Hunger Council of the Lamoille Valley Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: January 19, 2017

Present: Rick Aupperlee (Laraway Youth and Family Services), Sara Babcock (Lamoille Community Food Share), Chris Dalley (Vermont DCF - Economic Services Division), Amanda Densmore (Vermont Department of Health), Will Eberle (Vermont Agency of Human Services), Leah Hollenberger (Copley Hospital), Kevin Kelley (Community Health Services of Lamoille Valley), Art Mathisen (Copley Hospital), Corey Perpall (Community Health Services of Lamoille Valley), Carole Pomeroy (Vermont DCF - Economic Services Division), Julia Scheier (Salvation Farms), Meredith Scott (Children’s Literacy Foundation), Valerie Valcour (Vermont Department of Health), Kim Wojnar (NOFA-VT)

Chairs: Susan Bartlett (former Vermont Agency of Human Services), Scott Johnson (Lamoille Family Center)

Hunger Free Vermont Staff Present: Drake Turner and Jenna Banning

Welcome and Updates:
Attendees shared updates on anti-hunger initiatives taking place at their organization and in their communities.

Member Announcements:
- Sara Babcock (Lamoille Community Food Share) - Sara shared that the Food Share has been receiving a lot of food from a local supermarket. As Act 148 (the Universal Recycling Law) is being rolled out, food stores are changing their food handling procedures and diverting more food to local food pantries.
- Meredith Scott (Children’s Literacy Foundation) - Meredith is the Program Director for CLiF. She shared that CLiF is using a community-building grant in the Morrisville school to connect students with other groups. For example, students are working with the local Meals on Wheels on a senior reading program. Action: Contact Meredith Scott at Meredith@clifonline.org with suggestions on other ways to get students involved in positive community work.
- Julia Scheier (Salvation Farms) - Salvation Farms is working with an intern from the University of Vermont to create a data sheet on the nutritional value of gleaned foods.
- Susan Bartlett - Susan described the breakfast program held at the First Congregational Church of Morrisville every weekday morning. Volunteers cook the breakfast, which is made of mostly donated foods. So far, over 5,000 breakfasts have been served, as well as over 700 snack bags for children.
- Drake Turner (Hunger Free Vermont) - Drake shared outreach materials on the Earned Income Tax Credit for Council members to share with their clients and networks. If a family or individual receives the EITC, they are also eligible for 3SquaresVT, and Drake would like the Council to help spread the message that this connection and opportunity exists.
- Jenna Banning (Hunger Free Vermont) – Jenna briefly reviewed the letters being sent to all Vermont state representatives and Governor Scott on behalf of the Hunger Councils of Vermont. These letters were drafted by Faye Conte, Hunger Free Vermont’s Advocacy Director, and reviewed by the Co-Chairs of the 10 Hunger Councils. The letters have since been sent and are now being followed up with action items.

Action Steps & Handouts:

Handouts:
Visit the Vermont Foodhelp website for EITC information and promotional materials at http://vermontfoodhelp.com/eitc
been sent out to all Hunger Council members so they can review the letter and have the option to “opt-out” of having either their name and/or organization listed on the letter. Hunger Council Co-Chairs will be sending the letters to their local legislators, and Hunger Free Vermont will send the letter to Gov. Scott on behalf of all Hunger Councils.

### Understanding the Connection between Health and Hunger

Hunger and food insecurity have many effects on an individual’s and community’s health. Council members heard from a panel of local health experts on how they see this connection in their clients and communities.

**Susan Bartlett** introduced the topic with a challenge to the group of ending hunger and malnutrition in the Lamoille Valley by the end of 2017.

Amanda Densmore (Vermont Department of Health) - Amanda presented an overview of the 3-4-50 campaign, which was created by the Vermont Department of Health as a framework to understand chronic health conditions in the state. (See attached powerpoint)

3-4-50 represents the 3 behaviors that lead to 4 conditions that cause over 50% of all deaths in Vermont. Amanda reminded the Council that while treating chronic disease is very expensive, taking a proactive community health approach is much more effective and affordable. She presented slides of chronic health conditions across Vermont and in the Lamoille Valley, followed with examples of some of the positive initiatives and organizations working in the region.

*The Council discussed the cost of chronic disease treatment, which equals roughly $2 billion in Vermont. Scott Johnson calculated that to equal roughly $400 million locally, and asked the panel of local health providers what they would suggest to shift the curve of rising costs.*

Corey Perpall (Community Health Services of Lamoille Valley) - Corey is the Community Health Team Manager for CHSLV. She would like to see a standard screening for food security implemented across a variety of services and locations in order to properly measure (and then treat) all who need assistance.

*The Council discussed the 2-item screen for food insecurity, which is being implemented in some primary care and hospital settings already across Vermont. Council members discussed the need to have adequate referral resources available if a person is identified as food insecure. Vermont 2-1-1 and the Senior Helpline were identified as two simple and effective systems for connecting people with resources.*

Valerie Valcour (Vermont Department of Health) - Val is currently the District Director, but is transitioning to the Chronic Disease Prevention and Emergency Preparedness roles. Val described an analysis and report carried out in the Northeast Kingdom on that region’s food system, and encouraged Council members to be aware of what resources and gaps are already present in the region.

Art Mathisen (Copley Hospital) - Art is the President of Copley Hospital. Art shared that while Copley is not currently implementing the 2-item food security screen, the hospital does work to both...
provide good nutrition for patients, and help them to understand how their food can affect their health.

Art would like to see a concentrated and coordinated effect made across the board to address nutrition and health, and shared that Copley just hired a case manager to help coordinate resources for patients.

Kevin Kelley (Community Health Services of Lamoille Valley) - Kevin is the President and CEO for CHSLV. Kevin encouraged the idea of assessing local resources and gaps, and felt that much of the needed information for such an analysis is already present in the community. Kevin also emphasized the importance of social interaction that many food programs (such as congregate meals, Meals on Wheels) can provide in addition to their nutrition.

Leah Hollenberger (Copley Hospital) - Leah is the Vice President of Marketing, Development, and Community Relations at Copley. She shared that the case manager regularly refers patients to 3SquaresVT, Meals on Wheels, and local food shelves. She also described a volunteer program at the hospital, through which all volunteers (regardless of need) are able to get free meals while volunteering. Some of the volunteers are not able to work independently, so they are paired with others, and thus also get the benefit of socialization. The hospital spends approximately $10,000 on this program annually, and Leah recognized that this meal at the hospital cafeteria may be the primary, or only, nutritious meal for the volunteers.

For others in the community (such as nearby Copley Terrace), the cafeteria meals are reasonably priced, and very nutritious. Leah shared that there is a new food services director, who is very good at integrating local foods, and working to get a composting system set up with a local farm. Leah described the Live Well Lamoille blog, a collaborative blog to share news on local social determinants of health and related programs. Leah thanked the many Council members that have already submitted materials to the blog, which has already reached over 4,000 readers in its first few months. [http://www.livewelllamoille.com/](http://www.livewelllamoille.com/)

Council members discussed the important role of school food programs in addressing chronic health conditions. Susan Bartlett praised programs like Universal School Meals and Breakfast After the Bell, which help increase both access and availability to nutritious meals for all children.

Drake Turner shared that since a key tool to getting Universal School Meals was adopted in Vermont in 2010, childhood food insecurity has dropped, proving that universal access to nutritious foods is effective. It has also improved children’s behavior and ability to learn - in the first year that Eden Elementary and Johnson Elementary schools adopted Universal School Meals, the principals reported that there were less visits by students to the nurses’ offices and the principals’ offices.

**Communicating the Connection between Health and Hunger**

*The Council discussed methods of communicating the connection between nutrition and health with the broader community.*

Council members discussed the fact that many people are not comfortable asking for help, which is one reason why it is important that any messages around nutrition and health be communicated across many different populations and mediums. At the same time, Council members emphasized...
that changing behaviors often takes a one-on-one approach, which can be aided through work with case managers and some workplace wellness programs.

The Council also discussed the role of stigma in food assistance programs. Art Mathisen shared his personal story of experience with receiving reduced price meals as a child. Art and Leah Hollenberger encouraged empowering the medical community to help patients understand the connection between food and health, as doctors and other medical providers often are able to have more personal, honest, and trusted conversations with their patients.

Meredith Scott, Leah Hollenberger, and others discussed the importance of education and public awareness across the entire community of the resources available and importance of the issue of public health. Leah encouraged Council members to use both tools and information from the 3-4-50 campaign and individual stories to connect with people.

Council members described some of the different cooking resources available in the community.

Council members shared some of the talking points to use in the community, including:

- Malnutrition is one of the social determinants of health that leads to 57% of deaths in Vermont.
- 73% of all adults in the Lamoille Valley don’t eat enough fruits and vegetables - this is true of all classes and populations, and leads to chronic disease.

Wrapping Up and Adjourn

Scott Johnson - Scott summarized some of the things that stuck out from this meeting:

- The amount of food being donated as a result of Act 148 is having a huge impact on food shelves and the food system.
- How do we get all schools in the Lamoille Valley to implement Universal School Meals?
- Would the 2-item food insecurity screen make a difference in medical care, and how do we set up the appropriate referral services?
- How do we communicate the connection between health and nutrition?
- How do we inventory the resources and gaps already existing in the region?

Susan Bartlett reminded the Council that ending food insecurity isn’t about helping just “the poor;” it’s about helping the entire community. It’s about creating a community in Lamoille County that is resilient, and in which it’s easy and socially acceptable for residents to access the services they need, whenever they need them.

Scott and Susan thanked the Council for meeting. The next Hunger Council meeting will be on March 23rd.

Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting: March 23rd, 9:30 – 11:30 at First Congregational Church in Morrisville