



Just Harvest News

A PUBLICATION OF THE JUST HARVEST EDUCATION FUND

Low-Income Pennsylvanians Take the Hit Under State Budget, Welfare Policy

Governor Tom Corbett signed the Pennsylvania State budget into law on June 30, 2011, and true to his word, the final budget included no new tax increases (including no tax or fee whatsoever on Marcellus Shale gas extraction). The \$27.15 billion budget included over \$1 billion in cuts; though education bore the brunt of these spending reductions, we saw big cuts to welfare-to-work and human services funding. According to a July 13 analysis by the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, “the budget employs a series of gimmicks to reduce the spend number...it shifts some education and managed care

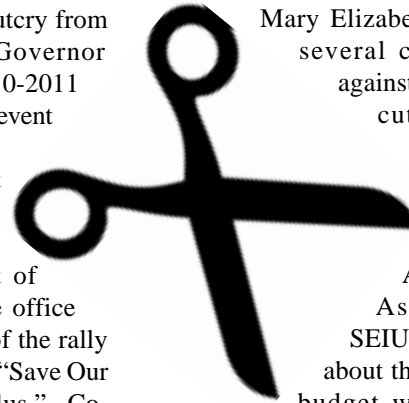
costs from 2011-12 back into the 2010-11 fiscal year.” Moreover – and despite outcry from advocates across the state – Governor Corbett refused to dip into a 2010-2011 budget surplus of \$786 million to prevent these cuts.

Anticipating this budget disaster, we organized a “Rainy Day Budget Rally” attended by about 120 on June 17 in front of Governor Corbett’s Fifth Avenue office Downtown. A secondary theme of the rally was to sound a “Double S.O.S” to “Save Our Services” and “Spend Our Surplus.” Co-

Director Tara Marks, Board Secretary Mary Elizabeth McCarthy, and several clients spoke out against the human service cuts, and we even heard testimony from a DPW caseworker, Jim Franciscus of the Allegheny County Assistance Office/ SEIU #668, who talked about the further strain the budget would place upon already overworked and understaffed County Assistance Offices. The rally concluded with Jim and Mary Elizabeth delivering an umbrella signed by all attendees to Governor Corbett’s staff on duty as a show of support for a more responsible budget.

The final version of the budget did not contain as many cuts as we expected, but what remained had an immediate impact. We’ve seen firsthand their effects, even right here in the Just Harvest office where part-time employees through the (now partially defunded) state Paid Work Experience program used to be a welcome addition to our small staff.

But another threat to our state safety net programs came to light in the final hours of the budget talks. The legislature and administration rushed to pass Act 22, a new law that, in addition to requiring drug testing for certain welfare applicants who have a prior drug felony, gives unprecedented authority for the period of one year to Welfare Secretary Gary Alexander to make changes and cuts to DPW-administered programs without legislative oversight. Under Act 22, DPW is authorized to change program eligibility,



Asset Test Reinstatement: A Clear and Present Danger

Under the auspices of Act 22, there has been talk of Secretary Alexander proposing the reinstatement of asset tests as an eligibility requirement for SNAP/Food Stamp participation. New work requirements for Food Stamps are also under discussion – and all this while unemployment and SNAP participation are at historic levels.

Prior to 2008 (?), individuals with more than [\$2,000] in household assets were deemed ineligible for SNAP/Food Stamps – the required that such households exhaust their assets (which could retirement funds, savings accounts, or even vehicles) prior to seeking public assistance. Again, our officials seem intent on delivering a Draconian response to a trumped-up “problem,” using as their smokescreen public hysteria over the isolated incidents in other states lottery winners were allowed to retain their food stamps

If the asset test is implemented, 170,000 people could lose their eligibility, which would cost Pennsylvania’s economy \$250 million federal dollars. If participants are subject to work requirements, unemployed childless adults would be limited to 3 months’ worth of benefits every 36 months – and 146,000 people could lose their eligibility, costing Pennsylvania’s economy \$177 million a year that these federally funded benefits bring home.

The toll on struggling Pennsylvanians will be even greater than money can measure. Requiring families to spend down their assets prior to availing of food stamps will only cause poor people to sink further into poverty and prolong their recovery. These policies deter families’ efforts to save and impede the transition out of poverty. In a system that is so understaffed the phones cannot be answered at County Assistance Offices, the asset test will create yet another barrier for applicants and administrative breakdowns for eligible participants.

Before the chatter becomes reality, we have to act: Now is the time to tell the Governor that an asset test will hurt our economy, overload the system and further sink needy families into poverty.



From 'The War on Poverty' to the 'War on Poor People'

"Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate." – Proverbs 22:22

Read the opinion pages, watch the local news, listen to mainstream drive-time talk radio (if you can stomach it), and you'll detect a contempt the likes of which we haven't seen since Reagan's "Welfare Queen" invective of the 1980s. The poor in America aren't the symptom of our economic crisis: They're part of the cause.

As the 2012 Presidential candidates ramp up their campaign rhetoric, we've seen both frequency and volume swell on these attacks on the poor. Rick Santorum recently blasted food stamp clients as "overweight" and not truly needy. And current GOP frontrunner Newt Gingrich made the delusional claim that food stamp recipients are "cashing in their benefits" for trips to Hawaii. The age-old strategy here is clear: If you repeat a lie often enough, people will believe it.

Even locally, we've seen two "investigative reports" on WPXI's Target 11 segment in the past year, which claimed to expose widespread fraud perpetrated among welfare and food stamp clients in Allegheny County. The February report was framed by an extreme (and beyond-the-pale illegal) example of a Swissvale convenience store that undercharged Food Stamp purchases, refunding them cash for subsequent marijuana sales. The report noted that Representative Mike Turzai favored "legislation requiring welfare recipients to have photo identification, fingerprinting, and drug testing." All of these policies have seen discussion at the state legislative level, thanks to the suspicion-fueled hysteria that all low-income people must be cheats, lazy, or otherwise "unworthy" of help without additional layers of invasive screening.

In a similar Target 11 report this past November, WPXI misleadingly referring to the electronic benefits transfer card (the ACCESS card used to disburse food stamp and cash assistance benefits) as a "special credit card," basing much of the story on the testimony of one anonymous Northside woman who claimed to witness the illegal sale of food stamps. By suggesting that this type of fraud is widespread based upon what vague details are cited, then presenting the findings in such an ambiguous manner (for example, muddling the difference as they did between cash assistance and Food Stamps) WPXI sounded what amounted to a cry of "fire" in the crowded theater of public opinion about poor people and public assistance programs.

Thinktanks opposed to social safety nets are serving up ample ammunition for the "War on Poverty Programs" too. A September, 2011 Heritage Foundation report misleadingly titled "Understanding Poverty in the United States" asserts that "only a small number of the 46 million persons classified as 'poor' by the Census Bureau fit that description." Low-income families who, for instance, own basic amenities like a car, a television set, or an air conditioner (often a necessity in the Summer heat of much of the Southern U.S.) are not truly "needy."

The media that presents opinion-baiting stories on welfare fraud based upon vague details, conjecture and isolated incidents, the candidates who propagate these untruths in the name of political gain, and the policymakers who use such "research" as justification for cutting safety-net budgets and further restricting eligibility – they are all failing America profoundly. These individuals have failed to even attempt to understand the complex realities of poverty. And they have failed in refusing to approach the problem with anything but the closed mind of the hopeless ideologue. Those who are so opposed to government acting as steward of poor and needy people, and who so champion a society based on "personal responsibility" always seem to dismiss that the odds are fixed against so many Americans.

Poverty cannot be summed up with a provocative quote or a three-minute "investigative news" piece. The 2010 US Census tells us that one in six households in the U.S. struggle with hunger, and that Food Stamps lifted 3.9 million Americans out of poverty in 2010. Unless and until facts like these are used as the sole dependable guide for shaping policy and public discourse, the specter of the "Welfare Queen" will continue to rattle its chains noisily over rational debate.

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.

Just Harvest, 16 Terminal Way, Pittsburgh PA 15219. Phone: 412-431-8960 Fax: 412-431-8966 E-mail: info@justharvest.org Website: www.justharvest.org

Just Harvest Board of Directors: Sara Bennett, AJ Banghn, Keith Caldwell, Alexander Carlisle, Barbara Coffee, Melissa Farabaugh, Sr. Barbara Finch, Fran Gruden, May Ann Hvizdos, Mary Elizabeth McCarthy, Paul McKrell, Theresa Orlando, Kathleen Sheehan, DeWitt Walton

Editorial Board: Tara Marks, Ken Regal, Adam MacGregor

Staff and Interns: Rochelle Jackson, Ken Munz, Adam MacGregor, Tara Marks, Shauna Ponton, Ken Regal, Ann Sanders, Heather Seiders, Kristie Weiland Stagno, James Tedrow

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.

State

(Continued from page 1)

modify benefits and provider payments, and to eliminate “presumptive eligibility,” which currently streamlines the process of applying for programs for those already enrolled in other programs.

Much of the political ammunition for DPW cuts and program changes stems from a 2010 report on DPW by Auditor General Jack Wagner. The Wagner audit claimed a 14.7 percent error rate in Medicaid benefit disbursements

“due to DPW’s failure to perform semi-annual reviews and annual renewals when they were due.” Tighter controls and oversight over

DPW processes were in order, affirmed Wagner, which seems to be the Draconian principle that opponents of public assistance programs are keen to apply to all programs administered by DPW.

As we reported in the most recent issue of our companion publication, “The Welfare Agitator,” Secretary Alexander’s budget theme for this year is “Promoting Self-Sufficiency Through Sensible Reforms.” But slicing away funding for programs that do pave the way to self-sufficiency is bad



Our “Rainy Day Budget Rally” June 17, 2011 at Gov. Corbett’s downtown office

policy for poor people and bad business for a stagnating economy that benefits greatly from the stimulus generated by food stamp purchases. Though there is no set implementation date for the accompanying drug testing law – which requires a portion of applicants who have a prior drug felony to submit to random drug screenings – the aim of the policy in context of Act 22 is clear: to deter people who are in need from availing of safety net programs, and to treat those who have otherwise paid their debt to society with continuing suspicion. The human toll of the budget and Act 22 remains to be seen, but Just Harvest and our advocate partners across the state will be keeping a close eye on Harrisburg.

Comings and Goings



A belated welcome to our Communications and Media Coordinator, **Adam MacGregor** whose hard work has strengthened our outreach efforts through social media, radio, the online video community and frequent appearances in print media.

James Tedrow, our Pitt School of Social Work Intern, is currently working on client story banking and organizing food stamp clients to visit legislators. See his article about the project on page _.

Goodwill Extern and new office assistant, **Jeff Nimerosky**, joins us for eight weeks to help out with our Annual Campaign and Tax Program Outreach.

Congratulations to our former Food Stamp Specialist **Ann Sanders** who has neither come nor gone, but has recently accepted our newly-created Volunteer Coordinator position.

The year-long baby boom at Just Harvest has come to an end. Welcome to three new members of the Just Harvest family: Gabriel (son of Kristie Weiland Stagno), Thea (daughter of Heather Seiders) and Owen (son of Ann Sanders).

Well wishes to Outreach Assistant **Aubrey Stock-Bratina**, Welfare-to-Work Employee **Bernadette Crumpton** and Goodwill Extern **Dorothy Beck**. Because of their hard work, we were able to reach out and help more families learn about our programs, find summer food sites, apply for food stamps and make tax appointments.

Another Bureaucratic Makeover for DPW

In late November, yet another DPW change came to light. Continuing his “waste-, fraud- and abuse-” prevention mantra, Secretary Alexander announced through a Nov. 21 press release that the department had created the Office of Program Integrity to “better coordinate efforts to stop welfare fraud.”

According to the release, the new office was “created using existing staff and resources” and “will consolidate all department-wide efforts into one office, integrating fraud-detection efforts, implementing fraud prevention initiatives and ensuring compliance, efficiency, and accountability.” DPW also claimed that since Alexander took the helm, “100,000 ineligible welfare cases – many involving clients who died or moved out of state – have been eliminated from the rolls, saving taxpayers more than \$34 million.” However, the department failed to mention that these “welfare” cases consisted largely of overdue Medical Assistance recertifications, which were subsequently canceled.

We have yet to even speculate what the practical consequences of this new office will be, but one thing is troubling at the outset: At a time of abject need among so many Pennsylvanians, now is not the time for the state to divert DPW resources toward the politically motivated creation of yet another level of bureaucracy. No less informed of a critic than former Governor Ed Rendell countered Wagner’s claim as early as last year, citing a report from the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services that placed Pennsylvania’s error rate at just over 4 percent – well below the national average of 8 percent. “The rhetoric [...] doesn’t match the facts,” Rendell told Harrisburg’s WITF radio in December of 2010. “It’s just rhetoric because this is a convenient whipping boy. And nobody [...], when it comes to DPW, cares about the facts or cares about the truth.”

If, in Governor Rendell’s words, the DPW is being whipped, anti-poor sentiment is being whipped into a frenzy right along with it – and the discussions about “tightening eligibility” in the instance of “reducing waste, fraud and abuse” at state level have reached a distressing crescendo. Now is the time for the pushback. **We ask you to take action by calling Governor Corbett – since he alone now has the authority to veto any changes to DPW – and to urge him to oppose any policy changes that would harm poor people in Pennsylvania who may be blocked or otherwise deterred from participating in social safety net programs that everyone is entitled to.**

Federal News

All Eyes on Washington

Washington is still on its current track of playing political football with elements of America's public safety net.

Despite promises from President Obama to restore the SNAP/Food Stamp funding cuts used to offset the cost of Child Nutrition programs under the "Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act" (and it had been in his own proposed but rejected budget), we're still waiting for some resolution. Instead of shoring up Food Stamps and other programs that provide basic needs in this time of such great need, elected officials chose to fixate their attention on eliminating the national

deficit within a strict ten-year time frame. That disagreement on how to balance the budget through any combination of program cuts or tax increases lead to the passage of the Budget Control Act of 2011 this past July. The act called for the creation of the (now recently defunct) Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (which was commonly referred to as the 'Supercommittee').

The 12-member bipartisan Supercommittee was tasked with coming up with a plan by Nov. 23 to reduce the Federal budget deficit by at least \$1.5 trillion over the next ten years. Since no agreement was

reached, automatic budget cuts in the amount of \$1.2 trillion will go into effect starting in 2013. Thankfully, programs like SNAP/Food Stamps, Medicare, Medicaid, TANF and others are exempt from these cuts – but the Supercommittee proceedings represented an uneasy, "Cuban Missile Crisis" moment for us and other advocates.

Though no hard-and-fast plans ever emerged from the committee's secretive proceedings, some sketchy details revealed that anti-poverty programs like SNAP/Food Stamps, Medicare, Medicaid – even the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit – may have gone under the knife. In early November, US Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) of the Senate Budget Committee urged the Super Committee members to re-examine SNAP as a target for cuts. "Any program that has increased so quickly, and by such an extent, clearly requires examination," wrote Sessions, seemingly oblivious to the economic root cause of the uptick in program participation.

One prominent member of the Supercommittee was Republican Pennsylvania Senator Patrick Toomey. Senator Toomey told political news website The Hill that he would consider every idea "on the table – except for a big tax increase" for his part in the Supercommittee proceedings. Advocates contended that some programs must remain "off the table" – school meals, summer food, afterschool snacks and meals, WIC, and child-care food – as well as other programs such as Medicare and Medicaid that benefit vulnerable Americans.

Just Harvest made it a focus of our advocacy work to make sure that Senator Toomey and his Supercommittee colleagues knew that the safety net must be protected. Board member Mary Elizabeth McCarthy wrote a letter that was delivered to over 1,000 of Just Harvest's clients and supporters urging immediate action by way of a phone call campaign to Toomey's office that he keep funding intact to essential safety net programs. And in mid-October, Co-Director Tara Marks visited the Washington, DC offices of Representatives Jason Altmire and Tim Murphy and Senators Toomey and Robert Casey to deliver personal stories from Just (See 'Washington', page 7)

Just Harvest in the News and Community

Public engagement and lots of action kept us busy over the summer of 2011 here at Just Harvest! Our June 21 annual meeting at United Steelworkers World Headquarters Downtown featured state-of-the-organization addresses by Board President Barbara Finch and Co-Director Tara Marks. About 40 attended to enjoy the Pittsburgh premiere screening of Shira and Yoav Potash's "Food Stamped" documentary. On August 6, we held our First Annual Summer Picnic at the West End Overlook. The weather cooperated throughout the afternoon, and early attendees got a view of Heinz Field where scenes from "Batman: The Dark Knight Rises" were being filmed. Friends, family, staff, board and members celebrated summer with a great potluck selection of food, music and games for the kids.

We took part in a number of public actions organized by our regional coalition partners as well. In June, as part of the One Pittsburgh coalition of labor, environmental and low-income advocacy organizations, we joined a 300-strong march from Market Square to the Exxon Station in Southside to protest tax breaks for the oil and gas industry while human services suffer under budget cuts. And in mid-August Just Harvest staff and board members again took to the streets with our partners in the We Are One coalition, gathering in a group of several hundred outside of Senator Pat Toomey's office in the South side to demand that he do his job and work to create good jobs for needy households in our region.

At the behest of the nationally organized Half in Ten Campaign, Co-Director Tara Marks' made a trip to the Whitehouse Rose Garden on September 12 to hear President Obama's announcement of the American Jobs Act bill. For this, we drew a good bit of media attention. "This 'get tough' attitude is what we have been waiting for from the president," she told Essential Public Radio, referring to Obama's repeated call to Congress to "pass this bill!" And, as census data on poverty rates in our area were released later that month, the Pittsburgh Tribune Review profiled a pair of our food stamp clients who spoke firsthand about living through the effects of this tough economy. Client Steven Jones, who was interviewed in the first article, offered a kind endorsement: "My family and friends, that's basically what got me by for the past year," he said. "That and help from Just Harvest. If it wasn't for that, things would be a lot worse."

We reached out to the community through several public talks on Just Harvest and our economic justice work. Among other appearances, Ken Regal spoke to students at the Chatham University Food Studies program, and Communications Coordinator Adam MacGregor gave a talk to students at Academy Charter School about social safety net programs. In October, Tara Marks co-presented a talk titled "Igniting the Political Will to End Hunger" with the Southwest Pennsylvania Food Security Partnership's James Harrell at the Three Rivers Community Foundation's *Building Change: A Convergence for Social Justice* event.

As the issues surrounding food and poverty programs will continue to develop rapidly over the coming election year, be sure to watch and listen for Just Harvest's thoughts in print and on the air!

Service Roundup

Food Stamp Applications: 5,000 and Counting...



In mid-November, Just Harvest observed a bittersweet milestone. We completed our 5,000th food stamp application since our contract with the Department of Public Welfare began in 2007, illustrating the continuing need as more and more county residents turn to public assistance in the throes of the stagnating economy.

Just Harvest's contract with the Department of Public Welfare charges us to complete 500 food stamp applications per year; for the past two years, we have completed over three times that amount. Over 162,000 people in Allegheny County participate in the food

stamp program, and recent figures from the USDA place nationwide participation at nearly 46 million.

Co-Director Ken Regal told the Pittsburgh Post Gazette, "It's a sad day when we 'celebrate' Just Harvest's 5,000th food stamp application. This number sends a powerful message to those who are cutting budgets, stereotyping poor people, and putting new bureaucratic barriers in the way of people who are just trying to keep food on the table."

So how did we (and how do we continue to) do it?

Just Harvest employs two food stamp specialists, who respond to the 40-plus inquiries per week that we receive from people in need. Once a potential client contacts us, a specialist conducts a preliminary screening right over the phone to evaluate whether the household is likely to be eligible, and if so, calculates a rough estimate of the benefits they might receive. We ask questions about income, family size, and some key expenses like rent and utility payments to help us make an estimate.

The client may then apply over the phone with the help of the specialist, who submits the application via the Department of Public Welfare's COMPASS website. Once the initial online application is submitted, our specialist creates an informational packet for the client, including documents that must be signed and returned to DPW, an explanation of how DPW works, and what the next steps are in the process – typically a phone interview with a caseworker.

In order to ensure that the process is moving along, we keep tabs on open cases through a series of follow-up calls with the client at 10-, 20- and 30-day intervals. The aim of the calls is to both troubleshoot along the way and to make sure that the client has submitted all their documents, has completed a DPW interview, and – after 30 days – to verify whether he or she has received a determination from DPW. In case of problems, we work with clients on a case-by-case basis to first help them to resolve the issue, stepping in with DPW staff when necessary.

Sometimes – through no fault of the client's – it can be a challenge to get from start to finish, but our services have earned us solidly positive customer satisfaction reviews. "Most people are very pleased at how easy we make the process," says Food Stamp Specialist Ann Sanders. "We know what questions to ask that are specific to the program, and can help them to get through an otherwise cumbersome and long application."

Tax Season 2012 Shaping Up

Just as the holiday celebrations are wrapping up, tax season will start with a bang at Just Harvest. It's the busiest time of year at our office and this year we're expanding our services once again. In 2012 we'll offer free tax assistance at four locations: our South Side office, CCAC Boyce Campus in Monroeville, Prospect Park Family Center in Baldwin, and Bedford Hope Center in the Hill District.

Together with the Money In Your Pocket Coalition, we've expanded staff training so that everyone is more prepared to start the season off right. We've also improved training for our volunteers by offering different models including fast-track training for those with tax knowledge and continuing education credits for CPAs. We hope these changes will increase the number of volunteers and improve their experience.

We've partnered with the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) to start a new VITA site at the Bedford Hope Center. Last year they referred over 120 people to our South Side tax site, so we expect the demand for assistance to be high. HACP's Self-Sufficiency program will recruit volunteers to help schedule appointments.

We're also expanding service at the Prospect Park Family Center by offering a "drop-off" tax service to previous clients. This will allow us to process their returns during slower times at our office and increase the number of refugee and immigrant families served at the site. We appreciate the Family Center's support in gathering documents in advance and scheduling appointments to make this service available.

GOAL: 2500+ tax returns!

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Volunteers needed as
tax preparers and
appointment schedulers

See www.justharvest.org for details or contact Ann at 412-431-8960 or anns@justharvest.org

In the Community

Thanks and Acknowledgements...

Over 250 Attend 23rd Annual Harvest Celebration Dinner

In an address to over 250 at the Annual Harvest Celebration Dinner on October 4th, former US Congress Member (D-Ohio) and UN Food and Agriculture Ambassador **Tony Hall** highlighted the government's role in ending hunger both at home and abroad and how the action of the people is key to developing the political will to end hunger.

"Nobody should ever go to bed hungry in our country," said Ambassador Hall, observing that, although progress has been made in the fight against hunger, it's not the kind of progress that is needed to ultimately end it. Hall encouraged attendees to take this action, to urge their elected officials to vote in the interests of needy people who have neither political voice nor lobby. Just Harvest and United Steelworkers honored Hall with the George Becker Memorial Award for his life-long commitment to ending hunger.

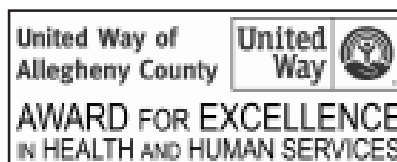


Pictured L-R: Board President Sr. Barbara Finch, 2011 George Becker Memorial Awardee Tony P. Hall, Seeds of Justice Awardee Joyce Rothermel, Co-Director Tara Marks

We also honored former Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank Executive Director **Joyce Rothermel** with our Seeds of Justice Award for her life-long dedication to raising awareness and action for economic and social justice. Over the past 30 years, Joyce dedicated her life to helping those most in need. Her vital role in the creation of both Just Harvest and the GPCFB is such a unique gift to our community.

Thank you to our emcee for the event, **Charles Showalter**, of Union Edge, Labor's Talk Radio and to all of our guests, "can't attend" donors, volunteers, advertisers, silent auction donors, and volunteers for making this possible. Together we raised over \$20,000 for Just Harvest. We are especially grateful to our event sponsors: *UPMC Health Plan, United Steelworkers, Falk Foundation, Pittsburgh Community Services, Inc., and the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work.*

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



JH Clients Take it to the 'Story Bank'

by James Tedrow, Just Harvest Policy Intern

As an intern from the University of Pittsburgh, I was excited to be assigned to conduct interviews with clients for Just Harvest's new "story banking" project. It has given Just Harvest's clients the chance to share their life experiences with us so that we can in turn pass them along to media, donors, supporters, and elected officials to demonstrate the real difference that social safety net programs make in the lives of real people. The stories that we've collected so far are quite powerful.

Take Linda Davis, for example. Linda has been out of work for the last year and a half, and simply does not have enough money to make ends meet. "Do I buy my food or buy my prescriptions? That's where I'm at now and have been for awhile," she stated during

If you or someone you know has a story about an experience applying for food stamps, please contact James (intern1@justharvest.org).

our interview. Food stamps make such decisions a little easier for Linda.

Then there is Margaret, a former cook, who thought was going to be alright financially when she retired a few years ago. Unfortunately, she began having medical problems, and coupled with the poor economy, the money she had saved began to go quicker than she had expected. "Just Harvest was instrumental in getting the help," she noted. Margaret would like to tell elected officials in Washington, DC to simply "wake up and see what they are doing to the people who are the backbone of the country. What they do hurts them the most... There are so many people who need help. Wake up and

decide these are the people that need helping."

On November 10th, Margaret, along with another client, Sharmese, actually participated in a meeting with one of their elected officials, State Senator Wayne Fontana. The meeting gave the chance for both Margaret and Sharmese to speak with the Senator about the importance of food stamps in their lives, the help that Just Harvest provided, as well as any trouble they have had with the Department of Public Welfare (DPW).

What began as simple cold calls to clients led to a face-to-face meeting between a State Senator and his constituents. The voice that the story banking project gives to clients is vital. The stories collected will continue to be shared with elected officials, as well as media outlets, DPW officials, and nonprofit partners of Just Harvest.

Washington

(Continued from page 4)

Harvest clients (drawn from our own Client Storybank), who would be facing far harsher lives if not for aid under the Food Stamp program.

Some would argue that the Supercommittee may have been a lame duck from the start. But it illustrated powerfully what risk these program budgets can face at a moment's notice, and it certainly removed all doubts as to where prominent officials stood on the issues.

We need your support as we focus on our next fight – defending SNAP/Food Stamps from any cuts or structural changes that would be bad for poor people in the forthcoming Farm Bill proceedings.

Please take the time to get involved by calling your Senator and Member of Congress today! Tell them to oppose any plan that harms poor people by cutting safety net programs like SNAP/Food Stamps.

Summer Food Success!

Just Harvest's 2011 Summer Food campaign was a great success. The goals for 2011 were to find three additional sites, increase calls to our Summer Food Hotline, and get school districts to help inform parents about the existence of the Summer Food Program.

Just Harvest worked closely with **James Harrell**, Regional Coordinator with Southwestern Pennsylvania Food Security Partnership to identify and establish 11 new sites. **James** and **Shauna Ponton**, Just Harvest's Child Nutrition Advocate met with sponsors and potential sites to answer questions, complete applications, and to help eliminate barriers to participation in the program.

Section 112 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 amended section 13(a) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1761(a)) that require State agencies that administer the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) to help inform eligible families of the availability and locations of the Summer Food Program sites. Just Harvest utilized this rule to help get the word out about the Summer Food Program. Just Harvest spoke to food service directors and superintendents in all 42 school districts in Allegheny County to get them to distribute our flyer with our Summer Food Hotline number which generated over 150 calls to our hotline. School districts also agreed to display the Summer Food flyer on their websites and outside billboards, and send out robo calls to student's households.

We also brought back our online Summer Food site locator with GoogleMaps, advertised the program on Gas Station TV (GSTV), and our hotline and GoogleMaps link was featured on WPXI's website.

Just Harvest found that in July the Pittsburgh Public Schools Summer Dreamers Academy caused participation to drop at a couple neighborhood sites. Because of this drop in participation some of the neighborhood sites had to close.

We also found that we got little response from elected officials when asked to help identify new sites in their districts. We plan to start earlier in 2011 to identify potential new sites and duplicate our outreach efforts.

Thanks to all the new sites for helping to make this summer hunger-free for Allegheny County's children.

Upcoming Events

SAVE THE DATE:

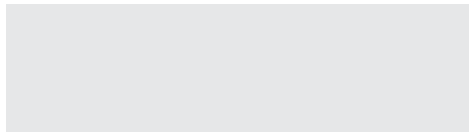
Join Just Harvest for our 17th Annual



Empty Bowls is a unique family-friendly special event featuring a simple meal of soup and bread. Every ticket holder receives a handmade ceramic bowl to take home as your reminder of those whose bowls are empty.

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 with the word "Subscribe" in the subject line.



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Just Harvest Education Fund
16 Terminal Way
Pittsburgh, PA 15219



NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PITTSBURGH, PA
PERMIT NO. 3127