

Hunger in America 2014



Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC

Local Report Key Findings

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SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK OF NORTHWEST NC

Our Mission

To reduce hunger and malnutrition in Northwest North Carolina.
We are committed to:

- Acquiring and distributing food to supplement the food needs of faith and community-based organizations;
- Advocating for the rights of hungry people;
- Educating the public about hunger; and
- Pursuing partnerships with like-minded organizations.

Our Vision

Sharing the abundance so no one goes hungry.

Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC is a proud member of Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger relief charity. We are a united network of regional food banks working to alleviate the immediate needs of our hungry neighbors, as we strive to end hunger through education, outreach and advocacy.

Together, we envision: One Community. Free from Hunger.

We Believe

- No one in our community should go hungry.
- Addressing hunger is a responsibility shared by the public and private sectors to ensure the health, vitality and well-being of our communities and nation.
- Everyone has gifts to share toward ending hunger – be that our time, our talents, our voice or food and financial resources.
- We must speak out on behalf of our neighbors who struggle to put food on their tables.

Working Together, We Can Solve Hunger.

Introduction

In order to address the problem of hunger, we must understand it. To that end, in 2013, Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC, a Feeding America affiliate, participated in the “Hunger in America” series, the most comprehensive study of the charitable food system in the nation, documenting the critical role of Feeding America food banks and our partner agencies in addressing hunger.

Hunger in America (HIA 2014) provides an in-depth, statistically valid look at who is seeking food assistance – their circumstances, the challenges they face and the difficult choices they are often forced to make living on extremely limited household resources. It also provides a snapshot of the capacity and programs of our partner agency network.

Along with the entire Feeding America Network, Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC will use the information drawn from this study to raise public awareness, guide the development and enhancement of programs and inform public policy discourse.

Hunger in America – The National Picture

- HIA 2014 reports the Feeding America Network provides critical food assistance to more than 46 million Americans each year – or 1 in 7 Americans – including 12 million children and 7 million seniors.

Hunger in North Carolina

- Feeding America affiliates in North Carolina cover all 100 of the state’s counties and together provide food assistance for an estimated 1,376,100 different people annually through a network of more than 2,800 partner agencies. This number represents 14 percent of the state’s total population.

Hunger in Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC’s 18-County Service Area

- HIA 2014 documents a sustained, significant and still growing need for food assistance across Second Harvest Food Bank’s 18-county service area.
- Nearly 300,000 different individuals turn to our network of more than 400 partner programs for food assistance annually – or 1 in every 6 people living in our region.
- Over the past 12 months, 62 percent of Second Harvest Food Bank’s partner programs report an increase in the number of requests for food assistance.
- Despite Second Harvest Food Bank’s continuing success in sourcing more food for our partner agency network (in the past five years, distribution has more than tripled from 7.9 million pounds to more than 25 million pounds), 44 percent of programs report having less food than needed to meet the needs of those requesting assistance.
- These facts corroborate what we have been reporting to community leaders, public officials and supporters about the need in our region. They also highlight the importance of the public and private sectors and concerned individuals working together to bring additional resources to our collective, strong efforts to provide for the nutritional needs of area residents.

Who is Seeking Food Assistance?

- ***Second Harvest Food Bank's network of partner programs helps to provide for the nutritional needs of our most vulnerable residents:***
 - 32% of those who receive food assistance through our partner agency network are children under the age of 18. Because programs that serve only children were not eligible to be sampled for the Client Survey, for example our BackPack and Kids Cafe programs and summer meal sites, this percentage underestimates the actual number of children being reached by Second Harvest Food Bank.)
 - 10 percent of those who receive food assistance through our partner agency network are seniors age 65 or older. (30 percent are age 50 and older.)
- ***Economic recovery has not reached those served by our network. Unemployment and underemployment are significant factors contributing to the need for food assistance:***
 - 78 percent of those who seek food assistance from Second Harvest Food Bank's network live in households at or below the poverty level.
 - 57 percent of households have monthly incomes of \$1,000 or less.
 - More than half (52 percent) of households report having at least one person employed at some point in the past year. Among these households, the person who had worked the most in the past year was more likely to be employed part time (56 percent) than full-time (44 percent).
 - Educational attainment is a significant barrier to higher-wage employment for many who receive food assistance from our network, with 32 percent of adult recipients having less than a high school diploma or its equivalent. Nationally, only 14 percent of the general population of adults does not have a high school diploma or its equivalent.
- ***Many families seeking food assistance from our network are struggling with health issues:***
 - 33 percent of households have at least one member with diabetes.
 - 60 percent of households have at least one member with high blood pressure.
 - Over the past year, 72 percent of households report choosing between paying for food and paying for medicine/medical care; 31 percent of these households are making this choice every month.
- ***People seeking assistance from our network are as diverse as the faces of America:***
 - 52 percent are white, 31 percent are black, 11 percent are Hispanic and 6 percent identify as of other racial backgrounds.

Households Make Difficult Choices and Trade-Offs to Keep Food on the Table

Over the past year:

- 84 percent of households report purchasing the cheapest food available, even if they knew it wasn't the healthiest option, in an effort to provide enough food for their household.
- 73 percent of households report choosing between paying for food and paying for utilities.
 - 30 percent of these households are making the choice every month.
- 72 percent of households report choosing between paying for food and paying for medicine/medical care.
 - 31 percent of these households are making the choice every month.
- 72 percent of households report choosing between paying for food and paying for transportation.
 - 31 percent of these households are making the choice every month.
- 64 percent of households report choosing between paying for food and paying for housing.
 - 24 percent of these households are making the choice every month.
- 24 percent of households report choosing between paying for food and paying for education expenses.
 - 9 percent of these households are making the choice every month.

Second Harvest Food Bank is a Vital Resource for Its Partner Programs and the People in Need We Serve Together

- 65 percent of the total food distributed by partner programs is obtained from Second Harvest Food Bank.
- 84 percent of partner programs report that not having access to Second Harvest Food Bank as a source of food would have a major effect on their ability to serve their local community.

Continued Slow Economic Recovery Challenges Our Partner Agency Network

- 32% of partner programs had to make cutbacks in the last 12 months, including cuts in hours of operation, laying off staff or limiting their service area.

Faith Communities and Volunteers Provide a Valuable Lifeline of Support for Second Harvest Food Bank's Network

- More than half (51 percent) of Second Harvest Food Bank's partner programs are operated solely by volunteers.
- 82 percent of partner programs are faith-based or operated in a religious institution.

Second Harvest Food Bank's Response to the Significant Problem of Hunger in Our Communities

As documented in HIA 2014, economic recovery has not arrived for many who seek food assistance from our network. The majority of families we serve are living in households with extremely limited resources. The employment circumstances of many households are unstable at best and many are struggling with health problems. With startling frequency, families are making difficult trade-offs to put food on the table, including some that may be further compromising the health of some family members.

The intersections between hunger and other vital issues, such as health, education and employment, continue to inform Second Harvest Food Bank's partnerships and programs to reach families and communities in need.

Health

As concerns grow over the alarming increase in chronic diseases, public officials at the national, state and local levels are recognizing that access to healthy food plays a major role in promoting personal health, healthy neighborhoods and a healthy economy. Second Harvest Food Bank continues to address this issue of access through a carefully-constructed, strategically expanding network of partners and programs. Where service gaps remain, we are pursuing initiatives that will provide more food, especially fresh fruits, vegetables and protein, into urban communities and rural areas.

Second Harvest Food Bank continues to make great strides in increasing the amount of fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables and protein available to our partner network. An annual grants program is expanding the capacity of our network to accept and provide perishable, nutritious items to the people they serve.

Through our expanding Nutrition Education Services programs, Second Harvest Food Bank is committed to empowering individuals and families with practical nutrition information and strategies to extend limited resources to shop for and prepare healthy, affordable meals.

Second Harvest Food Bank recognizes that, alone, it cannot meet the great and growing need for food assistance in our region. A public/private partnership, coupled with the compassionate efforts of caring individuals, is essential. The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) in North Carolina, has been shown to reduce hunger and improve health and nutrition in food insecure households, and can help lift families out of poverty. FNS also provides an economic benefit to communities, with every \$5 in benefits creating approximately \$9 in local economic impact. Second Harvest Food Bank's FNS Outreach Program provides training for its own Agency Relations staff and partner program staff and volunteers to guide potentially eligible individuals and families through the FNS application process.

Education

A body of research documents the relationship of food insecurity, academic performance and future economic security. Missing key nutrients and calories can have serious effects on a child's physical and mental development. Inadequate nutrition is linked to delayed brain development and an impaired ability to learn. The effects are especially dire in the first three years of life and worsen when food insecurity continues into early childhood. Elementary school students from food insecure homes are more likely to repeat a grade than their peers. Food insecurity has

a continuing negative impact on the cognitive and academic development of children as they grow older. Educational achievement through the middle and secondary school years depends on students mastering basic skills and building on their knowledge over time. Food insecure children learn at a slower rate than their peers. That fact, coupled with their initial developmental delay, leaves them further and further behind as they progress through the educational system. Helping to alleviate hunger among children through a range of special meal programs and partnerships remains a strategic priority for Second Harvest Food Bank.

Employment

While our state's economy has begun to recover from the recession, a wider lens reveals complex issues that mirror nationwide trends. Middle-income jobs are increasingly scarce, including, in our area, those in manufacturing that did not necessarily require education beyond the high school level. The overwhelming majority of new job creation is occurring in jobs that do not pay enough to feed a family. The gap from poverty to economic stability has, unfortunately, grown larger and deeper.

As families strive to bridge the gap, the assistance Second Harvest Food Bank's network provides is critical. As workers struggle with unemployment, take part-time and/or temporary positions or retrain for new work in growing fields, we help them put food on their tables.

Among these growing fields is the food industry. That's where Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC's Triad Community Kitchen culinary training program comes in. Over the course of 13 weeks, students learn advanced culinary techniques and become experts in food safety – all while helping to produce meals for hungry Northwest North Carolinians. To date, more than 450 graduates have been placed in jobs.

Our work, and that of the entire Feeding America Network of food banks, extends beyond providing a meal today and next week. Together with our many supporters, we are investing in our shared future – helping ensure that children have the nutrition they need to learn and that adults have the fuel they need to move forward in their lives so our communities can continue to grow strong and prosper.

The impact of our work on the lives of our neighbors in need can get lost in the numbers. We are proud of all that we accomplish together with our partner programs, supporters and volunteers, but mindful that it all begins with one:

ONE PERSON IN NEED.

ONE NEIGHBOR WHO CARES.

ONE COMMUNITY FEEDING HOPE.

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