



PRESS RELEASE
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President Obama's Newly Appointed USDA Under Secretary Visits Rhode Island Community Food Bank & Local Pantry

Rhode Island Working Diligently to Increase Access to Valuable Federal Nutrition Programs

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – During a recent trip to meet with regional USDA staff, Kevin Concannon, USDA Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services, made a stop at the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, as well as Bryan's Food Pantry in Woonsocket, to see, first-hand, the impact of federal nutrition programs aimed at helping families in need.

Nominated by President Obama, and confirmed by the U.S. Senate in July, 2009, Kevin Concannon plays a crucial role in administering the 15 nutrition assistance programs under the jurisdiction of the USDA – including direct responsibility for overseeing the SNAP program that helps nearly 36 million Americans each month.

Upon arriving in the Ocean State, Mr. Concannon visited Bryan's Food Pantry in Woonsocket – a member agency program of the Food Bank's network. Each Thursday, Bryan's Food Pantry serves individuals and families in need, regularly helping more than 100 Woonsocket residents each week. The pantry also offers SNAP outreach through Food Bank staff, thanks to a national grant awarded by Feeding America – The Nation's Food Bank Network, to encourage the pantry's clients to enroll in the program.

"I was pleased to see USDA Foods as part of the resources being distributed to people in need," stated Under Secretary Concannon during his remarks at the Food Bank. "It was equally reassuring to see the SNAP outreach and its impact. The SNAP program not only helps Americans in need, it helps the supermarkets and the trucking companies. It helps everyone with its direct economic benefits."

At the Food Bank, Mr. Concannon toured the 76,000 sq/ft facility that provides food to hunger-relief programs across the state. He visited with volunteers sorting and inspecting food for distribution and met students from the Food Bank's Community Kitchen job-training program.

The Under Secretary was joined by representatives from Rhode Island's Congressional Delegation, General Assembly and offices such as the Department of Human Services and the Department of Health. Those invited represented a wide array of key officials responsible for the state's SNAP, WIC and School Nutrition Programs.

Among the foods received by the Food Bank for distribution to struggling Rhode Islanders has been an increase in the amount of USDA product through TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) – a program overseen by Under Secretary Concannon. These changes also resulted in an average increase of \$80 per month of SNAP allotment for most four-person families to spend on groceries

"We have a commitment to our communities, and their connection with our programs that help so many," added Mr. Concannon. "Never before in our lifetime have we had this many people turning to these programs for help feeding their families. There is no reason, in the capacity of our country, that anyone goes hungry. It is a challenging goal, but an achievable goal," he finished.

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Currently, the Food Bank feeds more than 50,000 Rhode Islanders each month through a network of more than 300 member agency programs across the state. This rise in need reflects a 28% increase over last year.

The Rhode Island Community Food Bank is a non-profit organization located in Providence, RI. The Food Bank solicits, stores and distributes food products donated by supermarkets, wholesalers, food processors, local farmers and community food drives. The food is then distributed to the Food Bank's network of more than 300 member agency programs. In the past fiscal year, the Food Bank distributed 9.5 million pounds of food. For more information about the Food Bank, please visit www.rifoodbank.org

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