**Hunger Council of Lamoille County**  
Meeting Minutes  
September 27, 2012  
Puffer Methodist Church Morrisville

**Present:**  
Co-Chairs: Susan Bartlett and Scott Johnson  
Members: Val Valcour, Amanda Densmore, Greg Stefanski, Barbara Murphy, Rep. Linda Martin, Rev. Mike Ford, Michelle Wallace, Amy Davidson, Carmel Quinn, Rev. Doni Copenhaver, Beverly Lemieux, Sue Cano, Lily Sojourner, Sara Babcock, Chris Saunders, Urban Martin, Bonnie Hanson, Dan Noyes, Dawn Archbold, Kerri O’Halloran, Ed Oravec

Guests: Joyce Cloutier, Military Family Community Network  
Lorrie Dupuis, Community Health Team Manager – Blueprint for Health

**Hunger Free Vermont staff:** Jenna Whitson and Dorigen Keeney

**Hunger in Lamoille Valley**  
**The Data:** Dorigen Keeney reported on hunger in Vermont and the strength of the nutrition safety net in the Lamoille Valley. (See Fact Sheet).

**Senior Hunger:** Senior hunger is rising in the state and the nation because of the rising costs of food, fuel and medication make it difficult for those on fixed incomes. About half of the chronic diseases suffered by seniors are associated with poor nutrition.

While Meals on Wheels (MOW) covers the entire region, there are only three sites for congregate meals and those only serve meals a few days a week, if that. Statewide, only about 30% of eligible seniors participate in 3squaresVT. For seniors struggling with hunger who are not frail enough for MOW, there are few senior meal sites for them. We need to do better at enrolling seniors in 3SquaresVT and finding other solutions for feeding hungry seniors.

Funding for MOW and congregate meals (programs under the Older Americans Act) has been level funded for three years at the same time that the number of seniors has been rising significantly. There is much concern that money for senior meals will be either level funded or possibly cut under sequestration.

- If sequestration happens, Meals on Wheels could lose 40% of total budget
- In other states there is corporate support for senior meals – not in Vermont
- Sara Babcock (MOW) reported that they were doing all right with volunteers right now. Front Porch Forum is helping.

**Summer Meals:**

- Added 5 sites in Lamoille or a total of 21 in the region this past summer
- Still only reaching a fraction of eligible children in the summer – low-income children tend to gain weight and fall back academically when they don’t have access to nutrition and enrichment programs
- General discussion on how do we get the word out about summer meal sites?
• School newsletters, websites
• Flyers, posters etc.
• How do you reach homeschoolers?
• Front Porch Forum
• Flyer when they go to WIC? – do get the information as families graduate from WIC
• Information is available through 211 which links to HFV website
• Vermontfoodhelp.com website has a summer meal site list – not everyone thinks to go there

Child Care –
• Only 27% of child cares in the region participate
• Center sponsorship might help more centers provide meals

Other information:
• Scott – Among youth in transition, age 18-21, they are seeing an increasing rate of homelessness and hunger
  • On an annual basis – there are about 100 young people locally that age-out of the foster care system. At least 1/3 are high risk and that doesn’t count number of those that aged-out and chose not to stay involved in extended care.
  • Greg Stefanski – some also choose to transition back to biological families – important to address how they are getting food with their families.
  • Also, there are more and more children living with other families, grandparents, etc. and often don’t have enough resources.
    ▪ Dorigen – when a child is placed in kinship care but not taken into the custody of the State, there may be no funds to support that child. HFVT is hearing stories of no food in some of these households. We are trying to get the word out that these families may be able to get a Reach Up benefit for the child.
    ▪ Winter is coming and people will be making the decision whether to eat or heat their home
    ▪ Scott – High-Low project will be in Morrisville (evening walking tour coming up). The project is of photos of young people in their low moment of their life and high moment and a tape recording you can listen to of them speaking about these moments –

Reports from the Field: Hunger in Lamoille Valley

Farm Bill Update:
• Chris Saunders from Sen. Leahy’s Office provided an update on the Farm Bill – the bill will expire at the end of September, but we are not expecting major disruptions in nutrition programs. When Congress returns after the election, there are many different possible scenarios, but we are expecting action before the end of year to pass some form of Farm Bill. Sen. Leahy is pushing for the Senate version and Congressman Welch is pushing for the same.

Brittany Rhoads – Lamoille Community Connections
• The Bridge Program offers assistance with applications for programs and connecting families with resources
• They are seeing a lot of families who are struggling with lack of access to quality food. She has a caseload of 15 children – at least 13 of them qualify for free or reduced lunch
• For example, she is working with a family of 3, one child with special needs, denied 3SV benefits and free school lunch. The family makes just over the eligibility and her boys deal with nutrition issues: quantity vs. quality. Paying for school meals for both boys is a significant cost to the family who makes just over the income eligibility
• Partnering with students from Sterling to put together a program for educating to make healthier choices, and working with caregivers, caseworkers etc.
• They provide flex family funding but have had to turn down many applications because families make too much money.

Bonnie Hanson, CVCOA
• Have helped more seniors apply for 3SV this year. Still many refuse because of pride and thinking someone else deserves it more.
• Many seniors are eating poorly, for example ramen noodles, because they are cheap and filling and are easy to prepare. Some seniors can’t stand at the stove for long periods so end up using microwave dinners that are expensive and high in sodium.
• The Commodity Supplemental Food Program is available but doesn’t fit seniors: big cans are hard to work with and there are foods they don’t eat. The boxes are heavy, and many have a hard time with transportation to pick it up.
• Many seniors have dental problems. Dentures are expensive and not covered by Medicaid or Medicare.
• One woman went to live with her son and, because she was eating better, her memory improved such that she recognized her caseworker.

Joyce Cloutier, Military Family Community Network
• She is new to the Lamoille area, but has been working in Washington and Orange Counties for a long time. She oversees over 500 marines, national guard, etc.
• In Washington County she worked with 23 homeless veterans.
  • 11 were placed in housing, the rest were in shelters during the night
  • Outreach specialists hear from some vets that they want nothing to do with the system, don’t trust the VA (maybe had a bad experience)
  • Only 17 had visited food shelf
  • She provides food, Wal-Mart and gas cards
• Lamoille County, in the last 7 days, has worked with 4 homeless veterans, including 3 children. Two are living in the street and 2 living with friends, moving from house to house.
• Have had 14 agencies approach her – want to wrap around a guard family for Christmas
• Reasons we are seeing these high numbers of homeless veterans:
  • Loss of job or inability to get full employment
  • Don’t make the money they made when they were on deployment and have not reduced their living expenses
Barbara Murphy – a course hosted at Johnson State College Oct 10th and 11th – open to any community members who are in some way in support of military children – no cost Go to: www.militarychild.org Or call 635-1240.

Valerie Valcour – VT Department of Health

- The Health Department is focusing on the link between food insecurity and obesity and the link between obesity and chronic disease
- The WIC program is improving low birth weight rates and the entry into prenatal care increasing
- DOH provides technical assistance with the schools around helping schools develop wellness teams
- Youth risk behavior surveys showed that the statistics are unchanged in terms of obesity rates and children choosing vegetables (obesity rates had previously been increasing)
- Poor oral health is linked to socioeconomic status and has significant impact on health and hunger
- Healthy Community Design: Wolcott is the first town in VT to have a wellness plan (that includes school wellness) in town plan. People are invested in creating healthy areas in our towns – parks, trails, farmers markets etc. DOH can help with choices – helping stores and schools have healthy options to choose from.
- Healthy Retailer Project – 60% surveyed said they would buy fruits and veggies at convenience stores if they were available.

Amanda – WIC program –

- Since 2009 – have provided fruit and vegetable food benefits on a card ($6/month per child and $10/month for pregnant and breastfeeding women). In Morrisville district, there was only a 50% redemption of these benefits. The Department is trying to maximize usage.
- Discussion on why is redemption of fruit and veggie card so low?
  - Stigma of using card at grocery store – many stores have to separate the WIC foods from other groceries.
  - Only 5 stores in the County are authorized to accept these benefits.
  - Benefit is $10 for women and $6 for children – drops at end of the month – does not carryover
  - When the whole food package goes on the card in the next few years, hopefully shoppers will be able to mix their WIC purchases with other groceries which would help with stigma.
- Have a prevention team focused on reducing obesity – completed a 6 month survey of WIC participants – asked “what makes it hard to eat healthy?”
  - 70% had challenges: Most commonly reported was overeating, 2nd was that they can’t afford to buy healthy foods regularly, 3rd was too busy to prepare healthy food.
- WIC participants enrolled in 3squaresVT in 2010 was 54%, the highest since 2002
• WIC participation is down in VT and across the nation. May be because of the perception that, in hard economic times, people feel they don’t need the benefits as much as other people and do not enroll.

Ed Oravec – Principle of Morristown Elementary
• Over the last two years have improved the food quality in the school meal programs. Grant money allowed them to hire a professional chef and began to see a significant difference in what could be offered to students. Participation by students and teachers has really increased.
• Meals are all whole grains, salad bar, home-made, less sugar
• Unfortunately, can’t provide seconds on protein due to new limits on fat, calories and protein in the new school meal regulations.
• Working on ways to grow more vegetables and provide nutrition education
• Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program for snacks – also a way to introduce new foods to kids
• Morristown afterschool program is providing snacks and summer meals
• Not all students are taking advantage of it – still have work to do
• Q – How long is lunch period? 25 minutes - seems to be enough time
• Greg asked about the response from parents and caregivers? – the school has had positive feedback from parents – parents have come in to eat with their children AND response from students has been overwhelmingly positive
• Have you seen behavior improvements? Haven’t looked at data but do believe that combined with other techniques (play scape out back) is helping with overall environment and engagement
• Have you had challenges with new changes from USDA? Have an advantage because did not opt in to USDA commodity foods, able to go out and buy food they want
• Morristown not losing money on meals – finding other revenues to cover meal program
• Would LOVE to have community members join the school for lunch – just have to call ahead by 10am

Lorrie Dupuis – Community Health Team Manager – Blueprint for Health
• Group of healthcare professionals that get together weekly to talk about bridging gaps – making things more seamless for patients in primary care settings. They focus on people with chronic illness – but also work on increasing prevention to chronic disease.
• She is here to absorb information on hunger to bring back to primary care – and information on food/nutrition services.
• They do see hunger – issues with transportation, food quantity vs. quality – and the need for education of patients on how to eat healthy
• One of the medical students did some research – put together a packet about eating healthy on a budget for children with a high BMI: Pediatric Outreach program (POP). Involves cooking classes and exercise program as part of a healthy lifestyle and encompasses entire family.
• Dorigen – HFVT has developed an online tutorial for health care professionals on childhood hunger in Vermont. Dorigen will send out the link.

Council Projects/Initiatives for this year: Member sign-up
**School Nutrition**
- **Survey of schools** in the region – especially to understand how they are managing with the new school meal standards and what are the financial implications.
  - Each member signed up to survey a school.
  - Johnson state students may be a good resource to survey schools
  - Let Dorigen know if you want to sign up for a school
- Regional meeting on school food service to share information
  - Gathering regional food service people for sharing ideas/success – Sue Cano, Greg Stefanski
- Encourage community members to volunteer in school meal programs – Rev. Mike Ford, Rep. Linda Martin
- Schools to be drop off point for CSA shares – Val Valcour, Rep. Linda Martin
- Help schools access local foods through grow-a-row, gleaning, accessing “seconds”, and connecting local farms to schools - Susan Bartlett, Rep. Linda Martin, Greg Stefanski
- Back pack program – Beverly Lemieux
- Expand access to charitable food – mobile pantry for schools – Rev. Mike Ford, Joyce Cloutier, Susan Bartlett, Rep. Linda Martin
- Expand school gardens – Kerri O’Halloran, Rep. Linda Martin

**Increase public awareness about hunger**
- Includes: letters to the editor – Stowe Reporter, Hardwick News and Citizens, local weeklies – articles on local food/nutrition resources, disseminate information through Front Porch Forum and Facebook
  - Members interested in working on issue: Scott, Barbara, Michelle Wallace, Joyce Cloutier, Val
  - Local access TV program on the successful school meal programs at Morristown elementary and Laraway – Susan Bartlett.
- **Expand access to and improve quality of charitable food**
  - Use local radio to get word out for a more local food drive: Froggy 100.9 and WDEV (coordinate with Susan Bartlett on contact info). Joyce Cloutier and Michelle from FoodBank will coordinate.
  - Expand pantries to underserved areas – Michelle Wallace
  - Improve access to local produce – Michelle Wallace
- **Addressing Senior Hunger**
  - Adding fresh foods to CSFP - Michelle Wallace
  - Expand access to food through senior center meals, food delivery, CSA’s and/or connections with students – Susan Bartlett
  - Develop multi-generational meal programs – Rep. Linda Martin, Beverly Lemieux

**Hospitals and Community Health Centers as food centers** – Susan Bartlett

**Identifying and addressing isolation in the community** - Greg Stefanski
• **3squaresVT Challenge** – have people eat on the amount of money that is provided by 3SquaresVT. HFV is trying to get media attention and get leaders with some visibility to take the challenge. Encourage everyone to join: very educational. To register, go to: [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3SVTChallenge2012](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3SVTChallenge2012)

**NEXT MEETING: December 6**th, 9-11am

Adjourn

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jenna Whitson and Dorigen Keeney