6

GETTING TO THE CORE

OF MEDIA RELATIONS AND OUTREACH

HOW TO'S FOR MEDIA RELATIONS AND OUTREACH

The previous sections of this toolkit have mentioned a variety of tools you can use to conduct outreach for increasing participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This section provides the specific, practical information you need to put these tools to use:

- Interviews
- Press releases
- Pitch scripts and letters
- Proclamations
- Media advisories
- Calendar listings

The section that follows will give you the scoop on another very important communication tool — public service anouncements.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWS

Following are interview tips that you or your organization's SNAP spokespersons can use.

Before the Interview

- Know the reporter, publication/program, interview format, and audience. Go online and look up recent articles written by the reporter and ask your colleagues if they know anything about the outlet or reporter.
- Know your goal for the interview. For instance, do you want to publicize a prescreening event? Let people know about your 800 number?
- Know what you want to say. Review the talking points on page 14 of the "Introduction" section.
- Develop 3-5 key talking points to ensure your message is related.
- Jot down likely questions and appropriate answers.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

- Buy preparation time by asking to call the reporter back if the deadline allows.
- Establish an "interview atmosphere" and mindset. Set yourself up in a quiet room with no distractions and have your talking points in front of you. Do not think it's any less formal because it is over the phone.
- Use notes.
- For radio, speak visually — use words to paint pictures. For instance: "The number of hungry people in Pleasantville could fill the football stadium three times over."

TELEVISION INTERVIEWS

- For men, a dark suit and blue shirt works best. For women, avoid solid black or white, and busy patterns. Bright colors are fine.
- Sit erect, but not stiff, and slightly forward in the chair. Unbutton suit jacket when seated.
- Resist the urge to shout into the microphone. Speak and gesture naturally.
- Talk to the reporter or interviewer, not the camera.
- Keep a pleasant expression; smile when appropriate.
- Hold your "interview attitude" from the moment you are lit until the interview is completely over and you are sure the camera is off.

INTERVIEW DO'S

- ☺ Asked about a problem? Talk about a solution. For examples, see the Q&A document in the "Introduction" section on pages 15 and 16.
- ☺ Answer the question you wish they had asked. "Bridge" to a related point you want to make. For example:
  - ◊ ***Q:*** *Why are so many people going hungry?*
  - ◊ ***A:*** *It's a complicated issue, but the important thing is that people can get the nutrition support they need through SNAP benefits.*
- ☺ Speak in headlines. Speak in short, succinct statements that will make good quotes. Offer a conclusion first, briefly and directly, and back it with facts or proof points. For example:
  - ◊ *"SNAP has made big changes recently that make it easier to find out about the program. You can call 1-800-221-5689 to learn more about benefits and how to apply."*
- ☺ Speak clearly. Avoid jargon and bureaucratese.
- ☺ Be engaging, likable.
- ☺ Even if a reporter uses a negative statement or slurs, frame your reply as a positive statement.

INTERVIEW DON'TS

- ☹ Do not fake your expertise. If you do not have the answer to a question, assure the reporter you will find and provide the needed facts in a timely manner (please provide an approximate time to expect the call), or offer to assist the reporter in finding another source.
- ☹ Do not overlap the interviewer's question; begin your answer when the reporter is finished.
- ☹ Do not be provoked. Keep cool.
- ☹ Do not lie to a reporter. If you aren't comfortable responding to a particular question, simply say that you have "no comment." However, if you can, refer them to another appropriate source for the information or let them know you will find out for them.
- ☹ Do not over-answer. Short answers are better than long.
- ☹ Do not let false charges, facts, or figures offered by a reporter stand uncorrected.
  - ◊ ***Q:*** *Why would someone go to the trouble of applying for SNAP if the benefits are only $10 a month?*
  - ◊ ***A:*** *On average, monthly benefits vary from $86 per person to almost $200 per household. This additional support will help low-income households purchase nutritious foods necessary for a healthy diet.*
- ☹ Do not fall victim to hypothetical situations and "A or B" dilemmas.

MEDIA PITCH SCRIPT

What is a pitch script?
A pitch script is an outline of the key points you need to cover during a phone conversation with a reporter or assignment editor. You can use this pitch script to talk to a reporter before or after sending them a media advisory about an upcoming event.

How much time will I have to make my pitch?
Often you only have 30 - 90 seconds to make your pitch, so you must use them wisely. Practice your pitch aloud once or twice before calling.

Should I read from my script?
No, do not read directly from the script as you talk. The script is to be used as a starting point.

Where can I find* SNAP *participation data to use in my pitch?
You can find updated participation data on the FNS Web site at *http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/SNAP/participation.htm.*

What if the reporter cannot attend?
If the reporter cannot attend, ask if you can send a photograph or perhaps arrange a phone interview with one of your spokespersons afterwards.

PITCH SCRIPT TEMPLATE

Following are two examples of pitch scripts. The ineffective script does not provide the reporter with enough details to cover the event and does not present a case. The effective script politely asks if the reporter has time to talk and efficiently outlines pertinent event information.

INEFFECTIVE PITCH:

"Hi! I just wanted to tell you that Hunger Organization will be holding an event on Monday. The antihunger group works with members of the community to provide SNAP benefits and…"

EFFECTIVE:

"Hello, my name is XX and I am calling from the Hunger Organization. Is this a good time?" [Or, "Do you have a minute?" If not, ask when you can call back.]

"Because XX low-income elderly people in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] are living on the edge of hunger, Hunger Organization is kicking off a 'Benefit Bus' tour on Monday to help the older population in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] access SNAP benefits without the bother of finding transportation to a local SNAP office.

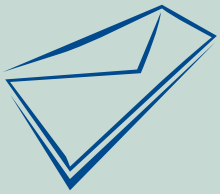
"This bus tour will span X days and X locations. [Have additional details handy, such as a media advisory, in case you are asked questions about the event.] SNAP outreach coordinators will be on hand to provide a checklist of all necessary paperwork needed to apply, and to conduct prescreening for benefit eligibility.

"I hope you'll agree that this is something you or your station/paper would be interested in covering. May I fax or e-mail you a media advisory? [Or, I have faxed/e-mailed you a media advisory about this event to provide you with additional information.]"If you have any questions about the event or our program, or need to reach us, my name is XX and my number is XX." [For voicemail, repeat name and number.]

PITCH LETTER

What is a pitch and what are some examples of a pitch?

A pitch is contact with a journalist or editor to introduce story ideas or other salient information. "Pitching" most often refers to media outreach efforts to obtain coverage; however, outreach efforts to place PSAs or secure partnerships are also forms of pitches.

WHEN TO USE A PITCH LETTER	
	A pitch letter makes the case for covering a specific story, especially a story that is "evergreen" or is not tied to a specific event and can be written at any time.
THE IMPORTANCE OF A PITCH LETTER	
	More than a phone call, the pitch letter allows you to outline what you are doing and why it is valuable. A good pitch letter (see template on page F 5) has staying power. If it doesn't generate a story today, it may tomorrow.
THE FORMAT OF A PITCH LETTER	
	A pitch letter can be used in a variety of formats — mail, fax, e-mail. If you choose to send a pitch letter via mail, put it on your letterhead. The points outlined in the "Developing and Selling the Story" section of this toolkit will also come in handy as you create your pitch letter.

PITCH LETTER TEMPLATE

Dear [NAME OF REPORTER],

Have you ever had to decide whether to buy medicine for your sick child or buy food? Have you ever had to choose between paying the heating bill and having enough food for dinner? Every day, thousands of low-income people in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] grapple with issues like these. But they don't have to.

There are XX people living on the edge of hunger in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY]. SNAP helps low-income Americans purchase nutritious, healthy food. However, only half of those eligible to receive SNAP benefits are currently enrolled.

[ORGANIZATION NAME] is kicking off a SNAP outreach effort in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] by *[Describe the activity you would like the media to report on, such as hosting a health fair or prescreening event, volunteering, distributing informational flyers, promoting events, etc., And be sure to use language to get their attention]*. The goal of this outreach effort is to ensure that everyone who is eligible for SNAP knows about it and is able to access benefits.

SNAP is a win-win for low-income families and individuals, as well as for the local economy. By helping them defray the costs of groceries, SNAP benefits allow recipients to purchase more healthy and nutritious food. These benefits also help local retailers and the local community by bringing Federal dollars into the area.

Given some of your recent stories, I thought you would be interested in learning more about our community outreach effort, and I look forward to speaking with you in further detail. I can be reached at (XXX) XXX-XXXX to answer any questions you may have or provide you with background information.

Best regards,

[YOUR NAME]
[TITLE]
[CONTACT INFORMATION]

MEDIA ADVISORIES

What is a media advisory?
A media advisory is a one-page document loaded with information about the who, what, when and where of your planned event — without giving away the entire story.

What goes out first, the media advisory or the press release?
The media advisory is sent in advance of a press release.

What is the goal of a media advisory?
The goal is to get your event on the media's calendars and planning books. Using your organization's letterhead, write your advisory in a way that will interest the press, without giving away so many details that they get the full story without having to attend the event.

How do I write a media advisory?
As demonstrated in the template below, begin with a headline that informs the media that something important or "newsworthy" is happening, followed by a secondary heading with additional facts.

When should I distribute the media advisory?
See page C 7 of the "Media Outreach" section for more information on when to distribute a media advisory.

WHAT TYPE OF INFORMATION SHOULD I INCLUDE IN THE ADVISORY?	
WHAT	As in a press release, the first sentence should describe the purpose or "what" of your event in a uniquely newsworthy way. Like your pitch, the media advisory should have a "hook" or angle to get the attention of the media.
WHEN	The "when" section outlines the specific date and time of the event.
WHO	The "who" section lists event attendees in order of prestige — for example, a State official would be featured before a local official.
WHERE	The "where" states the exact address of the event, and includes directions and parking information if necessary.
WHY	The "why" section provides background information for the media, including relevant statistics and a brief description of your organization. This section should also reference other resources, if available, such as a Web site, video clips or radio sound bites.

MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: [NAME OF DESIGNATED MEDIA CONTACT]
[(AREA CODE) PHONE #]
[CELL# or E-MAIL]

HUNGER ORGANIZATION TO LAUNCH "BENEFIT BUS" TOUR

SNAP Prescreening Events at Assisted Living Complexes Help Low Income Seniors Determine Eligibility

WHAT: A "Benefit Bus" Tour will hit the streets of Rochester, stopping at assisted living complexes across town to provide low-income seniors with information about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and help them determine whether they are eligible to receive benefits. This is part of an ongoing SNAP outreach effort by Hunger Organization.

WHEN: Tuesday, April 12, and Wednesday, April 13, 2005, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

WHERE: Tuesday: Baywinde Senior Campus
550 Latona Road
Rochester, NY
Wednesday: Gables at Brighton
2001 S. Clinton Avenue
Rochester, NY
** *For directions or parking information, please contact Jane Doe*.

WHO: Bob Smith, Mayor, City of Rochester
Dana Jones, Director, New York State Health Department
Mary Mack, Executive Director, Hunger Organization
SNAP Outreach Prescreeners, Hunger Organization

WHY: Hunger is an important issue in this community, and Hunger Organization is working to ensure that Rochester residents who are eligible for SNAP know about it and are able to access SNAP benefits.

As the cornerstone of the Nation's nutrition assistance safety net, SNAP helps low-income families and individuals purchase nutritious and healthy food by providing much-needed temporary help.

Visit *www.hungerorganization.org and/or www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach.htm* for additional resources.

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY:
HUMAN SERVICES COALITION OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

MEDIA ADVISORY
September 23, 2002
For Immediate Release

Contact(s): Terry Coble, Policy Director
305-576-5001, ext. 17 / 786-473-9936 (cell.)
terryc@hscdade.org
Daniella Levine, Executive Director
305-576-5001 Ext. 19 / 305-467-4015 (cell.)
daniellal@hscdade.org
Human Services Coalition of Miami-Dade County

"Measuring and Overcoming Poverty in Miami-Dade County"
Miami leaders announce a new campaign to help families achieve economic independence

What income does a family in Miami need to meet basic needs? What types of subsidies and supports are in place to help Miami families make ends meet? What is being done to help lift the earnings of low-income working families in Miami?

These are the kinds of questions that will be answered at a briefing to release a report on the cost of living in Florida and to kick off a campaign to help Miami families on their path to economic security.

The briefing will be held at:

10:00 a.m., Tuesday, September 24, 2002
South Florida Workforce Little Havana One Stop Career Center
3525 NW 7th Street
Miami, FL
305-643-6730

Briefing speakers will discuss:

- The findings of The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Florida report.
- The launching of the **Greater Miami Prosperity Campaign** and the **Food Stamp Outreach to Working Families** project to increase the use of the Earned Income Tax Credit and Food Stamps to lift families towards economic self-sufficiency.

Speakers will include:

Diana Pearce, Researcher and Report Author, University of Washington
Honorable Manuel A. Diaz, Mayor, City of Miami
Hon. Eric M. Bost, Under-Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Hodding Carter, President and CEO, John S. & James L. Knight Foundation
Peter W. Roulhac, Chair Elect, Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce
Daniella Levine, Executive Director, Human Services Coalition of Dade County
Maureen Golga, Self-Sufficiency Project Organizer, Wider Opportunities for Women

Sponsors of this event are: Human Services Coalition of Dade County, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, and Wider Opportunities for Women, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit.

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SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY:
COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM FOR MADISON COUNTY, INC.

Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc.

www.capmadco.org

Helping People Help Themselves

3 East Main Street
P.O. Box 249
Morrisville, NY
13408
315-684-3144
800-721-2271
Fax: 315-684-9650

112 Center Street
P.O. Box 384
Canastota, NY
13032
315-697-3588
800-280-4717
Fax: 315-697-3690

6 Cambridge Avenue
P.O. Box 249
Morrisville, NY
13408
315-684-7862
866-684-7862
Fax: 315-684-9940

Working Solutions
1286 Upper Lenox Ave.
Oneida, NY 13421
Located in the Wal-Mart Plaza

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 384
Canastota, NY
13032
(315) 363-2400

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Terri Granger
Outreach Coordinator
Phone: 315-684-7862
Fax: 315-684-9940

OUTREACH SITES SET AS HOLIDAYS DRAW NEAR

Morrisville, NY – Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc. in conjunction with Madison County Department of Social Services have set the following dates and locations for Food Stamp Outreach. Those who are interested in applying for Food Stamps, or inquiring about other programs, may do so at these locations.

Thursday, December 4, 2003
9:00 – 12:00 noon
CazCares, Cazenovia, NY

Tuesday, December 9, 2003
10:00 – 1:00
DeRuyter Free Library, DeRuyter, NY

Thursday, December 11, 2003
2:00 – 4:00
Hamilton Food Cupboard, Hamilton, NY

Wednesday, December 17, 2003
11:00 – 1:00
Brookfield Baptist Church, Brookfield, NY

Representatives from Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc. and Madison County Social Services will be available to assist all who are interested in applying.

For more information, contact Terri Granger at 315-684-7862 ext. 23.

Community Action Program for Madison County, Inc. (CAP), one of more than 1,100 Community Action agencies throughout the U.S., has four accessible offices throughout Madison County. CAP is working to alleviate poverty and empower low-income families in order to improve their quality of life. Driven by a mission that focuses on helping people help themselves to achieve their fullest potential, through identifying and building on strengths, CAP administers a variety of programs and services related to financial self-sufficiency throughout the population of Madison County. Last year CAP served nearly 5,000 individuals. For more information, please call 315-684-3144.

HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

TIP 1

THE HEADLINE - The headline of your press release should be as dramatic as possible without sounding exaggerated. Will your program affect the community in a big way? Think about what will grab the attention of a news reporter. Your headline will tell the news.

TIP 2

WRITING STYLE - The upside-down pyramid is a standard style of news writing. The broad base at the top of the pyramid represents the most newsworthy information in the story, and the narrow tip at the bottom represents the least newsworthy information in the story. This enables the story to be shortened by cutting from the bottom without losing the most important details. Similarly, when you write a press release in the upside-down pyramid format, you put the most newsworthy information at the beginning and the least newsworthy information at the end.

TIP 3

PARAGRAPH ONE - The first paragraph states the news or announcement and includes supporting information. Make sure you have addressed the who, what, when, where, and why of the story.

TIP 4

PARAGRAPH TWO - A quote often starts the second paragraph and delivers a major message point of your effort. It can state an opinion and add a human element to the story. Generally, the person writing the release will draft a quote to effectively communicate the point.

TIP 5

USE OF QUOTES - Quotes must be approved by the person to whom the quote is attributed. Quotes are often adjusted to respond to that person's concerns, tone, and style. Be sure to make the quotes conversational and brief; this increases their chances of being picked up and repeated. You should not quote more than two people. Quoting from too many sources causes confusion.

TIP 6

PARAGRAPH THREE - This paragraph contains more information on the event or announcement. You could include interesting and relevant facts that are a part of your main message. You can amplify your message with another quote either from the same spokesperson or from a different source. Be sure the quotes are conversational and brief.

TIP 7

LAST PARAGRAPH - This paragraph should tell the public what you want them to know about your organization. For example, how long it has been in the community and/or how people can contact you.

TIP 8

LOCAL OR REGIONAL MEDIA - You will be writing for local or regional media, so your press release should provide details about how the news affects your community. Your local news outlets will be more interested in a story whose impact is felt locally. That said, you should also provide some national context — like information about SNAP benefits, trends, and national studies.

TIP 9

ACRONYMS, JARGON, AND TECHNICAL LANGUAGE - Do not use acronyms, jargon or highly technical language in your press release.

TIP 10

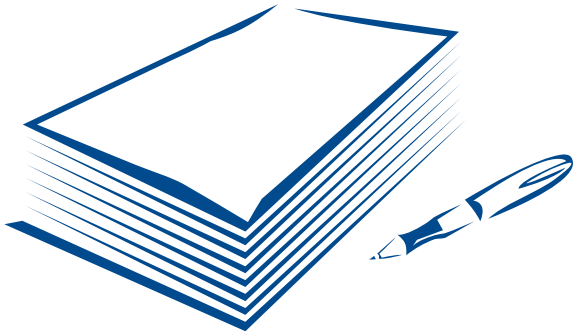
LENGTH OF PRESS RELEASE - Your press release should be to-the-point and a maximum of one to two pages. Few reporters will read beyond a second page. A press release is not the right forum to issue thank-you's and acknowledgements.

TIP 11

PROOFREAD YOUR RELEASE - Always make time to review and edit your release. Correct all spelling and typographical errors. Have someone unfamiliar with the program look over the release to see if the messages are clear to them.

TIP 12

LETTERHEAD - Print the release on your organization's letterhead so that it looks official.



PRESS RELEASE LAYOUT TIPS	
1	**CONTACT INFORMATION** - Always include up-to-date contact information on your press release in the upper right-hand corner. The contacts you list should be easily accessible; you may wish to include more than one person. Because reporters often work on tight deadlines and may need to reach your contact immediately, consider including a cell phone number on your release.
2	**PARAGRAPH ONE** - The first paragraph of your press release should include the city from which you are releasing the information and the date.
3	**SPACING** - To ensure ease of reading, use at least a space and a half or double space between lines. Make sure you leave enough margin space, at least ¾″, for reporters to make their own notes.
4	**FORMAT** - If your press release is more than a page, you should write "- more -" at the bottom of the page to indicate that it continues. You should also write "Page Two" in the upper left-hand corner of the page so that reporters can follow the release easily. Finish the release by inserting "###" at the end.

PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
[DATE]

1

CONTACT:
[Your Name or appropriate contact]
[AREA CODE AND PHONE #]
[OPTIONAL: CELL #/E-MAIL]

[HUNGER ORGANIZATION] AND [CITY GROCER]
KICK OFF "FILL THE CART" CAMPAIGN
Outreach Effort Underway to Educate [YOUR COMMUNITY] Low-Income Families and Individuals about Nutrition and SNAP Purchase Power

2

[YOUR CITY, STATE, DATE] – [HUNGER ORGANIZATION] and [CITY GROCER] kicked off the "Fill the Cart" campaign today – a major outreach initiative to increase enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Working together, the two will educate [YOUR COMMUNITY'S] low-income families and individuals about nutritious and healthy food which can be purchased using SNAP benefits. [CITY GROCER] has also developed a recipe book highlighting sample healthy menus and an easy-to-use shopping list featuring nutritious items that can be purchased using SNAP benefits. The recipe book will be distributed at local [CITY GROCER] stores, farmers markets and health fairs.
(Add specific details about outreach effort)

"[INSERT QUOTE HERE]," said [YOUR ORGANIZATION'S] Executive Director, president or spokesperson.

3

SNAP is a win-win for the [CITY] community – for both residents and retailers. Funded with Federal dollars, each $5 in new SNAP benefits generates almost twice that amount in economic activity for the community. For a household of four, the average benefit is about $200 a month. Research shows that low-income households participating in SNAP have access to more food energy, protein, and an array of essential vitamins and minerals in their home food supply. *(Add other relevant information on the event of announcement – i.E. Interesting/relevant statistics, economic benefit, EBT card versus paper coupons.)*

"[INSERT SECOND QUOTE HERE]," said [SNAP office contact, partner, or another key community leader.]

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] is community-based organization serving the [NAME OF AREA] community for 25 years. [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] raises awareness about the nutrition benefits of SNAP through outreach including prescreening events, cooking demonstrations and a toll-free information hotline. For more information about SNAP, and what you can do in [NAME OF CITY/TOWN] to help further [NAME OF ORGANIZATION]'s mission, call [PHONE NUMBER OF ORGANIZATION] or visit [YOUR Web site, if applicable].

4

###

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE:
VERMONT CAMPAIGN TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER (PAGE 1)

Vermont Campaign to
End Childhood Hunger

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Erik Filkorn
(802) 434-3331
filkee@gmavt.net

VERMONT CAMPAIGN TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER LEADING EFFORT TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN FOOD STAMP PROGRAM
Federal Research Grant Provides Funds to Launch vermontfoodhelp.com
Statewide Outreach Intensified

Burlington, VT—September 26, 2003—The Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger (VTCECH) has joined forces with the University of Vermont and the Vermont Department of Prevention, Assistance, Transition and Health Access (PATH) to create vermontfoodhelp.com. The site is the central element in a statewide effort to reach the estimated 44,000 Vermonters who qualify for benefits under the federally funded Food Stamp Program but are not currently using it.

"There are many misconceptions about food stamps that keep people from participating in the program, and we're hoping this website and our accompanying informational campaign can help overcome them," said Robert Dostis, Executive Director of VTCECH. "Vermontfoodhelp.com is a convenient and discreet way to help Vermonters to understand how the program works, learn if they qualify, and to simplify the application process for this important nutrition program."

The program is being funded by a U.S. Department of Agriculture Technology Research Grant awarded in September, 2002. The Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger has created a coalition of public and private resources to develop the website, informational materials for use in hundreds of locations statewide, and a public information campaign that will run for a year. The website was designed and built by Bluehouse Group of Richmond in cooperation with UVM. PATH will be tracking whether new applicants have visited the website, and

MORE

180 Flynn Avenue • Burlington, VT 05401 • Phone: 802-865-0255 • Fax: 802-865-0266 • www.vtnohunger.org

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE:
VERMONT CAMPAIGN TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER (PAGE 2)

(continued)

vermontfoodhelp.com
9/26/03
Page Two

will provide feedback to UVM on its effectiveness in educating potential program users.

"The Food Stamp Program is our primary resource for combating hunger in Vermont, and with this new website, people can learn about the program and its eligibility requirements in privacy," said Eileen Elliott, Deputy Secretary of Agency of Human Services. "Partner agencies and service organizations will be able to use the website as a guide in consultations with clients, helping them understand what their benefits might be, and what they can be used for. Vermontfoodhelp.com is going to help us qualify many more food stamp recipients."

The statewide campaign includes an effort to publicize the over 500 public-use computers around Vermont. "We hope that our outreach will help overcome the 'digital divide' and encourage low-income households to take advantage of the benefits of the Internet," said Brad Blackwell, coordinator of the vermontfoodhelp.com program. The site is intended to be easy to use and is confidential.

"While our primary goal is to increase participation in the program, the research component is equally important," said UVM Extension Nutrition Specialist Linda Berlin. "Through this website we can gain valuable knowledge about the barriers that prevent people from taking advantage of the Food Stamp Program. What we learn from this project will serve as a model as other states advance."

###

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE:
HUMAN SERVICES COALITION

For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Daniella Levine, Executive Director
Human Services Coalition
305-576-5001 Ext.19
305-467-4015 (cellular)

FOOD FOR ALL: A Building Block for Community Prosperity
Community Leaders Convene to Address Growing Problem of Hunger

Miami, FL – July 28, 2003 - On July 30, 2003 at 4:00 p.m. and July 31, 2003 at 9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m., local and national advocates will meet to discuss the growing dilemma of hunger in Miami-Dade and the country. The **Food For All** Summit will take place at Temple Israel, located at 137 NE 19th Street, Miami, FL.

The Summit is designed to bring awareness and attention to the South Florida community concerning the issues of hunger, poverty and health related concerns. Daniella Levine, Executive Director of Human Services Coalition of Dade County, a coalition member, observes, "Far too many people in the United States and Miami-Dade are going hungry or living on the edge of hunger. Improvements to and effective use of Federal nutrition safety net programs and enhanced coordination and innovations at the local level can address this situation and help ensure that no one in the community is forced to go hungry."

Food for All has been generated through the efforts of a coalition of community groups, including the Allegany Franciscan Foundation, Alliance for Human Services, and Human Services Coalition (HSC). Participants include Miami-Dade Commissioner Jimmy Morales, New York City Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum, Roberto Salazar, head of the Federal Food and Nutrition Service in the Bush administration, Ellen Vollinger from the Food Research Action Center and Modesto Abety of the Children's Trust. Virgil Conrad, Regional Director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, will present a signed proclamation to end hunger (Wednesday, 5 p.m.). This event will draw attention to the grave hunger crisis facing Miami-Dade County and the State of Florida.

Over a Fellowship dinner, the advocates will hear from those directly affected by hunger and helped by existing programs. After an evening of presentations to learn about the issues, the attendees will spend Thursday in smaller groups developing solutions to the problem.

The goal is to draw from Federal, State and local resources to end hunger in South Florida. According to Daniella Levine, "The community is coming together to develop a strong action agenda – together we can make Miami #1 in community prosperity instead of #1 in poverty!"

Founded in 1996, the Human Services Coalition of Dade County (HSC) works to empower individuals and communities to create a more just society by promoting civic engagement, economic fairness and access to health and human services. At the heart of these efforts is a belief that individuals, families and communities will be strengthened through increased public awareness and civic involvement in improving systems of care. HSC is a membership-based coalition composed of over 6,000 members, representing community groups, faith-based organizations, policy makers, businesses and individuals. For more information, please contact us at 305-576-5001 or visit *www.hscdade.org*.

WHAT IS A PROCLAMATION?

Who issues a proclamation?
Proclamations are usually issued by mayors, county commissions, governors, city commissions, State legislatures, and other public officials to recognize a local cause or achievement.

Why and when should an organization request a proclamation?
Organizations can use a proclamation to get more publicity when conducting events or outreach efforts. The timing is best around a major event or when undergoing a big media push.

How is a proclamation issued?
Your organization may submit a proclamation request. You may privately approach a mayor, State legislator, or city commissioner to sponsor your request. Provide draft language that you would like the issuing body to consider. That often helps to move the process forward. If the proclamation is to be issued at a public gathering, such as a city commission meeting, you may need to file the request a month or more in advance, depending on the rules of the issuing body.

What steps should be taken to issue a proclamation?
Once you have determined which public official(s) you would like to ask to issue a proclamation, it will be important to research whether any guidelines exist. This information can often be found on the officials' Web site, or can be obtained by calling a public affairs liaison. In many cases, you can apply for a proclamation by mail, e-mail, or personal delivery.

What does a typical proclamation say?
The language in the proclamation should be crafted to drive home key points about your organization, your special outreach effort, and the value of SNAP. The proclamation template on page F 18 can provide some helpful language.

What does a typical proclamation look like?
Oftentimes, a proclamation is printed on heavyweight paper and affixed with a seal and official signatures. Your organization can proudly display it.

PROCLAMATION TEMPLATE

SNAP AWARENESS DAY/WEEK/MONTH
[TIMING TO BE PROCLAIMED]
By the [INSERT TITLE OF LOCAL OR STATE OFFICIAL…Such as Mayor of/Governor] of
[INSERT CITY/TOWN/STATE]

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of the Federal nutrition assistance safety net, providing more than 8.2 million households and 21 million low-income Americans with nutrition assistance;

WHEREAS, hunger is a problem that affects families and individuals, including children and the elderly;

WHEREAS almost half of those eligible for SNAP benefits are currently not receiving the benefits they need, and [INSERT STATE/LOCAL STATISTIC, IF POSSIBLE];

WHEREAS, each $5 in new SNAP benefits generates nearly double that in economic activity;

WHEREAS, SNAP is modern, with benefits now delivered via electronic (EBT) cards;

WHEREAS, food retailers who accept SNAP EBT cards are important partners fighting hunger in our community;

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture and the State of [INSERT NAME OF STATE] are working to simplify the SNAP application process;

WHEREAS, the STATE/CITY/TOWN of [INSERT NAME] is participating in SNAP's national outreach effort by conducting an awareness effort to help constituents determine potential eligibility and inform them on how to apply;

NOW, THEREFORE, I (INSERT OFFICIAL'S NAME AND TITLE) do hereby proclaim (TIMING – DAY, WEEK, MONTH) (SPECIFIC DATE) as "SNAP Awareness Day/Week/Month" and call upon the community and partner organizations to celebrate with appropriate ceremonies to acknowledge these efforts.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand on this **[INSERT DAY AND MONTH, YEAR]**

_____

Signature of Official

SAMPLE PROCLAMATION:
FRESNO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS (PAGE 1)

Fresno County Board of Supervisors
December 14, 2004

WHEREAS, the County of Fresno is committed to promoting healthy eating, good nutrition, and active lifestyles; and

WHEREAS, in November 2002, the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) revealed that more than 2.24 million low-income adults in California cannot always afford to put food on the table and, as a result, almost one out of three of these adults (658,000) experience episodes of hunger; and

WHEREAS, the ranks of food-insecure Californians include not just the most impoverished but: working adults, the elderly with fixed incomes and many families; and

WHEREAS, food insecurity and poor nutrition pose substantial risks to health resulting in large costs to society through increased needs for medical care relating to obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, etc., and impede education and work productivity; and

WHEREAS, nutrition education and access to quality food improve health, education, and employment outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Census Bureau's 2003 American Community Survey indicates that Fresno County has the seventh-highest poverty rate of all counties in the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Food Stamp Program was first established as the Food Stamp Plan in 1939 to help needy families and a lagging economy during the depression era and was revised in 1961 with additional changes made in 1977; and

WHEREAS, the Food Stamp Program is the first line of defense against food insecurity and malnutrition; and

WHEREAS, fifty-one percent of all Food Stamp Program recipients are children and nine percent of recipients are age 60 or older; and

WHEREAS, the Food Stamp Program supports local farmers and Federal benefit dollars could potentially contribute an additional $88 million to Fresno County's economy, with an economic multiplier effect of 1.84, resulting in an economic gain of $161.9 million annually; and

SAMPLE PROCLAMATION:
FRESNO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS (PAGE 2)

WHEREAS, Fresno County's Department of Employment and Temporary Assistance has successfully improved business practices that resulted in a significant increase in the Food Stamp Program Accuracy rate from 85% in Federal Fiscal Year 2000 to 96% in 2003; and

WHEREAS, California's food stamp participation rate is the lowest in the Nation, but Fresno County is actively addressing access to food stamps in the County and has increased outreach activities that resulted in an 80% increase in the nonassistance Food Stamp Program participation from Fiscal Year 1999-00 to 2003-04; and

WHEREAS, Community Food Bank is undertaking a partnership with Fresno County, the Congressional Hunger Center, Fresno Metro Ministry, Foodlink for Tulare County, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Western Region Office and other County businesses and organizations to continue to increase County residents' access to the Food Stamp Program through widespread outreach efforts and cooperation with Community Based Organizations.

Now, THEREFORE, as the Food Stamp Program contributes to the current and future health and well-being of the people of Fresno County, Be It Resolved, that we the members of the Board of Supervisors do hereby proclaim the year leading to the 2005 holiday season as Food and Nutrition Access Year in Fresno County. We call upon the communities of Fresno County to work with State and Federal agencies to improve access to the Food Stamp Program to strengthen this region's people and economy and to improve the health of our county.

ADOPTED by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors this 14th day of December 2004.

Susan B. Anderson, Chairman	Phil Larson
Judith Case	Henry Perea
Bob Waterston	

THE COMMUNITY VOICE: THE EDITORIAL SECTION

What is the editorial section?

The editorial section is the section of the paper in which the editors of the paper and others express their opinions on important issues facing the community. This section of the newspaper is typically well read by key community leaders and decision makers who can help ensure the success of your efforts. Below are several tips for getting your messages and information on these pages. Keep in mind that the more you can tie your outreach efforts in to local happenings, the greater the likelihood of getting published.

What is a letter to the editor?

Letters to the editor are written by readers in response to an article that appeared within the past few days and submitted for publication in the newspaper. Keep on top of local news coverage around hunger, poverty, or families in need. This type of news coverage provides an opportunity for you to respond with helpful information.

What if no one contacts me about my letter to the editor?

If you have sent your letter to the editor and have not heard anything within a week, make a follow up call to check on its status. Be aware that editors receive hundreds of letters and may not immediately respond. A letter to the editor on a specific topic has a better chance of being published if more than one person or group responds. This is a good time to rally your partners and ask them to write to the paper as well; each letter, however, should be individually drafted. Form letters are usually ignored.

What is an opinion-editorial (op-ed)?

An op-ed is an article written by someone expressing their opinion about an important issue. Op-eds are submitted by community members. Editors decide which to print in the paper. Op-eds are an excellent forum to let people know about the benefits of SNAP because they allow you to share your point of view with much greater detail and persuasion than a short letter will permit.

What if no one contacts me about my op-ed?

Due to limited space, not every op-ed that is submitted can be printed. Most op-ed editors will respond to your submission within a week or two. If you have not heard back in that time frame, or if your piece is particularly time-sensitive, it is perfectly acceptable to call and ask about its status.

TIPS TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

- Check out the newspaper's guidelines for publishing letters to the editor, usually printed on the editorial page itself.
- Begin by referring to the article to which you're responding, including its title and the date it appeared in print.
- Resist the urge to say everything you know. Keep your letter concise and make one clear point. Refer to the talking points at the end of this section for useful language.

TIPS TO GET AN OP-ED PUBLISHED ON THE VALUE OF SNAP
• **Learn the rules.** Research the newspapers' specific rules about submissions, such as word count, before you start writing. This information may be posted on the outlet's Web site.
• **Make contact.** Call the editorial page editors of the newspapers and talk to them about your column idea. They may have ideas about the direction you are taking that will increase the likelihood of being published.
• **Use a hook.** Include a "hook" or catchy aspect in your piece. Has there recently been a news story about hunger that would make an op-ed on SNAP timely? Perhaps there is new data on local poverty rates, or a special event coming up that will provide a hook.
• **Use examples.** Capture the reader's interest with illustrations, anecdotes, and personal stories. These persuasive tools help explain complicated issues and bring the human element to your op-ed.
• **Stick to facts and solid arguments.** Avoid alienating readers with inflammatory or accusatory remarks.
• **Make a specific recommendation.** State your opinion on the issue.
• **Make a unique point.** Offer a new point of view even if the newspaper itself editorialized recently about hunger or poverty.
• **End with a bang.** Summarize your argument and leave readers with information, advice, or an idea they or the community can act on, such as a challenge to increase enrollment of their neighbors and family members who are eligible.

What is an editorial board meeting?

Most newspapers have editorial boards who determine the position that the newspaper will take in its printed editorials. These representatives from the newspaper meet regularly to consider those positions. Meeting with this board as a group or with individual board members allows you to influence editorial coverage of hunger and SNAP issues. As a result of an editorial board meeting, a reporter may be assigned to cover the issue, or an editorial may appear in the paper.

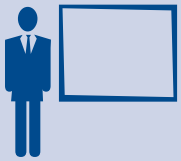
Also consider joining an advisory board, county board, or nutrition board, if one exists in your community. Look to this group of individuals to present hunger and other related topics to the editorial board. There is a chance there will be no immediate outcome, but the meeting will introduce you and your partners to influential individuals at the paper, and position you as a knowledgeable source about SNAP. These are important relationships to cultivate, so follow up with new information from time to time.

POINTERS TO SET UP AN EDITORIAL BOARD MEETING WITH A NEWSPAPER

- **Plan your timing.** You'll grab a few minutes of a board member's precious time in the same way that you'll get the attention of a beat reporter: a strong peg to a current news story.

- **Make an appointment.** Call the newspaper and ask who organizes editorial board meetings. In most instances, an assistant will either connect you directly to a board member or ask you to send a letter or e-mail outlining your request. Most papers reserve regular hours for the board to meet, generally between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. The meetings are usually held in a small conference room at the newspaper's offices.

- **Assemble a team.** Rally your partners. Assemble a diverse group to meet with the editorial board, with each person having different perspectives and experiences related to food stamps and hunger. Participants might include the head of a local food bank, a local grocer, and an elected official. Let the newspaper know ahead of time whom you are bringing.



- **Rehearse your presentation.** Designate one person to act as the spokesperson and introduce the issue (e.g., "Many people go hungry unnecessarily and aren't receiving the SNAP benefits they need. When people use SNAP benefits, everyone in the community benefits."). Limit your remarks to 15 or 20 minutes.

- **Leave written information behind.** After the presentation, the members of the editorial board generally ask questions (see the Q&A at the end of this section for helpful hints). Be sure to leave written information about your organization, hunger, how SNAP benefits can help and their positive impact on your community, etc.

SAMPLE OP-ED: URBAN JUSTICE

ANOTHER VOICE

Stamp Out Myths About Food Stamps

Program costs city nothing, helps in several ways

By Shelly Reed

It is a common myth that Food Stamps drain money from the economy. In fact, they do just the opposite. When people use Food Stamps in your neighborhood they are providing business for grocery stores, bodegas and markets, and they are fueling the economy and creating jobs.

So where is the money coming from? Food Stamps are funded by the federal government, not by local or state budgets. The money is out there, and if you don't use it in your community, then people in some other community will.

A recent report from the New York City Council, looking at the USDA 2004 "Funding Overview," estimated that the city could receive as much as $900 million in additional federal funds if all eligible New Yorkers applied for Food Stamp benefits. And according to the Nutrition Consortium of New York State, the city could be losing more than $1 billion in revenue per year due to program underutilization. It estimates that for every Food Stamp dollar used, $1.84 is generated in economic activity.

As of last September, only 54.5 percent of eligible individuals were receiving Food Stamps, and since 1995 Food Stamp participation by the eligible population went down 36.6 percent.

Also, Food Stamps, by providing a needed economic boost for individuals in danger of losing their homes, can prevent new cases of homelessness.

East Side State Sen. Liz Krueger says, "Food Stamps is a win-win for low-income New Yorkers, our retail sector, and the public at large, by decreasing hunger and increasing food sales." She further asserts that "the Federal Food Stamp program brings hundreds of millions of dollars into New York City's economy by providing money for food for low-income New Yorkers, who immediately spend the funds at local stores, creating jobs and generating revenue in the local economy."

According to the West Side Campaign Against Hunger, at the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew, located on West 86th Street and West End Avenue, only 37 percent of 9,000-plus households that came in for emergency food were receiving Food Stamps. That was during a time when the pantry saw both increased demand and decreased supplies of food.

Food Stamps are an underutilized resource for many reasons. Some people are embarrassed to apply, but food stamps are not a handout, they are an entitlement, and with the new food card, which works like a debit card, there are no longer embarrassing coupons to rip out while in line for groceries.

Statistics provided by the city's Human Resource Administration reflect that more than half of Food Stamp recipients in New York City do not receive public assistance or income from Social Security. They are the working poor. And there are a great number of these working poor, elderly and disabled individuals living on the Upper East Side and Upper West Side who are unaware that they may be eligible for Food Stamps.

By letting go of any negative perceptions of Food Stamps, we can encourage these individuals to apply. In doing so, we can improve both our local economy and the lives of potential Food Stamp recipients.

You can now apply online, at http://www.otda.state.ny.us.

Shelly Reed works with the nonprofit Urban Justice Center in the Homelessness Outreach and Prevention Project.

PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY CALENDAR LISTINGS

Newspapers, radio and TV stations, and local access/community cable TV channels often have time or space set aside for a calendar listing of public events happening in and around a city or State. This publicity is free and easy to obtain.

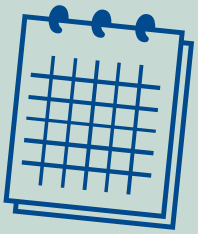
Most media outlets that have a calendar section assign a specific staff member — usually a calendar editor — to receive submissions and compile the listings.

Respect the media outlet's deadlines. A general rule of thumb is to submit listing information a few weeks in advance; however, it is best to contact the specific outlet to determine timing and preferences (fax, e-mail, U.S. mail) for receiving calendar information. This is also a perfect opportunity to inquire whether or not the outlet accepts corresponding images and, if so, what the preferred format is (hard copy, JPEG, TIF) and the resolution or image size needed.

If you are submitting a calendar listing by U.S. mail, it is recommended that you send a cover letter and listing two to three weeks before the event date. Remember to put your letter on your organization's letterhead; if you are submitting an image along with your letter, be sure to include a sample caption.

A CALENDAR LISTING SHOULD CONTAIN:

- **Who**
- **What**
- **Where**
- **When**
- **Contact name and phone number**
- **Cost, if any**



COMMUNITY CALENDAR LISTING TEMPLATE

[DATE]

Dear Community Calendar Editor,

Too many low-income individuals and families in [NAME OF STATE/CITY/TOWN] are not getting the food they need. In fact, [X NUMBER] low-income people in our community are at risk for hunger and poor nutrition, and many of these are children. Studies indicate that, nationally, about 50 percent of those eligible for SNAP benefits are not getting the benefits they need. Here in [NAME OF STATE/CITY/TOWN], [INSERT STATE/LOCAL STATISTIC, IF POSSIBLE].

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of the Federal nutrition assistance safety net. Today, the program provides more than 8.2 million households and 21 million low-income Americans with nutrition assistance.

To increase enrollment at the [STATE/LOCAL] level, [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] has embarked on a major outreach effort to help low-income individuals and families learn about their eligibility for SNAP benefits and how to apply. On [DATE AND TIME], [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will be [EVENT INFORMATION DETAILS] at [LOCATION].

Please include the following notice in your community calendar listing. If you have any questions about our program, please contact me at [PHONE NUMBER].

Thank you.

[CONTACT NAME]
[NAME OF ORGANIZATION]

SAMPLE COMMUNITY CALENDAR LISTING:
FARMER'S MARKET GENERIC

SNAP Prescreening at Farmer's Market
Millions of low-income people are eligible to receive SNAP benefits, but only about half are enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Community Partnership will be conducting SNAP eligibility prescreening at the Farmer's Market on Wednesday, September 23, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., to help interested persons determine whether they qualify for SNAP. Stop by to learn more about the program. A few minutes of your time can help put healthy and nutritious food on your table. For more information, please call (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

SAMPLE COMMUNITY CALENDAR LISTING:
PROJECT BREAD

WATERTOWN TAB on TOWNONLINE.com & PRESS

Food assistance for seniors
Are you struggling to put food on the table? Elderly and disabled people are able to apply for SNAP benefits by mail. And recent changes have increased the benefit level for many Social Security recipients.

Call Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline at 800-645-8333, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., to see if you are eligible for SNAP benefits or find out about other food resources in the community. Bilginual staff are available. Or visit *www.getting-foodstamps.org.*