **\$421 per month for the past 20 years**. If the cash grant had kept up with inflation, a cash grant of \$421 would now be about \$673. The average cost of basic necessities has increased by 50%, leaving roughly 282,349 cash grant recipients way behind

the mark. Only 2.3% of Pennsylvania's population receives cash assistance. Cash grants account for only 5% of DPW's overall budget and 2% of all state spending. When these families fall behind, we all fall behind and we believe that Pennsylvania can do better than that!

DPW has a long history of providing consumers with supportive services in the form of transportation allowances, clothing allowances, books and supplies, etc. to help them achieve their self-sufficiency goals. However, DPW policy makers have moved to limit these services and to shift the burden to the consumers. Keep in mind that people on cash assistance are living at 30% of the federal poverty guidelines!

Pennsylvania is in the midst of a Governor's race and voters need to know where candidates stand on these very important issues. Let's give families a hand up, raise the cash grant in 2009 and ensure

that cash grant consumers have the supportive services they need to get job training and education!

## Food Stamp Victories

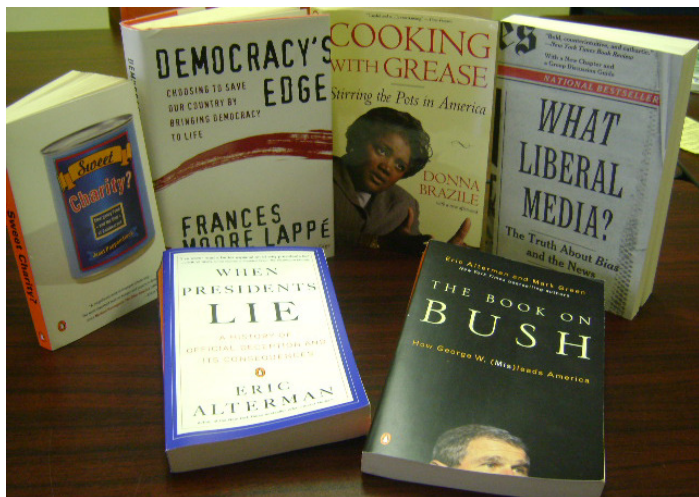
As struggling families have been turning to the food stamp program to provide food on the table, advocates have been fighting hard for improvements to the program. There have been some significant victories!

- In an effort to expand eligibility to more households, PA increased the income guidelines for the program to 160% of the federal poverty guidelines for households without an elderly and/or disabled person and to 200% for households with an elderly and/or disabled person.
- The extra \$25 a week laid-off workers receives in unemployment had counted against SNAP benefits, making many families ineligible. **PA was granted a waiver that now allows us to disregard the extra stimulus payment for people who receive SNAP (food stamps).**

**ACTION:** Tell your State legislator to oppose TANF Special Allowance regulations and support raising Cash Assistance grants in the 2011 Budget!

## Good Reads

Looking for a good book this spring? We have a selection authored by the amazing guest speakers of our annual dinners for sale. The books below are available for just \$10 each, and all proceeds benefit Just Harvest! - *Cooking with Grease*, by **Donna Brazile**; *Democracy's Edge*, by **Frances Moore Lappe**; *Sweet Charity*, by **Janet Poppendieck**; *When Presidents Lie*, by **Eric Alterman**; *The Book on Bush*, by **Eric Alterman** and **Mark J. Green**.



**Great books for sale!**  
All proceeds benefit Just Harvest.  
Call 412-431-8960 to order yours today!



Just Harvest Board Member Fran Gruden and Fr. Kris Stubna of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh at a benefit held at SEVICHE in November.

## Local News

### Pittsburgh Public Schools Universal Free Breakfast Program Gets National Attention

Pittsburgh Public Schools received national attention for its Universal Free Breakfast Program last month when the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), a national anti-hunger non-profit organization, released its "School Breakfast in America's Big Cities" report.

Pittsburgh Public Schools ranked 5<sup>th</sup> best nationally in effectively reaching low-income students in the breakfast program.

**Michael Peck**, Food Service Director for Pittsburgh Public Schools states, "Unfortunately, the number of families that rely upon food assistance continues to

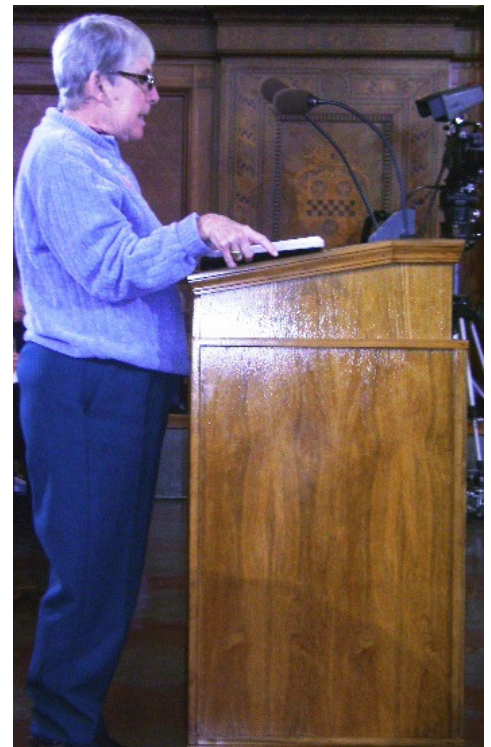
grow, and our challenge is to provide the most important meal of the day in an extremely short amount of time with limited space. Obviously we have a great deal of work to do as we've not met FRAC's goal of 70% of low-income student participation, but I am proud of the work stakeholders and our department have done to be recognized."

Pittsburgh's Universal Free Breakfast Program, offering free meals at no charge to all students, regardless of income, began during the 2007-2008 school year and has shown significant improvement since.

### City Zoning Changes to Urban Food Production

As a member of the Pittsburgh Food Council (FPC), Just Harvest has been involved with proposed changes to a city ordinance dealing with urban agriculture and the keeping of non-domestic farm animals on city properties. While we generally support the city's efforts to develop rules focused on local vegetable production and bee and chicken keeping, we do not believe the proposed language adequately defines certain changes. We also strongly disagree with the projected fees associated with agricultural uses. Urban agriculture represents a solution to food insecurity by allowing neighborhood groups and residents to grow and sell their own food; high fees could negate these benefits.

At a February 16th hearing of the City Planning Commission, the FPC successfully lobbied to have the vote pertaining to this tabled, allowing time to craft alternative language for the areas of concern.



*Mary Elizabeth McCarthy, Just Harvest Board Secretary, testifies in favor of increased anti-hunger funding at the City Council Hearing.*

**VICTORY!!**

### Unprecedented Vote – Council Ups Hunger Funds

We were thrilled when Pittsburgh City Council, in an unprecedented move, unanimously voted to increase funding for the city's four anti-hunger groups by about 1/3, to \$439,800!

"Hunger has always been at the top of my agenda," said **Councilman Ricky Burgess** (District 9) who introduced the amendment to the 2010 Capital Budget. "I'm proud to sponsor this measure."

Each of the Council members and the Mayor's representative had vowed to continue the funding provided in 2009 and 2008, even though the need is demonstrably greater.

For fifteen years, Just Harvest has led a group of local organizations – including the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, Hunger Services/Urban League, and Pittsburgh Community Services, Inc. – in keeping the issue of hunger at the forefront of lawmakers' minds in the annual campaign for city funding.

### Advocates Looking for Farmers Markets to Accept Food Stamps

"We're looking forward to working with you on this project and doing whatever we can to improve poor peoples' access to farmers markets," Russ Redding (PA Secretary of Agriculture PDA) told **Joni Rabinowitz** at a meeting in his Harrisburg office.

Joni had requested the meeting to discuss new developments in the Food Stamp (SNAP) and WIC Programs with Agriculture officials and emphasize the key role PDA must play if farmers —along with consumers — are to benefit from these two federal programs.

"We hope to have EBT/Food Stamps in local farmers markets by May 2010," said **Corinne Ogrodnik**, who, along with her Public Policy Class at CMU's Heinz College, is working to make this happen.

# In the Community

## Accolades and Advocacy mark "Joni Rabinowitz Day"

Co-Director **Joni Rabinowitz** was saluted by more than 100 friends and colleagues at a retirement luncheon January 14 at Epiphany Catholic Church. Board members **Theresa Orlando**, **Ken Munz**, and **Mary Elizabeth McCarthy** spoke about her passionate commitment to economic justice, while **Mike Stout** presented a musical tribute with his original songs, "When the Cotton Mill Women Rose" and "The People Gonna Rise Again."

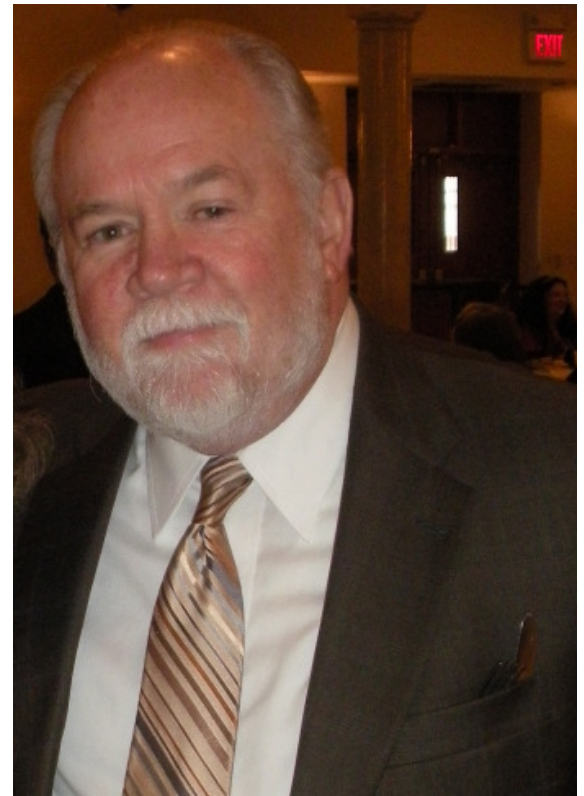
Numerous federal, state, and local officials were on hand to note how Joni's singular combination of moral focus and persistence made them more responsive to the needs of poor people. Official proclamations presented by **County Executive Dan Onorato**, **County Council**

**President Rich Fitzgerald**, and **City Councilmen Bill Peduto** and **Doug Shields** marked January 14, 2010 as "Joni Rabinowitz Day" in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.

Guests enjoyed the warm hospitality of **Epiphany Catholic Church** and a delightful vegetarian lunch catered by **Springboard Kitchen**, a job training program run by Lutheran Service Society.

Also at the event, Just Harvest announced the creation of the "Joni Rabinowitz Fund for New Organizing." Contributions to this fund will be used to continue Joni's powerful legacy by supporting internships and stipends to give real-world experience to a new generation of emerging organizers.

**ACTION BOX:** Make a donation to the Joni Rabinowitz Fund for New Organizing – keep Joni's legacy strong!

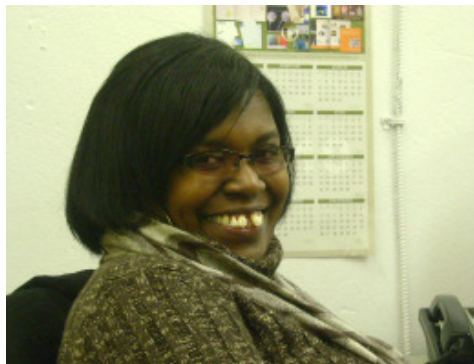


Jack Shea, President of the Allegheny County Labor Council, attended the luncheon to honor Joni.

## Comings and Goings

Board members **Maureen Coyne** and **John Becker** each resigned from the Board at the end of 2009. These vacancies will be filled in our upcoming nomination process and spring election. Just Harvest thanks them for their dedication and hard work over the years.

**Crystal Turner**, (pictured below) was placed by the EARN program, worked at JH this winter. She helped with administrative support, including scheduling hundreds of tax appointments, until finding full-time unemployment. **Jessica Burgan** came on board as the new Communications Coordinator in February.



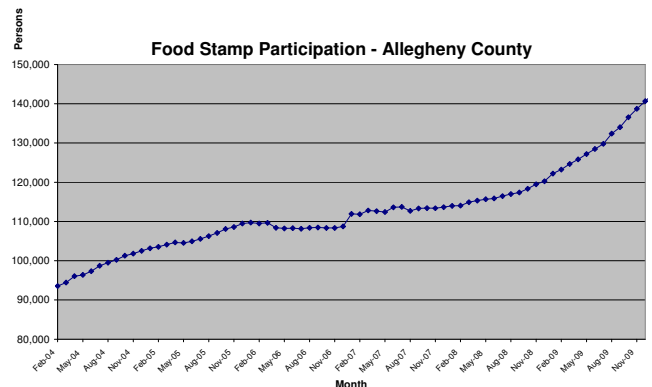
## Food Stamp Applications on the Rise and on the Road

In 2009, Just Harvest's food stamp team saw a huge upswing in applications; we helped 1,520 people apply for food stamps last year! 2010 looks to be promisingly busy as well, with 465 applications already completed by Mid-March.

One of the reasons Just Harvest has been able to help so many people is due to creative outreach efforts by our staff and volunteers. Thanks in part to a grant from NeighborAid, Just Harvest has been conducting on-site food stamp screenings and applications at a variety of doctor's offices, hospitals, and organizations. **Rhonda Johnson** of Penn Hills found out that she was most likely eligible for food stamps when she met Just

Harvest's **DeShauna Ponton** during a doctor's visit at Alma Illery Health Center.

"As a middle man, Just Harvest was a blessing. They saved so much time from trying to get to the office – It's a wonderful thing for the community. I wouldn't have even known about it if [Shauna] hadn't been there at Alma Illery." Receiving food stamps, Rhonda says, "takes such a burden off of me." She has even referred some of her friends to Just Harvest for help.



# Thank You

Just Harvest Education Fund extends our warm thanks in this issue to the Birmingham Foundation for their generous grant in support of our food stamp enrollment and free income tax assistance services, to the Women and Girls Foundation of South-west Pennsylvania for their support of our Welfare Justice Project's efforts to stop harmful new restrictions on Special Allowances for TANF clients trying to become self-sufficient, and to PathwaysPA and the United Way of Allegheny County for continued major support of our income tax program.

Just Harvest is also grateful to the Steel City Demons Roller Derby Team for their fall event benefiting our work, to the United Steelworkers for their special holiday season gift, and to Ten Thousand Villages for hosting a Just Harvest holiday shopping night in November.

And thanks to all of our generous recent donors for continuing to be the heart and soul of our grassroots strength: Robert Abraham, Thomas Allen, Madalon Amenta, Bruce & Gail Antonoff, Nancy & John Artz, Mary Ruth Aull, Cynthia & George Balchunas, Samuel Balis, George & Helen Becker, Jane Becker, Clare Beer, Judith Bellin, Thomas & Gladys Benedek, Sara Bennett, The Berger Family Fund of the Pittsburgh Foundation, Ronald Berlin, Carol Bernick, Fran Bertomaschi, John & Gay Beverly, Art & Mary Bittner, Edith Blattner, Bernard Bloch, Glenrose Bradford, Donna & Edward Brett, Suzie Brindle, George Brownell, John & Martha Burkholder, Richard & Marie Byrne, David Caldwell, Albert Caretto Jr., Lonnie & Paul Carey, Janice Carlino, Stephen & Jean Ferguson Carr, Stephanie Christian, Kate Clancy, Jean Clickner & Jon Pushinsky, Moe & Greta Coleman, Maren Cooke & Neil Donahue, Angel Costis, Jennifer Craig in Memory of MaryLouise Wright, Mike Crossey, Judith Dodd, Steffi Domike, Jerry Donatelli, Thomas & Marilyn Donnelly, Michael Drohan & Joyce Rothermel, Rene & Betty Duquesnoy, C.C. Edmonds, Fred Egler, Jr. & Kathleen Buechel in Honor of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Egler, Julian & Rhoda Elicator, Frederick Elliott III, Elizabeth Enslinger, John & Rose Evosevic, Toby Exter, Paul S. Fast, Ed Feinstein & Sally Kalson, Winnie Feise, Suzanne Ferguson & Glenn Freund, William Finch, Kathy & Michael Fine, Ed Fish, Muriel & Mark Floyd, Robert Foley, Adel Fougnes & Richard Thomas, Ivan & Malke Frank, Anne Franks in Honor of Joni Rabinowitz, Joan Friedberg, Christine Gaus, David & Joan Gauthier, Ben & Margaret Gessler, J. Donald & Evelyn Geyer, Mark Ginsburg, Shirley Gleditsch, Daniel Gup & Terri Klein, Wanda Guthrie, Christine Haas & Daniel Kovalik, Howard & Eva Havlicsik, Anne Hawkins, Lorinda Hayes in Honor of Joni Rabinowitz, Sister Bonnie Heh, Gunther & Klara Heilbrunn, Dennis Hennessey,

Henry & Elsie Hillman, Christopher Horowitz, Timothy Hrehocik, Jim Huggins, Gene Ieni, Joan Isenberg & William Hashinger, Clifford & Nora Johnson, Justin & Florence Johnson, Shirley Jordan, Aaron Joyce, Steven & Adrienne Kaltman, Peter & Leslie Kaplan, Mary Kellers, Amy Kellman, Carol Kinney, Sara Klein, Elizabeth Klimchok, Gregory & Lauretta Kobasa, Lucille Koehler, Allen Koslovsky, Caroline Kostuch, Paul & Jean Kozak, David Krupp, Sr. Maria Kruszewski, Ronald Kubiak, Leonard & Mildred Kuntz, Renee Laventure, Laura Leete, Dawn Lehman, Larry & Claire Levine, Sara Lichtenwalter, Miriam Lindauer, Ronald Linden & Nancy Israel, Richard & Susan Loether, Andrea London & Ken Boas, Jean Lundstedt in Memory of MaryLouise Wright, Louise & Michael Malakoff, Irwin Marcus, Tirzah Mason, Mary Elizabeth McCarthy in Honor of Joni Rabinowitz, Valerie McDonald Roberts in Honor of Tara Marks, Mitch & Debra Levy McKenney, Daniel McKinley & Kathleen Mulligan, Dennis McManus, Warren Metzler, Tom Michlovic, Barbara Miller, Samuel & Arlene Momchilovich, David Mooney & Maxine Heller, Bertha Morimoto, Linda Morrison, Barb Murock for the Joni Rabinowitz Fund for New Organizing, Cornelius Murphy, Marianne Novy, John Oesterle, Jack O'Malley, Theresa Orlando for the Joni Rabinowitz Fund for New Organizing, Mel Packer & Emily Deferrari, Leone Paradise, Philip Peters, Karen Peterson, Carla Pfahler, Charles Piccolo, Suzanne Polen, Cecilia Pollock, Rita Pollock, Phyllis & Marty Pomerantz in Memory of Barbara Krupp, Robert Puskaric, Margaret Rafalko, Shirley Ravets, Harry Readshaw, Elizabeth & David Reed, Caroline Roberto, Virginia Robertson, David & Lynette Rosser, James Ruck & Gail Britanik, Molly Rush in Honor of Joni Rabinowitz, Ann Ruszkowski, Ed Ruszkowski, Esther Sales, Dorothy Sample Hill, Ann Sanders, H.D. Sanders, Richard Sandow & Francine Rose, Lorraine Sauchin, Faith Schantz & Tom Pandaleon in Memory of Lila Schantz, Thomas & Marilyn Schaub, Harold & Marla Scheinman, Loretta Sciulli, Mim Seidel & David Blaushild, Irving & Janet Selsley, Anna Jane Shally, Kathleen Sheehan, Leonard & Phyllis Shufler, Elaine Smith in Honor of Joni Rabinowitz, Frances Sokolowski, Seth & Stephanie Spaulding, Rick & Katherine St. John, Judith & Jerald Starr, John Stember, Ruth Succop, Thomas Surdyk, Lowell & Rachel Swarts, Samuel Tisherman & Susan Dunmire, Asher Tulsy, Samuel & Elaine Viggiano, George Volkman, Charles Vukotic, Stephen & Carolyn Wachtel in Honor of Anne Wachtel, Paul Wahrhaftig, Margaret Ward, Jonathan Weinkle, Ronni Weiss, Virginia Wellman, Judy Wertheimer & Michael Boninger, Elizabeth Westerman & Charles Cox, Timothy Whelan & Barbara Miller, May Whitcomb, Gina Wilson, Philip & Marianne Wion, Elizabeth Ann Wolfskill, Hannah Wolfson, Janet Woodcock, Laura Zinski, Bethany Community, Michael Hughes & Associates, Milan Vranish Insurance Agency, Oakmont United Methodist Church Women, QM Consulting, Union Baptist Church Of Swissvale, Bakerstown United Methodist Women, and the Workable Alternatives Foundation.

## Historic Actions Will Finally Help Minority Farmers

After 100-plus years of federal agriculture policy harming the rights of black farmers, the Obama Administration has planted seeds of change. The appointment to Secretary of Agriculture of former Pittsburgher and **Iowa Governor, Tom Vilsack**, broke new ground for minority farmers seeking equal access to credit opportunities and other USDA programs.

The lack of equitable access to credit has resulted in minority farmers losing millions of acres of farm land. In 1999, black farmers filed a class action suit against the USDA and some have been successfully litigated while others are ongoing. Unfortunately, similar legal complaints by Hispanics and Native American farmers remain stalled in the Federal courts.

Secretary Vilsack has crafted a plan to address the civil rights problems at the USDA that includes working with the Department of Justice to resolve the remaining claims. The difficult history and suffering of minority farmers will never be justified by financial settlements, but it is an important acknowledgment of injustice and a turning point in how the USDA does business.

## Empty Bowls Marks 15 Years with Huge Success

An estimated 1,600 guests joined in the fun on March 7 as the Empty Bowls Dinner marked its 15th Anniversary at Rodef Shalom Congregation in Oakland. A joint benefit for Just Harvest and the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, Empty Bowls raises funds and awareness in the fight against hunger in the Pittsburgh area. Guests receive a simple meal of soup and bread and choose an original handmade ceramic bowl as a reminder of our neighbors whose bowls are empty. Nearly 1,600 new bowls were donated this year from many individual artists, community arts centers, and schools. Media, business, and political celebrities joined other volunteers in serving soup to the crowd. The event also featured a Soup-to-Go line, a silent auction of fine ceramics, glass bowls, and bowls autographed by celebrities from **Yo-Yo Ma** to **Jerome Bettis**, and a wonderful bake sale led by the youth groups from Rodef Shalom and nearby Temple Sinai. Special thanks to our event sponsors: Fifth Third Bank, Hefren-Tillotson, Del Monte Foods, Giant Eagle, UPMC Health Plan, Comcast, FedEx Ground, 91.3 WYEP FM, Rodef Shalom Congregation and WPXI-TV Channel 11. Thanks to them, all the restaurants and caterers that donated soup, our bowl donors, our volunteers, our planning committee, our guests, our advertisers, and our partners at the Food Bank, total proceeds from Empty Bowls 2010 are expected to top \$50,000.

**Save the Date!**  
**May 4, 2010:**  
**Just Harvest Annual Meeting**  
**and**  
**Candidates' Forum**

Please join us for our Annual Meeting on May 4. Learn about our victories and work done by JH staff, volunteers and interns. Members will cast votes for the new Board of Directors at this time. The meeting will be held at the United Steel Workers Building on the Blvd. of the Allies, in downtown Pittsburgh.

The 2010 Candidates' Forum will follow the Annual Meeting. This is a great opportunity for community members to hear each candidate respond to questions about eliminating hunger and poverty. The forum is free to the public and all are encouraged to attend. More details to follow.

**Come Rock with Just Harvest!**

Join us at Bar Louie (Station Square)

Wednesday, March 31st

at 6pm for a

fundraising happy hour

with live music by Higher Ground

More details available online at

[www.justharvest.org](http://www.justharvest.org).

**Get on Board**

March 31, 2010 is an important date: the deadline to make nominations to the Just Harvest Board of Directors. We are actively seeking new board members committed to our social justice mission. Do you have a passion to help and empower people? Are you willing to commit 5-10 hours a month for a great cause? Are you a team player? Are you someone who listens well and is thoughtful in considering issues? If this sounds like you, please consider nominating yourself. Call Tara Marks at 412.431.8960 to learn more about the nomination process.

**Share the Harvest**

Just Harvest joins the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Kretschmann Organic Farms and the Enrico Biscotti Company for a collaborative fundraiser to improve access to local, healthful foods. It will be held on April 1st from 6-9pm, at E2 in Highland Park: 5904 Bryant Street. \$25 tickets can be reserved by calling 412.281.2602 or online at [www.enricobiscotti.com](http://www.enricobiscotti.com).



**Just Harvest Education Fund**  
**16 Terminal Way**  
**Pittsburgh, PA 15219**

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