



Meeting Minutes January 13, 2009

Welcome

Stephanie Chafee welcomed everyone and began the discussion following the screening of the Two Angry Moms documentary and introduced special guest, and the film's producer, Amy Kalafa.

Discussion/Q&A

Amy noted that there is both good news and bad news since the film was created. She said that a study has reported that the more healthful cafeteria food has resulted in higher attendance, fewer discipline problems, higher test scores, improved athletic performance and better behavior among the students. There is also a long term research study currently taking place at Oakland Children's Hospital. Amy also mentioned that she is part of a group that is forming a nonprofit food service company in Fairfield County, CT to try to bring more locally grown foods into their cafeterias.

John Magnarelli, USDA regional director, stated that improving school meals requires involved people at the local level, a school lunch director committed to the cause and a superintendent willing to back it. He also said that The Institute of Medicine is looking at new school lunch guidelines.

Dorothy Brayley, Executive Director of Kids First, stated that 32 of Rhode Island 36 school districts are run by one of three management companies—Sodexo, Aramark, or Chartwells. In September 2009 the nutrition standards for school food will be improved and 13 or 14 districts have already implemented the new criteria mandated in this act. In September, all districts will be contractually obligated by the new criteria which will include more fruits and vegetables on the plate and wider variety of them, whole grains, brown rice, legumes, a reduction in the amount of sodium and fewer processed foods.

She also noted that Kids First is working on education and communication programs to get children to accept the new foods being provided in schools and that parents must also work to get kids to enjoy these foods.

Get Involved—Advocacy for 2009

There are several ways to get involved with the issue of better nutrition in our children's schools:

- Contact your local Wellness Committee to see if they have begun to implement the new nutrition standards that will be required in schools as of September 2009. If they haven't, ask what they are doing to prepare for the rollout of the new guidelines/new meals for this coming fall. For more information on this, or to find out how to reach your local Wellness Committee, contact KidsFirst at www.kidsfirstri.org.
- In the spring, Congress will be reauthorizing the Child Nutrition Programs Act, which funds school breakfast, school lunch, and WIC. We will provide more information and sample letters to send to members of Rhode Island's congressional delegation later this spring, and at our May meeting. Our goal, which President Obama supports, is to increase funding for these programs, which will result in school departments having more funding available to provide healthier meals to our children.

2008 Status Report on Hunger & Food Bank's Advocacy Agenda for 2009

Executive Director Andrew Schiff discussed the Food Bank's 2008 Status Report on Hunger that was released in November 2008 and was included in your packet (you can also view the report on our website by clicking [here](#).)

According to a USDA report, approximately 11 percent of households in our state are food insecure. Andrew noted that one way to combat the problem of hunger is to increase participation in federal nutrition programs—Food Stamps, WIC and school meals. These programs are currently underutilized in Rhode Island, leaving millions of federal dollars on the table that could be spent in our local grocery stores or on school meals for low-income children.

Andrew said that he believes parents should be able to see what their kids are eating for breakfast and lunch in schools. He also stressed that schools need to be reimbursed for meals at a higher level in order to improve the nutritional quality of the food being served. Andrew also indicated that the Obama administration is in favor of improving the nutrition of school meals, and actually has a [plan to end childhood hunger by 2015](#).

Stephanie added that this year the General Assembly cut funding to the Food Bank by 50 percent or \$192,000, at the same time that more people need food assistance throughout the state. We have to advocate for additional state funding for the Food Bank.

Hunger in America 2009 – Volunteer Opportunity

Erica Hanson, Agency Services Manager and Kelly LeBeau, Agency Services Coordinator discussed an upcoming volunteer opportunity, the Hunger in America 2009 study, conducted by Feeding America. This study is published every three years combining the results of more than 200 food banks across the country and is the most comprehensive study of its kind. Forty of our member agencies will be randomly selected to fill out surveys. Agency clients will also be interviewed regarding topics such as annual income, employment, and use of government assistance. Thanks to the WEH members who have volunteered and others, we currently have enough volunteers to conduct the study!

Events Update

Lisa Roth Blackman discussed all of our upcoming events:

- Wine Down Wednesday at Flemings
 - Approximately 60 people attended this fun event on January 14, raising \$1,500 for the Food Bank.
- The Taste of the Flower Show, Wed., February 18th from 6:00—9:00 p.m. at the RI Convention Center.
 - Tickets are \$75 per person. The invitation and reply card pdfs are attached to this email. If you would like to attend the event, please contact Liza Gentile at lgentile@rifoedbank.org or 401-942-6325 x214 to purchase tickets, or visit www.rifoedbank.org to purchase tickets online.
 - It's not too late to sign up as a participating restaurant or caterer! If you have a contact at a restaurant that would like to participate, please contact Liza Gentile at lgentile@rifoedbank.org or 401-942-6325 x214 and she will customize a letter to them and send out a sign up form.
 - If you can help us by putting up the event poster at participating restaurants, or your local florist or gift shop, please let Liza know. If you know anyone that might like to attend the event, please forward the invitation to them, or send us their name and we will send them a hard copy. Thank you!

- Community Kitchen Fundraising Dinner
 - This event will take place on Thursday, May 7 at the Johnson & Wales Culinary Arts Museum.
 - Pinelli-Marra has already signed on to cater this event.
 - We will be holding a committee meeting within the next few weeks to discuss the general logistics of this event. If you would like to be on the committee, please contact Liza Gentile at lgentile@rifoodbank.org or 401-942-6325 x214.
 - We are also looking to include a high-end raffle with this event; a trip, jewels, a night on the town etc. If you know of anyone who may be able to donate a prize or part of a prize please contact Liza Gentile at lgentile@rifoodbank.org or 401-942-6325 x214.

Fundraising Update

Lisa Roth Blackman responded to a question regarding how the Food Bank is fairing financially during these difficult economic times. While we've seen demand for food go way up and clients of our member agencies seek additional assistance, Rhode Islanders have responded generously and our fundraising dollars have increased. This increase, along with several large, one-time grants for food acquisition and purchase, will allow the Food Bank to at least match the same level of food distribution as last year, if not increase somewhat to meet the increased need.

Closing Remarks

Stephanie Chafee thanked Whole Foods for providing the day's delicious bagged lunch. Jewel Gregson, Marketing Team Leader at Whole Foods in Cranston and a Food Bank Board Member said that Whole Foods is committed to educating people about natural and organic foods and to contact your local Whole Foods Marketing Team Leader to learn more about presentations they can do in local schools on these topics.

Stephanie also encouraged everyone to bring a few friends to our next meeting which will be Monday, May 11, 2009 at 8:30 am. This meeting will be devoted to the issue of hunger and health and will feature guest speaker Dr. Deborah Frank, Director of the Grow Clinic for Children at Boston Medical Center. She will discuss her research on food insecurity and child development. Dr. Frank is a pediatrician and Principal Investigator of the Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program that monitors the impact of public policy changes on the health, growth and food security of young children at six medical centers across the country.