Good Shepherd Food-Bank

Feeding Maine's Hungry

Presentation by:

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Good Shepherd Food Bank: Who we are

- The largest hunger relief organization in Maine, GSFB provides for those at risk of hunger by soliciting food donations & purchasing food at whole sale prices, then distributing food to more than 600 partner agencies across the state.
- **14 million pounds** of food distributed annually.
- **600 local agencies** in our network, including food pantries, meal sites, and youth programs.
- **3 distribution centers** in Auburn, Brewer, and Biddeford.
- **$1 donated = 4 meals** for a Maine family in need.
- **1,600 volunteers** annually help the Food Bank fulfill our mission.

MEMBER OF FEEDING AMERICA together we can solve hunger.

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What is a food bank? Most people know we have to do with feeding people but most don't know exactly how we do it.

We are essentially a grocery store for the hundreds of ending hunger organizations around the state.

The food bank collects donated food from manufacturers and retailers, as well as purchases food and we distribute that food to over 600 member agencies throughout the state. So food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, etc., get the food they need to do their work from us. We charge them for the food, at an average rate of $0.14/pound.

Last year we distributed over 14 million pounds of food, serving 100,000 Mainers in need.

So why do we need a food bank? Because a lot of people are hungry! In fact **50 million Americans struggle with food insecurity** – which means not having access to enough food for a healthy life. Food insecurity is a continuum and is measured by the USDA.
People are asked questions such as:

1. Do you every worry about food running out before you get the money to buy more?
2. In the last 12 months, did you ever reduce the amount of food fed to your children because there wasn't enough money for food?
3. In the last 12 months, did you rely on low-cost food to feed your children because you were running out of money to buy food?

These are difficult questions. Can you imagine answering yes to them? Hunger, if anything, is under-reported in our country. Who wants to admit and answer yes to those questions.

Hunger in Maine

- **200,000 Mainers** are considered *food insecure*
- Hunger is on the rise in Maine
  - Unemployment remains high
  - Wages are stagnant
  - Food prices have increased drastically
  - Fuel prices are high

35% of Maine's food insecure population do not qualify for government assistance and must rely on charity.

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200,000 people in Maine responded yes to those questions.

And the need is growing. During the latest recession, the number of Mainers living with food insecurity grew 50%. This is not surprising considering that the number of unemployed doubled during this same time period. People are ultimately hungry because they do not earn enough money to cover their basic needs.

Many people wonder, what about food stamps, aren't they supposed to solve hunger? Well the Food stamp program certainly helps and indeed during a time period in the late 1970s after a significant call to action to end hunger in the US, hunger was largely solved, because of the food stamp program,.

But since 1980, social welfare programs, including food stamps, have been cut dramatically and hunger has reemerged. In response to this, the emergency food system, namely food banks and food pantries, was created to meet the need caused by the growing gaps in the federal response to poverty. Indeed, 35% of Maine's food insecure earn too much money to qualify for food stamps under the current guidelines. And for those that do receive SNAP, the amount provided often does not go far enough for families to afford healthy food.

Child Hunger in Maine – the numbers

- **54,000** or **21%** live below the poverty line (around $22,000 for a family of four). This is up 29% over 2008.
- **120,400** or **45%** of Maine's children live in low-income households.
- **86,900** or **32%** children received SNAP benefits in 2012, an increase of 40% over 2008.

In 2011, ***63,000 Maine children were food insecure***. This represents 24%, or **1 in 4 children**.

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Hunger is an especially troubling issue for Maine's children. As you can see, poverty and food insecurity are interrelated, but they are not exactly the same thing. Some families living in poverty receive enough SNAP benefits to ensure they are food secure. Others earn too much to qualify for SNAP, yet they do not earn enough to make ends meet.

And the result is that 63,000 Maine children are food insecure, which represents 1 in 4 children in Maine.

What does child hunger look like? Child hunger, like most hunger in the US is often invisible. But to those who know it well, such as the doctors and the teachers, the signs are there. The child who can't concentrate, is absent and sick a lot, is having trouble with his/her school work, and is having behavioral issues. These are all signs of a hungry child.

The impact of child hunger age 0-3

What every parent wants: *a child who is not overweight or underweight and whose parents report that s/he is in good health, developing normally for his/her age and has never been hospitalized.*

~ Children's Health Watch

- Low-income mothers were **25% more likely** to have a pre-term baby and 53% more likely to have an underweight baby at full-term.
- Food insecure children have **90% greater odds** of having their health described as fair/poor versus excellent/good.
- Food insecure children have **31% higher odds** of having been hospitalized.

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What every parent wants for their child is simple, but for families living with food insecurity, this simple aspiration is nearly impossible to attain.

And the impact of hunger is felt almost immediately:
In a 5 year study, researchers found that low-income women were 25% more likely to have a pre-term baby and 53% more likely to have an underweight baby at full-term. These were attributed to maternal malnutrition during pregnancy.

Once born, food insecure children experience a host of problems. Children's Health Watch found that food insecure children under the age of 3 have 90% greater odds… and 31% greater odds of having been hospitalized.

The bottom line is that hungry children incur developmental impairments that limit their physical, intellectual and emotional development during their most formative years of 0 – 3. The crucial years where the foundation of their future potential is created. And this impact on a child's development is irreversible.

Child hunger is an education problem

Food insecurity serves as an important marker for identifying children with delayed trajectories of development.
~ American Society of Nutrition, The Journal of Nutrition: 2005

Children who are hungry are:

- **4 times** more likely to need mental health counseling
- **7 times** more likely to be classified as clinically dysfunctional
- **7 times** more likely to get into fights frequently
- **12 times** more likely to steal

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So what happens to these children when they enter our schools?

In 2005 The American Society of Nutrition conducted the first study of its kind in that they isolated the effects of food insecurity on child well being. And the impact they found was profoundly disturbing.

Food insecurity at kindergarten predicted impaired academic performance in both math and reading for boys and girls. This study found that among 6 – 12 year olds, food insecurity is associated with poorer math scores, grade repetition, absenteeism, tardiness, visits to a psychologist, anxiety, aggression, psychosocial dysfunction, and difficulty getting along with other children.

Beyond basic math and reading scores, food insecurity increases the likelihood that a child will need special educational services – children who are classified at the extreme end of the food insecurity spectrum are twice as likely to require special education.
So children living with food insecurity are struggling with school from the moment they enter.

That perpetuates into adolescence

Among 15 – 16 year olds food insufficiency was associated with depressive disorder and suicide symptoms, even after controlling for income and other factors.

By the time they are teenagers, food insecure children are twice as likely as their peers to have seen a psychologist and twice as likely to have been suspended from school.

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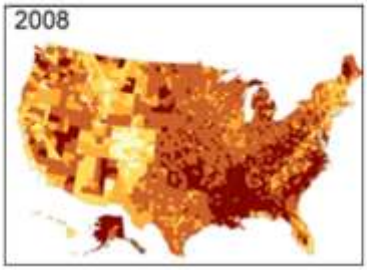
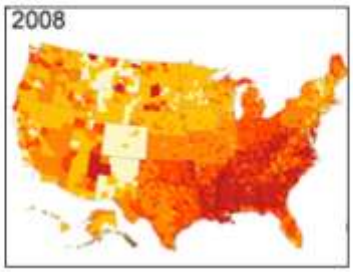
And this is a problem that persists into high school where the consequences begin to have life long implications.
In the same 2005 study, researchers found this data about teens.

And even beyond the educational and emotional impact, children are suffering poor health effects due to being food insecure.

Child hunger is a health care problem





A common survival technique used by food insecure households is to purchase lower cost food items in order to stretch their limited food budgets. These pictures show the result of people making this decision. The top chart depicts the concentration of food insecurity, the bottom left obesity and the bottom right diabetes. The darker the color, the more prevalent the incidence. And notice for all three graphs, the only state in the darker shades in Maine.

The trend is clear. Hunger and obesity are now two sides of the same coin.
When you have a limited amount of resources to spend on food, you're going to buy as many calories as you can for your money. And in today's current food system, that means a lot of cheap carbohydrate that are calorie dense and nutrient poor.
We now have a generation of people who are over weight and malnourished.

And now they are suffering the ill effects of being overweight.

Child hunger is a health care problem

If a **child experiences food insecurity** at any point during its toddler years, the child was **3.4 times** as likely to be obese by the age of 5.

Children who experienced the **double whammy** of low birth weight and food insecurity were **28 times** more likely to be overweight or obese by the age of 5.

Among children 12 – 14 years old, **overweight and obese children were significantly more likely** to be depressed, report low self-esteem, and have poor school and social functioning.

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Obesity is highly correlated with many health problems including cardio vascular disease, asthma, hypertension, diabetes, and joint degeneration. Disturbingly these problems are being found at younger and younger ages, especially among lower income populations.

In addition to physical health, obesity has a substantial negative impact on the emotional and cognitive well-being of children.

A national study of adolescent health found that among children 12 – 14 years old, overweight and obese children were significantly more likely to be depressed, report low self-esteem, and have poor school and social functioning compared to normal weight children. Obese girls were nearly twice as likely to have attempted suicide; obese boys were twice as likely to drop out of school.

Again – we're seeing the interconnection between food insecurity, poor health, and poor educational outcomes.

All of which ultimately lead to….

Child hunger is an economic problem

- The **family's income** will **decline by 32%** due to loss of productivity from caring for a low-weight or pre-term baby.
- The **cost of educating a special needs child is double the average** for a child without special needs. Through the 8th grade, this amounts to approximately **$54,000** per child.
- **Childhood obesity** carries an estimated price tag of **$14 billion** per year in health care costs alone (adult costs are over $200 billion).

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Child hunger is an economic problem.

We discussed the various impacts food insecurity has on a variety of issues relating to a child's educational attainment and his/her health. The slide above tell us how these impacts play out in economic terms. Food insecurity costs the family, our schools and the public at large.

Child hunger is an economic problem

- Over the course of their working career, **a high school drop-out** will earn **$500,000 less** than a high school graduate and **$2 million less** than a college graduate.

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Another economic consequence caused by food insecurity is the lost earning opportunity. We've seen how food insecurity holds students back from academic success and many from graduating at all.

A study of high school dropouts estimates that over the course of their working career, a hs drop out will earn $500k less than a hs grad and $2m less than a college graduate. And workers with less than a hs degree are less likely to have health insurance or retirement plans and they will continue to fall further and further behind their peers.

The public ultimately bears the cost of the increased health problems, lower worker productivity and lost tax revenue.

According to a report by the Center for American Progress and Brandeis University,

"**hunger costs our nation at least**
$167.5 billion per year
due to the combination of lost economic productivity, more expensive public education, avoidable health care costs, and the cost of charity to keep families fed."

These costs are significant.

According to Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap, the **additional annual cost required** to meet the food needs of those living with food insecurity in the United States is **$21.8 billion per year.**

It costs us more to ignore hunger than it does to eliminate it.

It's clear that it costs more to ignore hunger than it does to eliminate it.

And who is ultimately paying the price?

The 1 in 4 children in Maine – a quarter of our future workforce – who, by no fault of their own, are living with food insecurity.

Hunger causes a significant drain on our state's human capital. And the condition itself perpetuates the very thing that caused it – poverty.

What Can We Do?

1. **Protect and fully fund SNAP:**

The first goal of pediatrics is to protect children from suffering preventable illness. From that perspective ***SNAP is like an effective immunization****—it decreases the likelihood a young child will be sick, underweight, or developmentally a risk. These conditions cause preventable suffering for children and families, and incalculable avoidable costs to society now and in the future."*

~Deborah A. Frank, MD, Children's Health Watch

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So what can we do? Well, there's actually a lot we can do. While there are certainly complex systemic problems that plague low income families, feeding a child is quite simple. Children in Maine aren't hungry because there isn't enough food and they aren't hungry because we don't have programs in place to provide them access to the food. They are hungry because we lack the leadership and political will to keep them fed.

This is not a new problem. We've seen hunger before and we beat it. <u>And this is largely an AMERICAN problem</u>. In 2011, the IMF put together a list of the top economically advantaged countries and the US was tied for last place in food insecurity. And in the United States, Maine ranks in the bottom half in terms of food insecurity and we have the highest rates of overall food insecurity, child food insecurity and obesity in New England.

First: At the heart of feeding children and families is SNAP – or food stamps. No other program has proven more effective or more efficient at alleviating food insecurity than SNAP. In fact, pediatricians have referred to SNAP as a vaccine to insure the health and well being of our children.

In fact, pediatricians have referred to SNAP as a vaccine to ensure the future health and wellbeing of our children.

What Can We Do?

2. Fully utilize Federal Child Nutrition Programs:

Maine currently leaves **$33 million** of federal money on the table every year.

Of the **83,000 Maine kids** that qualify:

- 75% receive free/reduced school lunch
- 37% receive free/reduced school breakfast
- 16% receive free/reduced summer meal

We can reduce Maine's meal gap by half if we achieve 100% participation.

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Second: We need to fully utilize federal child nutrition programs. Maine currently leaves an estimated $33 million of federal money on the table every year that has been set aside to feed hungry kids. Why? Because of the 83,000 kids who qualify, READ SCREEN

Solely because we have not made 100% participation a priority for schools. If we achieved 100% participation, we would reduce Maine's meal gap by half.

What Can We Do?

3. Support the Emergency Food System:

Over 35% of food insecure people in Maine
earn too much money to qualify for assistance.

- Back Pack Program
- School pantries
- Cooking Matters

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Third: We need to continue to support the emergency food system to fill in the gaps. Over 35% of food insecure people in Maine earn too much money to qualify for programs.

In addition to Good Shepherd's food pantry network, our Child hunger programs specifically target communities and employ solutions to alleviate child hood hunger: We currently partner with 50 of our neediest schools to work towards our goal that no kid goes hungry in Maine.

- BackPack – fills the gap when school isn't in session
- School Pantry – helps families who earn too much to qualify for SNAP or whose benefits don't go far enough (average family with children in Maine gets $375/month)
- Cooking Matters – teaches kids and families how to stretch their food dollars and eat healthy even on a limited budget.

What Can YOU Do?

together we can solve hunger.

1. **Donate:** Food or dollars to either the Food Bank or your local pantry.
2. **Volunteer:** At the Food Bank or with your local pantry.
3. **Advocate.** Support federal nutrition programs and help be the voice of your neighbors in need.

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So, hunger is a big problem, but it's a problem we can solve. And that's the BEST news.

While the issues confronting our state and its economy are numerous and complex, this one we know how to solve.

And considering the role that hunger plays in holding back educational outcomes, contributing to poor health and ultimately perpetuating poverty, how much more can we move the needle on these other issues just by solving this one?

But we need to attack hunger on all fronts. We need government to fulfill its commitment and help its most vulnerable citizens.

And we need your help. Please, donate, volunteer and advocate.