9:30am **Welcome and Overview** - Patti Whitney-Wise and Donalda Dodson

9:44am **Field Hearing Presentations**

1. **Marianne Durkan, Chair of FISH Food Pantry**

   The FISH pantry was established over 40 years ago in Hood River by volunteers. It was first started out of an old restaurant, but has since moved around to various locations. It has been at current building for 14 years, serving many distinct communities. The FISH pantry currently has 2 staff people. Expanding has allowed them to move into communities that were not previously being served.

   They want to be more than a Band-Aid for their clients. They, also, want to look more into nutrition and education and search out more community partners. Currently working on opening a new food bank location on land that was purchased by a local church. This new property will include a warehouse, kitchen, classroom, and welcome room. When all is complete, this project will cost just over $1 million, but has been entirely paid for. They will be able to welcome our clients, children can read, and there will be privacy area to keep some confidentiality in the process. Future goals are to look into supporting gardening within the local community.

   **Observation/recommendations:**

   If FISH can raise $1 mill for building, could they also raise $$ for summer food and afterschool food program expansion? Staff at Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon (PHFO) can help provide technical assistance.

   As FISH starts to offer other services, encourage connecting families to SNAP, TANF, job training etc.

2. **Susan Gabay/Carol Mauser – Department of Human Services (DHS)**

   One in 5 people receive SNAP benefits in the state of Oregon. This program is meant to serve people who are the 185% poverty level. SNAP recipients average income is $123/month and 75% of all SNAP client households have some sort of income. SNAP is beneficial for the local economy because for every $1 SNAP, there is $1.79 spent in local economic activity. Many farmers markets have SNAP match programs. The State of Oregon has an online SNAP application, which is very successful. Along with SNAP, the Self Sufficiency program includes an employment program, which is crucial to ending poverty.
Questions: Do you have people doing outreach to the communities around SNAP?
Answer: Typically SNAP offices do not. They mingle with community partners and have good relationships with those partners. There are some small DHS and Family Service Centers in these areas. Libraries and meal sites are a place SNAP tries to market their services.

Q: Economic Recovery, what industries contributed to the bounce back?
A: Agriculture was a stable industry here and the service industry has been successful. The Dalles also has some large manufacturing (wind surfing and juice product) plants in the area.

3. Katy Chavez – Oregon Child Development Coalition (OCDC)

This organization is a migrant and seasonal head start. The families that interact with OCDC often come from agriculture backgrounds and are low income. OCDC connect these families to any kind of services they might need (i.e. SNAP, WIC, etc.). OCDC works within the community with people and organizations. They also offer classes for longer-term skills, like budgeting. OCDC also has services for schools children and it should be noted that the community grows by approx. 3000 during the summer.

OCDC has to address population increase during the harvest season. The office is serving families 5am-4pm Monday through Sat.

Because of crop damage, there will be a possible 30% loss. OCDC will meet at the end of April with growers and community partners, so that we can adjust to things like this.

Employees at an orchard receive housing as part of their work conditions. Families will come without plans, so OCDC works with them to find housing and work. The cabins that are provided have improved over the years, which has been beneficial for the families living there.

The families often are undocumented and there is often a language barrier. They are very quick to adjust. They are very involved in the classes we offer and they really want to get involved.

Observation/Recommendations:

Expand the April meeting to include FISH and other service providers to help plan for those coming for the harvest season.

4. Ben Zimmerman – Small i Farm

The mission of Small i Farm is to attack food security in our community. The first step of this organization was to survey the community to determine the level and the access of food. Secondly, interviews with all of the organizations
involved in the area were compiled. That survey just went out in March for the Gorge area. Results will hopefully help identify what gaps there are. A future goal is to get food security screenings at local clinics or medical facilities. (Example questions: Have you worried about running out of food in the last year? Have you run out of food in the last year?). The resources are pretty good in the Gorge, but there are some areas that are seriously lacking. It seems that there is a common conversation in the last couple of years that food security is a need and an issue in this area.

Continuing this momentum and activism in the Gorge (20-30 organizations in this area) is going to be crucial. It would be important to find one organization that can serve as a hub in this area that could facilitate the collaboration needed in this area. The medical community is one that is still being pressured to take a bigger role in food issues.

Getting more food and having more food access is great, but a bigger issue is how our culture treats and views food (i.e. how to cook, nutrition, growing gardens, etc.) This will go further than just giving out food boxes. Some people who are food insecure lack the basic things to cook, such as pots, pans, slow cookers, etc. Distribution and storage is also an issue in this area. If we had a freezer and a drop off spot right here would be amazing. The Gorge community is a bi-state area and engaging with those communities is important because they need to be included in these conversations.

Q: Are you working with the schools for school meals programs?
A: Not really. School Meal programs is a place that there still needs to be work. This might be outside the scope of this organization.
Comment: Schools are moving toward cooking on site more and more. If a school needs support, the Child Nutrition Program can serve as that support. Currently 30% of food in school meals is coming from Oregon. It is important to have those conversations that you feel are outside of your arena. PHFO has people on staff that helps with school meal programs, so we can be a resource to you.

Q: Doing screening with health care providers? Health Care Providers cannot code or get paid for that survey. Have you looked into that?
A: There is some movement to try to make food security screening CCO marked. There is a code, which is for hunger, but this code is not billable. Comment: Alternative payment methods are being looked into. Similarly to mental health, may things don’t get paid for, but as light is shown on these issues, insurance companies will start to pay more attention to them. If doctors find this to be important, just because they don’t get paid, doesn’t mean it doesn’t need to be done. Charitable food distribution in this area is coming from Washington, specifically a food bank in Spokane. Donated food it shouldn’t matter if it crosses state lines, it needs to get to the areas that it will most effect.

Observations/Recommendations:
Build on the CCO finding that food security is an issue. Help get hunger a billable item. Can the CCOs allocate money for mini grants for getting summer and after-school programs in place? A local group working with the CCO with TA from PHFO/OFB could provide some good results!

5. Lauren Kraemer – OSU Extension

Eating and what we eat is a very controversial issue. It is personal, cultural, and defines status in certain contexts. Lauren recognized her own assumptions when she began her work in the SNAP-Ed Program (implemented by the OSU Extension Service), assuming that people had a place to cook, knew what different vegetables were, and were familiar with basic cooking skills.

The Gorge is an area with deep economic disparities. The SNAP-Ed Program is able to work in schools where at least 50% or more of the school population qualifies for free/reduced price meal programs (in the Gorge, the participation range is 65-88%).

The SNAP-Ed Program delivers nutrition and physical activity instructions in kindergarten through 5th grades, using evidence-based curriculum. Each curriculum has its own focus, and we find that teaching cooking skills alongside nutrition messaging is most effective. We also provide taste testing whenever practical. We try to reach the parents or primary caregivers of school children, although there are barriers that make this challenging. In addition, we work with local food banks providing cooking demonstrations and taste testing using simple, healthy recipes from www.foodhero.org. The goal is for families to utilize the foods in their emergency food boxes to prepare the recipes that they have tasted. Food banks are great partners within our communities.

Other programs and partnerships to highlight include: Strong Women (OSU program for older women that includes social support); Food Preservation Programs (OSU); Veggie Rx Program (in partnership with Gorge Grown); Seed to Supper (in partnership with OSU Master Gardeners and The Oregon Food Bank); and healthy eating as a supplemental activity in addition to the TANF/JOBS programs (with local Oregon Dept. of Human Services).

Observations/recommendations: Continue to identify key partners to strengthen nutrition messaging. Promote more hands-on food classes in schools, if possible. Check on Farm to School and school garden funding.


Gorge Grown started in 2006, and heavily support the farmers markets in the area. Met with food banks and gleaners because of the farmers reaching out
and stating they had excess food. Research was done in the Gorge Valley to see where we were most effective. Our highlight is the access piece of food insecurity, which includes consumer education, farmer outreach and overall increase the supply and demand. Then a mobile market model was started to reach regions where there was very limited access. Some of the trucks are refrigerated, but they are too small to get a pallet inside.

Some of the successes have been the establishment of farmers market, and use of $5 SNAP match. Also there has been an increased the efficiency of sales including iPads and tried to engage with senior centers.

Some of the challenges have been how much to source and what to do with the extra food. There was a need to halt the mobile markets because of budgeting, but that there is a lot of progress still. Community conversations have been held to talk about gleaning and food waste and during these meetings many barriers were expressed by the community.

Some ideas that came from the community are a veggies prescription program, meaning health care providers will screen for food security and get prescriptions for fresh veggies honored by farmers markets and grocery stores, Willamette Food and Farm event model, creating more of a shopping experience for food banks and culinary students will help prepare meals to go.

**Observations/recommendations:** pursue vegetable prescription program with CCO. May be more SNAP match for farmers markets through SB 700

11:41 **Open Comments Period**

Jim Slusher– Community Action mission is to eradicate poverty. There are 14 sites in all 3 counties. Meals on wheels program out in the port area. Freezers and storage space is also an issue we have, but the backpack programs are effective. We cannot take all farmers donations (i.e. cherries). CHIP (comprehensive health improvement plan), health is a big issue in our area.

Susannah Morgan– If we get a call from a farmer that there is excess food, we will send a truck. We will prioritize the most local food bank first, and then the rest will go back to Portland, which will then be distributed out. Turn around is about 48 hours. Farmers ending hunger was created less than 10 years ago, in order to engage farmers to end hunger. Recognize that they have a role in ending hunger and food flows through the OFB network.

Rory – Teacher in The Dalles. There are ways that you can help us to help you. Educators are not invited to the table on these issues. We want to be here at the table with you. In The Dalles and Hood River, we have highly trained health and PE teachers, but we are very understaffed, and our school districts are suffering. We are continually asked to do more with less, and we need more support to increase support and allow us to be part of these types
of conversations. We need better budgets to run our schools. Help us help you by support the budget, and we need to help each other.

**Observations/recommendations:**

**Work to invite educators to the table: health and physical ed teachers particularly well positioned. Find out if evening or weekend meetings would work (or get school to accommodate)**

11:56am  **Building a Stronger Oregon** - Patti Whitney-Wise

These sessions allow us to get a lot of food for thought. The Task Force used to be a 1 person team and then Partners was created as a 501c3 to support the work of the task force. Both teams wanted to make sure people had food but also supporting family economic stability.

We want to build a brighter future together, ensuring all children have the fuel they need to strive in school. As we work on the policy level we focus at the state level on the economic piece. It should also be noted that SNAP numbers are going down, as the economy goes up. There is a boost in employment related day care. We want to see subsidies for day care and skills training for parents who are getting back into the job market. The earned income tax credit is another bill that we are supporting. Also, efforts to build more affordable housing and getting ride of the reduced price co-pay for families as part of the education budget bill. Fruit and Veggies bill (700) which will expand WIC and SFD is something we are currently working on. Along with a way to find additional funding to expand SNAP match programs and to expand Farm to School, which is now in ways and means. We were really doing well in the mid 2000s before the recession.

12:05pm  **What are the next steps?**

SNAP awareness, expanding program at FISH, prepare for harvesting family, work with CCOs to ensure they are asking questions around food security, and having resources to better the community. We will post our findings on the website and sharing with the local legislators all the information stared here.

Sharon Thornberry – we are going to host Hunger Free Communities Forum May 27th 9:30am-2:30pm which will be an active session. All programs and organizations around food security should be represented. This will be another opportunity to create action items and what should be done next to be most effective here in the Gorge. Washington should be invited because it is so similar and the river is not a wall.

Sarah Flynn – Oregon Hunger Response Day announcement for April 16th to rally in support of OHRF and TANF.