



## **Meeting Minutes September 7, 2011**

**Attendees:** **Lisa Roth Blackman**, Chief Philanthropy Officer, RICFB; **Stephanie Chafee**, Founder, Women Ending Hunger, First Lady State of RI; **Tracey Cugno**, Women Ending Hunger Co-Chair; **Mary Ellen Grosvenor**, Major Gifts Manager, RICFB; **Susan Gustaitis**, Johnnycake Center of Peacedale; **Nancy Howard**, LISC; **Maria Kasparian**, Edesia; **Leigh Reposa**, Board Member, Johnnycake Center; **Andrew Schiff**, CEO, RICFB; **Randi Belheumer**, RI Dept. of Health; **Becky Bessette**, RI Department of Ed; **Anne Connolly**, UNFI; **Catherine Cool Rumsey**, Volunteer; **Sandra Fabrizio**, RI Dept. of Ed; **Nicole Henretty**, Edesia; **Lisa Madsen**, RICFB Board Member, UNFI; **Eugenie Maine**, **Kelly Nichols**, Volunteer Coordinator RICFB; **Ming Lee Prospero** Volunteer; **Ellen Shalvey**, Sodexo; **Donna Walker Cindy Elder** Director of Communications, RICFB; **Judy Webb**, **Susan Wells**, **Leigh Reposa**, RI Student Assistance Services

### **Welcome**

Mary Flynn welcomed the group and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

### **Guest Speaker**

Becky Bessette, Administrator of Child Nutrition Programs at the Rhode Island Department of Education gave an overview of the school meal programs in RI, administered by the Department of Education, with funding from the USDA. Becky pointed out that 37 cities and towns in RI have stepped away from preparing their own food, and instead contract out meal preparation to vendors like Aramark, Sodexo and Chartwells. One district, N. Kingstown, prepares their own meals in house. Becky developed a new process for these companies to bid on food service contracts and she described the trial-run with Newport Schools.

When the food service contract in Newport was up for renewal, a group of parents, administrators, concerned citizens and School Committee members decided that they wanted healthier meals provided in the schools. This Nutrition Advisory Group (NAG) developed breakfast and lunch menus and asked vendors to bid for the Newport Schools meals contract specifically based on providing those healthier meals. The new vendor was selected based on their ability to provide healthier meals at a reasonable cost. The new menus have just begun to debut this fall.

There is an opportunity to influence the quality of meals in all Rhode Island towns just as they did in Newport. Concerned parents and citizens can get involved in the development of sample menus when contracts are up for bid, to insure that healthy meals based on the RI Nutrition Requirements are served in the schools. Kids First is facilitating the work of these District Wellness Committees.

**Women Ending Hunger members are encouraged to get involved with their prospective school districts and to advocate for more districts to take on the Newport approach to providing healthier school meals. To get involved with the Wellness Committee in your district, contact:**

**Karin Wetherill**

**Kids First:**

**P: 401-246-2666**

**C: 401-339-2524**

[kwetherill@kidsfirstri.org](mailto:kwetherill@kidsfirstri.org)

### **Legislative Update**

Rep. Maria Cimini's efforts to improve the Rhode Island Works Program were successful. Eligible work activities for families receiving RI Works cash assistance were expanded from a "work first" emphasis (requiring them to apply for many jobs with little chance of getting hired) to allowing parents to enroll in adult education, vocational education and training programs, like Community Kitchen. This approach makes much more sense, particularly during a time of high unemployment in the state.

### **SNAP outreach**

For the past two years, the Food Bank has received a \$50,000 grant from Bank of America (part of a national grant to Feeding America) to support SNAP outreach. Those funds are matched by the USDA for a total of \$100,000. We have used these funds to employ two SNAP outreach workers, one in Woonsocket and one in Newport.

This year, Feeding America informed us that we would only be receiving \$10,000. Because increasing SNAP usage among eligible Rhode Islanders is a strategic goal for the Food Bank, we wanted to maintain level funding with previous years. John & Letitia Carter offered a \$20,000 matching grant if we could secure an additional \$20,000 from other donors. We are happy to report that three donors, stepped forward and we have met the match. Agency Services is in the process of interviewing for the two positions.

### **Nothing Campaign**

Lisa reported that the Food Bank re-launched the Nothing Campaign on September 1. A couple of new things have been added to the campaign. You can now buy a virtual can and have your name put on it where it will sit on a shelf with others who bought virtually. Craftland allowed the Food Bank to use a space (pop-up store) for the sale of Nothing cans and other Food Bank items, including the reusable bags. Craftland is located at 235 Westminster Street in Providence. A list of other retailers selling cans of Nothing can be found the campaign website, [www.nothing.org/ri](http://www.nothing.org/ri).

### **WIC Volunteer Program**

Lisa reported that it has been challenging getting the program off the ground, as not many clients of Children's Friend are taking them up on the offer for help with shopping and transportation. We did have one volunteer, Tracey Cugno, accompanied a client to shop. Tracey said it meant a lot to the client. It was a challenging yet rewarding experience. Tracey also mentioned that the cashier was incredible with lots of patience and knowledge of the WIC benefits. They shopped at the Stop & Shop on Branch Ave.

### **Witnesses to Hunger**

Mary Ellen directed everyone to a calendar of when and where the Witnesses to Hunger exhibit will be displayed this year. See attached. **We will need help setting up and breaking down the exhibit at many of these locations.** We will email out specific volunteer times as the details of each event are worked out. If you would like to help out by picking up the exhibit, setting it up, or breaking it down, please call Mary Ellen at 942-6325 x271 or email [megrosvenor@rifofoodbank.org](mailto:megrosvenor@rifofoodbank.org).

### **Upcoming Events**

- Save the Date sheet attached
- Witnesses to Hunger dates
- Future WEH Meeting Dates
  - Wed. Jan. 25, 8:30 AM.
  - Wed. April 11, 8:30 AM
  - Wed. June 6, Wine and Cheese, 6:00 PM