



**Good Shepherd
Food-Bank**
Feeding Maine's Hungry

Presentation by Kristen Miale, President Good Shepherd Food Bank at Leadership Maine 20th Anniversary celebration, Thursday, August 22, 2013.

Thank you Maine Development Foundation for the wonderful opportunity to collaborate on leadership driven solutions to end hunger in Maine.

Hunger is a BIG problem and it exists in every community in the state. And it's a problem that impacts all of us.

In the US and in Maine, because of hunger, we have handicapped a significant number of our workforce thereby reducing our own productivity as well as perpetuating the cycle of generational poverty.

Throughout this presentation, I will provide facts about hunger that tell the story in Maine and in the U.S.

Good Shepherd Food-Bank: Who We Are

- The largest hunger relief organization in Maine, GSFB is the “grocery store” to hundreds of ending hunger organizations around the state.
- In FY2013, we distributed 14 million pounds of food.
- Every \$1 donated to the food bank provides 4 meals.
- Network provides food for 36,000 Mainers every week.
- Serves more than 100,000 unique individuals each year.



So, who are we? Good Shepherd Food Bank is essentially the grocery store to the hundreds of food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and other organizations across the state. They get the food they need to do their work from us.

We collect donated food from manufacturers and retailers, as well as purchase food, including over 1 million pounds of local Maine produce. We distribute that food through our member agencies throughout the state.

Because of our economies of scale in securing and distributing food, every dollar donated to the food bank allows us to provide 4 meals to a family in need.

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People Living with Food Insecurity

The number of people living with food insecurity in Maine increased by how much between 2005 and 2010?

- a. 15%
- b. 25%
- c. 30%
- d. 50%



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 US Census.

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? ...Well, the number of people answering yes grew by 50% in Maine between 2005 and 2010.

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Hunger in Maine

- 200,000 Mainers are considered *food insecure*
- More than 60,000 Maine children – or 1 in 4 kids – live at risk of hunger
- Hunger is on the rise in Maine
 - Unemployment remains high
 - Wages are stagnant
 - Food prices have increased drastically
 - Fuel prices are high



Why is hunger on the rise? **Hunger is ultimately an income issue.** We have hunger because people don't earn enough money.

BUT it hasn't always been like this. We've had recessions before, but hunger has not been a problem like it is today since the 1960s.

After a call to action in the late 1960s by political leaders, America increased federal spending on hunger and by the end of the 1970's hunger was virtually eradicated in the United States. We had it solved.

At this time, food was not a partisan issue. Both sides of the aisle agreed that food was a basic need.

Then, beginning with the Reagan administration, hunger relief efforts by the federal government were scaled back. Hunger began to grow and grassroots hunger relief agencies sprang up (including Good Shepherd Food Bank, which was founded in 1981) to fill in the gaps.

These gaps have now become chasms and the charitable sector cannot keep up.

And this is largely an AMERICAN problem. In 2011, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) put together a list of the top economically advantaged countries and the US was tied for last place in food insecurity.

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This is a picture of a food pantry distribution at one of our agencies in York county, where over 16,000 people live in poverty.

At the height of the latest recession, unemployment was at its highest rate in 30 years, the unemployment rate almost doubled.

We are hearing a lot these days about how Food Stamps are at their highest levels ever and need to be cut. However, there is a reason why they are at their highest levels. Because unemployment is at such a high level. It is doing exactly what it was intended to do. Food stamps grow when the need grows.

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Earnings to Qualify for SNAP

What is the most a single parent with two children can earn in order to qualify for SNAP (food stamps)?

- a. \$18,500
- b. \$22,800 
- c. \$28,300
- d. \$32,500



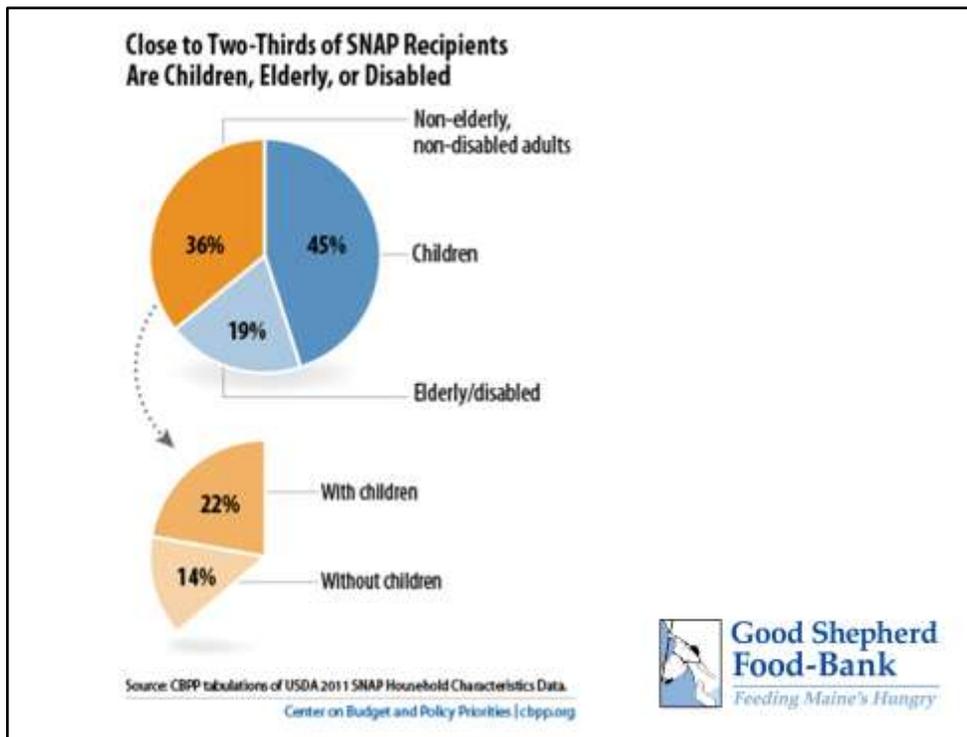
Unemployment almost doubled at the height of the last recession and food insecurity “only” grew by 50%. This is because of the programs that are in place to help those in need – namely SNAP and the emergency food system. So, let’s talk about SNAP:

A single parent with two children can earn up to only \$22,800 in order to qualify for SNAP. Can you imagine living on that income and feeding, clothing, and housing two children?

The reality is that 72% of Maine households on SNAP earn below the poverty rate; almost a third of them live under 50% of the poverty rate, which is less than \$11,000 a year.

A common response to this is that these people should work more. However, 76% of SNAP households include a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person and these households make up 83% of all benefits. This means that the recipients either cannot work or have worked their whole lives.

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Almost 2/3 of SNAP recipients are either too young to work, have already worked their entire life, or are unable to work.

Those who are able to work do. A single able bodied adult is allowed at the most three months of food stamps over a three year period.

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Average Monthly SNAP Benefit

What is the average monthly SNAP (food stamp) benefit for households with children in Maine?

- a. \$375 ★
- b. \$450
- c. \$525
- d. \$650



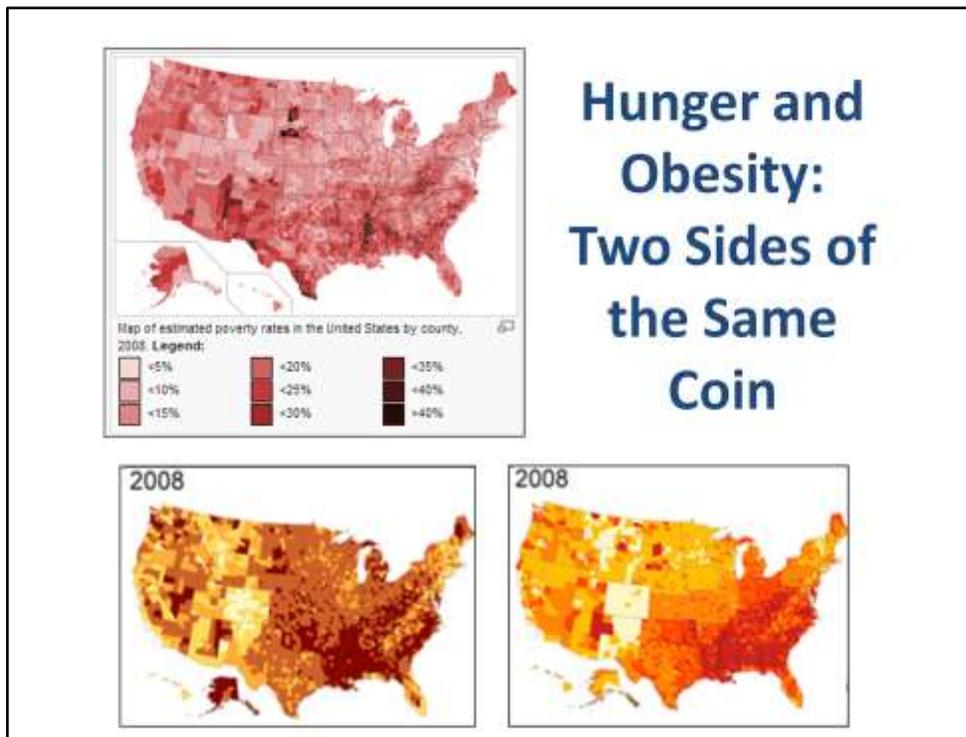
Another common complaint with the food stamp program is that we're too generous. We allow people to sit back and live off the system. With the average monthly SNAP benefit for households with children in Maine at \$375, these families are not exactly living the high life. The reality is that SNAP provides some relief, but households still need to come up with a significant portion of their own resources to secure food.

So what do these people do?

Well, many visit their local food pantry or meal site and that's where the food bank comes in. Many come because SNAP doesn't go far enough. Around 35% of our clients come to a food pantry because they earn too much to get food stamps, yet they don't earn enough money to make ends meet. 56% of our clients report having to choose between paying for food or heating their home.

I mentioned earlier how food banks were started, mostly in the early 1980s, in response to federal programs being cut. We were the safety net underneath the safety net. People would use the food bank when they were in a bad place, down on their luck. It's why we're called "the emergency food system" (EFS). This is what has fundamentally changed with the latest recession. The "EFS" is now a significant provider of food for thousands of Mainers.

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Another technique used by people to get by when they do not have enough food was mentioned in the survey questions I shared earlier – purchasing lower cost food items. This most often means buying less nutritional foods.

These pictures show the result of people making this decision. The top chart depicts the concentration of poverty, the bottom left obesity, and the bottom right diabetes. The darker the color, the more prevalent the incidence.

The trend is pretty 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 both over weight and malnourished.

Now they are suffering the ill effects of being overweight which adds to their health care costs, impacts their ability to work and the cycle of poverty continues. ...And it's not just the adults. Children who are food insecure, at any point during their toddler years, are 3.4 times as likely to be obese by the time they are 5 years old. These children are suffering poor health effects as well.

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Children with Fair/Poor Health

After adjusting for other factors, children from food insecure households were how much more likely to have their health described as “fair/poor” rather than “excellent/good”?

- a. 15%
- b. 25%
- c. 50%
- d. 90% 



So why do we care about hunger? Many of us do because it's a moral issue. We believe that food is a fundamental right of any individual.

But if you don't go for that argument, go for this one – hunger is more than a social issue. We just demonstrated how it's also a health issue. And it's also an education issue, and ultimately an economic issue.

If a child does not receive the nutritious food they need in the first three years of life, the impact on the child's cognitive and social development is irreversibly impaired.

It has been unequivocally demonstrated that children who are hungry are absent from school more often, have more behavior problems, and perform lower on tests. Teachers talk about how scary weekends are for food insecure children who often don't know what they'll eat after their school lunch on Friday. We hear from too many teachers that they know better than to have a test on Monday morning.

Bottom line – children who are food insecure cannot learn and are being set up to fail before they are even given a chance to thrive.

Hunger causes a significant drain on our state's human capital. And the condition itself perpetuates the very thing that caused it – poverty. In social services, they refer to this as “generational poverty” or “the cycle of poverty”.

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Fresh Food from GSFB

What percentage of food provided by the Food Bank is fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, and fish?

- a. 12%
- b. 26%
- c. 38% 
- d. 63%



So what is the good news?

Good Shepherd Food Bank and other its other food bank peers around the country recognize the responsibility we have given that we are the source of food for many low-income people. We recognize that the problem in Maine and in the US is not lack of access to calories but lack of access to healthy foods.

That's why we have made a strategic shift to focus our resources on getting food that is nutritious. And we're making great progress. 38% of the food GSFB distributes is fresh food. Not spam and soda.

63% of GSFB foods are considered "foods to encourage" as measured by Feeding America. These types of food include fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, fresh protein, water, cereal, pasta, and rice.

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Food Waste

How many pounds are the major food retailers currently throwing away each year in Maine?

- a. 1 million
- b. 2 million
- c. 4 million
- d. 5 million  = 4.2 million meals



Where does the fresh food we're distributing come from? Our retail partners.

Food waste not only is expensive and bad for the environment, it is unacceptable when we have 50 million Americans who are hungry. A recent report estimated that American's throw away \$165 billion worth of food and Maine is no exception. Our retail partners throw away roughly 5 million pounds of food.

This 5 million pounds of food is how much food we still have yet to collect from our current food retailer partners. This is the low-hanging fruit; we already have relationships and are picking up other items from most of these donors. They are beginning the transition of donating their perishable food to us; this is great because perishable food tends to be the most nutritious.

The waste in our current food system is a huge opportunity to address hunger.

Where are there other solutions to ending hunger? We mentioned SNAP and that's important. The entire food banking system in US provides \$5 billion worth of food to people in need; SNAP provides about \$75 billion. Unfortunately, Congress is currently discussing cuts to SNAP in the \$4 billion to \$40 billion range. The need just doesn't go away because you cut SNAP. What will become of these people? Of their children? What will be the real price we pay by continuing to cut aid to our most vulnerable citizens and their children?

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Child Nutrition Programs

How much federal money does Maine leave “on the table” in child nutrition programs (school breakfast, lunch, and summer lunch programs) each year?

- a. \$1.2 million
- b. \$11.3 million
- c. \$33.5 million  = 16 million meals
- d. \$52.3 million



In addition to SNAP there’s another vital federal program that supports families in need. In Maine, 83,000 children qualify to receive a free or reduced breakfast & lunch during the school year and a lunch during the summer months when school isn’t in session. These meals are paid for by federal dollars that have already been allocated and paid for. Luckily, these are not part of the current cuts being considered by Congress.

Of these 83,000 children, 75% of them get their free lunch, 37% of them get their breakfast and 16% of them get their summer meal. The remaining unclaimed meals are left in Washington DC. To claim them, we must make it a priority that every child who is eligible for these meals is 1) signed up and 2) has access to them. Many schools in Maine do not offer breakfast and there aren’t enough summer meal sites to distribute the food.

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Meals Needed to End Hunger in ME

How many additional meals are needed to end hunger in Maine?

- a. 12 million
- b. 34 million 
- c. 62 million
- d. 127 million



Are these solutions enough to solve the problem? Not entirely, but there are other strategies we can employ to end hunger in Maine.

We estimate that Maine needs to provide an additional 34 million meals to make sure everyone is food secure. This is based on Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap methodology (<http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>).

It's a big number for sure, but it's a reachable number. If you have been adding up the meals realized through our distribution partners and through full utilization of the school lunch program, you'll see that we just came up with 20 million of those meals already. **We're more than half way there.**

There are many, many problems in society – poverty, global warming, cancer and their solutions are complex and so far have eluded us - **but hunger we know how to solve.** We've done it before. People in Maine aren't hungry because there isn't enough food. They aren't hungry because there aren't programs in place to help them. **They are hungry because there aren't enough resources and leadership behind these programs to end the problem once and for all.**

And considering the role that hunger plays in perpetuating poverty and poor health – how much can we move the needle on other issues just by solving this one?

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What role will you play?

Support the collaboration between Maine Development Foundation and Good Shepherd Food Bank by:

Being an advocate for the food security work that Good Shepherd Food Bank is already doing on a community, state and federal level:

- **BE A VOICE** for food security for all Mainers by actively supporting the work the Food Bank is already doing and sharing stories of impact.
- **BE A LEADER** in your community by joining or organizing activities that positively impact food security in your area.

Helping us make the economic case for ending hunger in Maine:

- **JOIN A RESEARCH TEAM** to synthesize existing information linking food insecurity with its economic impact.
- **JOIN A MESSAGING TEAM** to create a plan to share the research findings and engage all Mainers in our work.

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Leadership Maine Celebrating 20 Years!



The grass roots hunger relief organizations have been doing an amazing job leading the fight against hunger. But if these organizations were going to end hunger, we would have. We need your help.

We need to attach hunger on all fronts. We need government to fulfill its commitment; we need the hunger relief organizations to keep doing what they're doing; and we need to the private sector to provide more higher wage jobs and bring down unemployment.

We need the leadership in this state to make it a priority to end hunger and that's where you, the Alumni of Leadership Maine, come in. Join the collaboration between Maine Development Foundation and Good Shepherd Food Bank to help us end hunger. Together, we can ensure all Mainers have access to nutritious food.

To participate, please contact Carol Taylor, Program Consultant at Maine Development Foundation, at ctaylor@mdf.org or complete our brief interest survey at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HRW9S6R>.

Thank you for your commitment to Maine and to the quality of life of all of our people.

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