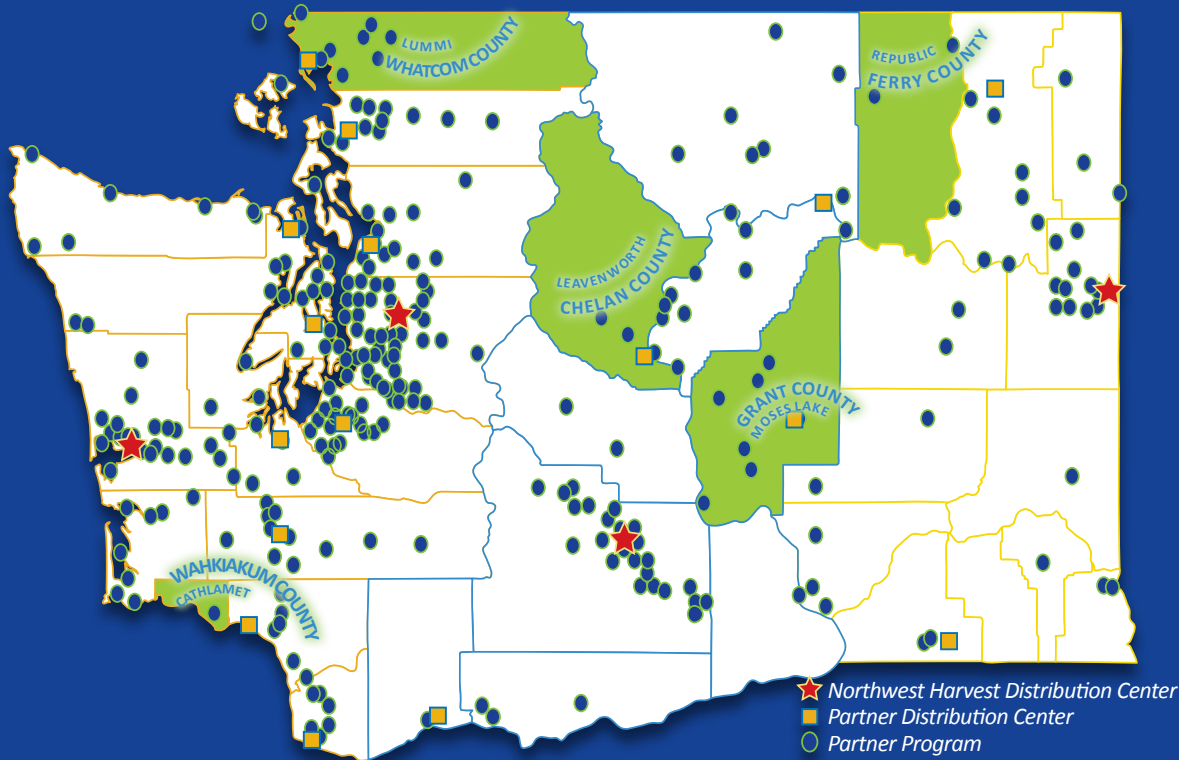


Focus on Food Security: *Connecting the Dots*

Northwest Harvest's Focus Group Report 2016

FEEDING OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED STATEWIDE THROUGH A NETWORK OF MORE THAN 380
FOOD BANKS, MEAL PROGRAMS AND HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS.



Focus on Food Security: Connecting the Dots

NORTHWEST HARVEST

Northwest Harvest is Washington's own statewide hunger relief agency. Our mission is to provide nutritious food to hungry people statewide in a manner that respects their dignity, while fighting to eliminate hunger.

Last fiscal year we distributed 34 million pounds of food to a network of more than 380 food banks, meal programs and high-need schools across the state.

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We are pleased to publish Northwest Harvest's 9th edition of *Focus on Food Security*, our annual report that features the voices of food bank participants from our statewide network of hunger relief organizations.

Each year we visit with participants from five different partner food banks and find that despite the change in scenery, the issues and themes of living with hunger and poverty occur in every community in Washington. The participant voice is central to informing our public policy agenda; our public policy advocacy goes hand in hand with our direct services, strengthening our abilities to fight and eliminate hunger in Washington.

In addition to visiting with programs in Republic, Leavenworth, and Cathlamet, we are pleased to feature for the first time stories from a tribal food program, the Lummi Nation Food Bank. We also returned to Moses Lake, one of the towns that we visited in 2007 for our first focus group report, to see what has changed since then for families struggling with hunger.

Northwest Harvest thanks the following partner programs, their

staff, and volunteers for assistance with the focus groups: Elaine Lane, Lummi Nation Food Bank, Lummi Reservation; Bob Mark, Community Cupboard—MEND, Leavenworth; Peny Archer, Community Services of Moses Lake, Moses Lake; Mary Dasher, Wahkiakum Helping Hand Food Bank, Cathlamet; and Barbara Coyle, People's Pantry of Ferry County, Republic.

We also thank the Wenatchee River Institute, Moses Lake Presbyterian Church, Cathlamet Public Library, and the Northern Inn for the use of their facility meeting spaces.

Finally, we are especially thankful to our focus group participants for sharing with us their struggles and powerful stories of resilience in the face of hunger. We present your words here and stand beside you in the effort to end hunger in Washington.



Shelley Rotondo, Chief Executive Officer

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Access previous years' reports at:

northwestharvest.org/Focus-on-Food-Security

INTRODUCTION

The stories that we present in Focus on Food Security 2016 were collected during the summer months in Whatcom, Chelan, Grant, Ferry, and Wahkiakum Counties. In total, 60 participants took the time to open up their lives and tell us about their experiences with hunger.

During these same summer months, Congress held hearings on the integrity of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly "food stamps") and child nutrition programs. A common question asked throughout these hearings was whether it is a sign of waste, fraud, and abuse that clients could get assistance from several government programs at one time.

The answer to that question is no and can be supported by the statements of any of our participants, clients from five different food banks across the state of Washington. "If you think you've got what you need for a good retirement—it's not," said Evie who lives in Cathlamet with her husband, Bob. "Both of us had to go on disability so we had to lose 10% of our pension, and because we were government workers, we don't get full SSI.

With the rising prices of food, rising price of gas, rising price of water in Cathlamet, we just can't make it without assistance. That's why we go to the food bank."

Like Evie, 1 out of 7 Washingtonians can't afford enough food for their household. Those who struggle with hunger are retirees, people with disabilities, parents raising children, and people who work several jobs but still can't make ends meet. They use the public and charitable programs for which they are eligible, cobbling together a fragile safety net because they have little choice in the matter: the high costs of food and other necessities, combined with cuts to safety net services mean that they have to pull together the resources that are available to them in order to survive.

Those who struggle with hunger are the people who are getting left behind in an economy that is on the mend and in a state where we finally saw our rate of household food insecurity fall below the national average (13.7% compared to the 14% national rate).¹ Very little has changed in the rate

of hunger for the most vulnerable, that is, those with less opportunities for higher income paying jobs:²

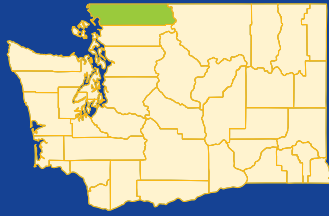
- 1 in 5 children live in a household that struggles with hunger.
- The rate of hunger actually grew for households headed by single women.
- Food insecurity disproportionately affects African American and Hispanic households with prevalence rates that are nearly twice the statewide rate.

Nutrition programs were designed to dovetail together, addressing different needs ranging from meeting specific nutritional needs at different developmental stages of life to exercising consumer choice as a means of stimulating the economy. Like our clients, charitable hunger relief organizations like Northwest Harvest also rely on a myriad of these programs: they supplement and strengthen our efforts to end hunger in Washington.

We invite you to read the words of our focus group participants and our policy recommendations at the end of this report, and we hope that you will decide to join us in our fight against hunger.



WHATCOM COUNTY



Population: Lummi—83,365;
Whatcom County—208,351⁴

Lummi

When you pull into the gravel parking lot of the Lummi Nation Food Bank, you are greeted by the sight of their delivery truck that bears the program's nickname: Commod Squad. It's a friendly reminder that in addition to donated and purchased food items, this food bank is the designated distributor of federal commodities through the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR.)

FDPIR is administered by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), providing food items for low-income individuals who live on American Indian reservations. Participants at this food bank who are enrolled in the program were generally satisfied with the food made

available to them: "I like the fresh fruits and vegetables through commodities," said Dennis, a father of five who has lived on the reservation for five years. "The cheese really helps," added Emily, a self-described "meatatarian" who has lived on the reservation for 18 years.

"If you get commodities, you can get enough food to feed yourself for a month—if you can eat that diet," stated Linda, whose favorite food is whatever fruit is in season. Linda explained, "I was getting plenty of food on commodities, but it wasn't meeting my nutritional needs. I had to give up commodities, but \$189 (in food stamps) doesn't go very far."

Federal rules prohibit participation in both FDPIR and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at the same time.³ This means that unlike their non-American Indian counterparts, Native Americans cannot use their commodities program to help bridge the gap left by insufficient food stamp benefits. "What we got in food stamps for a family of five was not a lot, and they were going to lower it," said Valerie, Dennis's wife and a California native. "We switched to commodities, and got a lot more food for our family," added Valerie, but now she and Dennis, who are both diabetics, struggle to figure out meals that can be made from the food that is given to them that meet their dietary needs and the preferences of their children.

The food bank helps with donated and purchased food, elevating its importance to the community. Leroy, a lifelong resident of the reservation, said, "The whole community counts on this place."

Yet the food bank is facing cutbacks in funding from the tribe, and the impact of those cuts is seen at the client level. Bob and his wife Mary Ann are seniors living on a fixed income. Their income from Social Security would have capped their food stamps at just \$16 per month, so they rely on the food bank but find it increasingly difficult to do so because of food shortages. "Sometimes we have to make a meal that lasts a few days, even in the summer because that's all we got," said Bob. "We don't eat three meals a day like we're supposed to do because we don't have the means to do it."

Many participants questioned the tribe's budget priorities since the food bank provides such an essential service. "This is a community," stated Linda. "Elders and children should come first."

Healthy food for growing children is a priority for this group. Emily worries about what her kids are eating when they have to cook for themselves: "I just got a job. I work from 1:30 to 10 at night. I was cooking, but now I'm working during dinner. My boys have to scrounge around. They eat a lot of Top Ramen."

Many families rely on the free and reduced price school lunch program, but sacrifices are sometimes made in order to provide meals that use fresher ingredients. Sunny attends classes at a local college and is raising a daughter who attends the local elementary school. Recalling what she prepared when she worked in school cafeterias, Sunny said, "Most of it was frozen or out of a box. I give my daughter half a sandwich, grapes,



GEORGE

"Churches have hot meals, coffee—I go to the one in town. Some places are rude. They say, 'Don't you got places on Lummi?' Certain places that do that make me kind of don't want to go back."

"The wages around here are just good enough for me to get paid, try to make it to the next pay day, but most of the time I'm broke three days after I get paid," said Emily. Participants in our group work and then do everything they can to scrimp and save in order to pay housing, utilities, and other bills for necessities, but still don't have enough income to cover the costs of living. Unfortunately, use of predatory payday loans was pervasive, an unwelcomed last resort to make ends meet.



Participants said that they used the loans to pay for necessities like a car battery (Linda), car repairs (Bob), and insurance (Dick). Besalyn, whose income comes from Social Security Disability Insurance and who prioritizes paying "bills before paying for food" said that she likes the loans for the simple reason because then "I'm not broke."

The loans have a very real cost of exorbitant interest rates and ruining a person's borrowing ability when there is a single default, but they also come at a cost of personal shame. Mary Ann said, "It hurts your pocket book. I get that pay day loan and it hurts. Then I have to stand in the food bank line, kicking myself in the butt. Put (money) in the kitchen so you don't have to get a loan next month."

Predatory loans take root when all other options are exhausted. "I'm trying to save, but I can't get enough money to build up my credit score and my car is almost dead," said Linda. "All my family is gone now. There's no one around who can help us out. It's really scary now."

and crackers. I'd rather have her eat that than processed, spongy chicken."

Richard isn't a member of the tribe but he and his wife are raising their four great-grandchildren who are members. He reports that his great grandkids also don't like the processed foods used in the lunches and breakfasts they get at school: "They'll eat the fruit and stuff like that, but as soon as they get home they're hungry."

The link between nutritious food and learning was emphasized by participants when we asked what they want their representatives to prioritize. George is 55-years-old and favors the

traditional tribal foods like deer meat and crab. He said, "Don't cut back on education—that's important too—but the food programs are real important, ones in the community here."

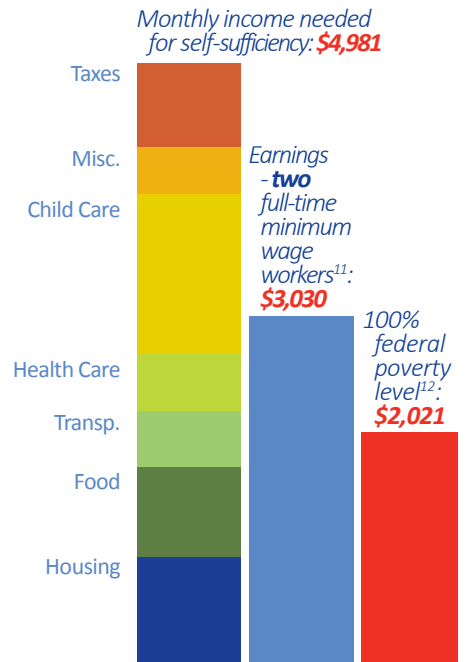
Richard added his concerns that tribal hunting and fishing rights have been too restricted: "Stop cutting back on hunting and fishing times. During seasons, they're limited to 2-3 days a month. You can't live on that!"

Linda reiterated concerns for food stamps and the food bank: "I would be very sad if we lost this resource. Our health would decline."

WHATCOM COUNTY:

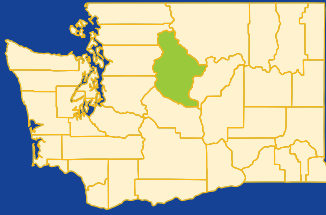
Unemployment (Aug. 2015) ⁵	6.5%
Social Security recipients (2014) ⁶	19% (40,555)
Schoolchildren eligible for subsidized meals (Oct. 2015) ⁷	
Whatcom County	40% (10,538)
Lummi Tribal School only	69% (185)
WIC recipients (2014) ⁸	3.5% (7,333)
Total served (June 2014) ⁹ :	
■ Basic Food (SNAP)	27,898
■ Medical assistance	8,398
■ TANF cash assistance	1,806

Monthly income needed for self-sufficiency¹⁰: **\$4,981**



Left bar of graph shows income for a family of four to meet basic needs in Whatcom County.

CHELAN COUNTY



Population: Leavenworth—1,992;
Chelan County—74,588*

Leavenworth

Nestled in the midst of the Cascades, it's no wonder that the town of Leavenworth adopted a picturesque Bavarian village theme to attract tourists and boost its struggling economy in 1962. The small town is now a tourist destination, but the boom in the tourism industry has meant increased financial hardship for low-income individuals and families who live and work here. "The cost of living is almost as expensive to live here as parts of the outer Seattle area," said Jena, who raised four kids by herself while living and working in town. "Food costs are just as expensive here as on the other side of the mountains."

Isabel, whose husband does seasonal work at a nearby orchard, believes

that the successful tourism industry overshadows the evidence of poverty in the town. She said through a translator, "People who come here from other places to buy a second home are not aware that a lot of people here are low income—very, very low income."

The residents who struggle financially are often the people who work in the tourist industry. According to Jena, "We've got mountains here, mountains there. They're getting paid minimum wage working at the Pass so they can get a free season pass. They're bunking together but they've got no money for food. They're definitely using Community Cupboard."

Jeff, a lifelong resident who takes care of his ailing mother full-time, agreed, adding, "There's 3-4 houses I know in town that have 6-8 young people living in it. That's the only way they can afford the rent."

Participants felt it was difficult to find affordable housing. Jena reported that at least 2/3 to 3/4 of her wages go towards housing alone. Housing assistance is available but difficult to get. Teresa is a grandmother, cancer survivor, and pizza lover. After waiting for over a year for a Section 8 housing voucher, Teresa now lives in low-income housing and still pays "at least 1/3 of my money" towards rent. Having Section 8 does not guarantee that one will find housing: "A lot of landlords won't take the Section 8

if it's not a Section 8 home," said Jena. "There's a lot of stereotypes: they think you won't take care of the property."

Some have faced prejudice when seeking emergency housing assistance. Rhonda slipped on a patch of ice and sustained a serious shoulder injury, putting her out of work for the first time in 30 years. She told us that soon after her injury, her son was injured, and she had to use some of her rent money to pay for his medical care which resulted in a three day eviction notice. "I went to the Salvation Army and got a lecture from her: 'Guess you'll have to check yourself into a shelter until you figure out how to manage your money!' Do you know how embarrassing that is? It strips you of a lot of your dignity."

Housing costs are even higher, thanks to the high costs of utilities. When the bills come in, Teresa said, "I just pay them, then I'm out of money." Jeff's solution to the expense is to keep the heat low and "wear three sets of clothes. Put more clothes on and more blankets on the bed."

Assistance is available from the town food bank. Jena said, "One of the wonderful things about Community Cupboard is that they have a program that will help you pay your electric bill in the winter."

All of the participants expressed their gratitude for Community Cupboard, but no one felt that they could get by on just what the food bank is able to provide. Many rely on food stamps to supplement. Jeff said, "Without food stamps, how do you get milk, butter, things you can't get through the food bank?" Isabel added, "With food stamps, I am able to buy meat and vegetables."

Participants felt that donations to the food bank were impacted by the lack of awareness of need. Jeff stated that those in town who can or will give



CAROL

"Do not cut programs for low income housing. For orchard workers, people on minimum wage, low income housing is extremely important."

Jeff is a Leavenworth "lifer." As he told us, he remembers when the Bavarian Village was called "Hobo Gulch."

After being self-employed for most of his life, Jeff now lives with and takes care of his 89-year-old mother. "I can't work—it's a 24 hour job. I can't afford to bring in anyone else to help us."

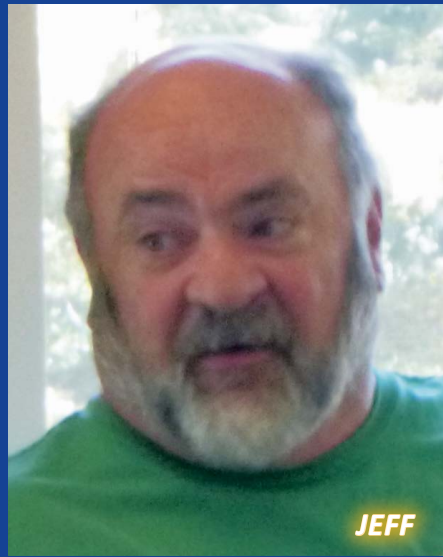
Taking care of his mother doesn't pay, and Jeff is a few years shy of receiving Social Security himself. His mother's \$900 monthly Social Security check is the sole income for the family. "Without the food bank or food stamps, it would be rough living on her Social Security after insurance and everything," he said. "That little bit doesn't go very far."

Jeff also helps take care of the younger generation: "We've got the grandkids three days a week," he said. "They've got hollow legs."

With so many mouths to feed, Jeff manages finances very carefully. He stated, "I'm lucky in the sense that my mother's house is paid off, and I'm living with her, otherwise we wouldn't make it." Bills are paid, but not paid in full. As Jeff says, paying bills is "a lot of juggling. Some get a little bit; some a little more. You just gotta juggle."

Some needs go unmet: "Some maintenance. You gotta keep the yard up, roof up, fix the leaks," he says. Entertainment is strictly not in the budget: "Stay at home or walk the dog—that's it."

In the end, Jeff and his family get by because of the ability to use several assistance programs to weave together a safety net: "The food bank, money from the state, and Mom's Social Security. It's not a lot. She'd be eating, but it gets us by."



"do an excellent job with what they do," but Jena felt that "people aren't aware there are a lot of hungry people here—people going without."

So with all the hardships brought on by tourism, why live in this town? For some, there is no other option. Jeff said, "Some people are just stuck and can't afford the gas. They can't afford to move." Jena

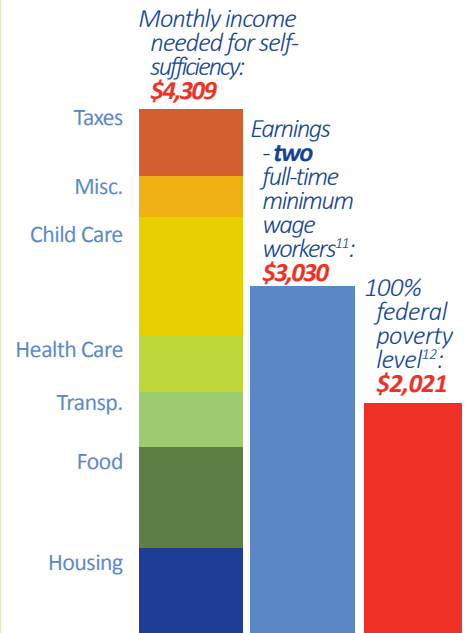
added, "This is where the work is. If you're able to tolerate the mentality of the tourist trade: it's exhausting, not polite often."

But Laurie who moved away then returned to Leavenworth four years ago summed it up with the simplest and probably the best answer: "This is my home."

CHELAN COUNTY:

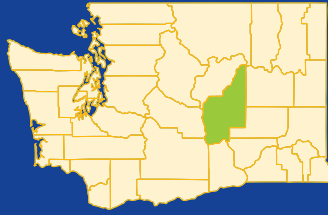
Unemployment (Aug. 2015) ⁵	5.8%
Social Security recipients (2014) ⁶	22% (16,280)
Schoolchildren eligible for subsidized meals (Oct. 2015) ⁷ Chelan County	56% (7,074)
WIC recipients (2014) ⁸	7.3% (5,415)
<i>Total served (June 2014)⁹:</i>	
▪ Basic Food (SNAP)	11,404
▪ Medical assistance	3,106
▪ TANF cash assistance	6,059

Monthly income needed for self-sufficiency¹⁰: **\$4,309**



Left bar of graph shows income for a family of four to meet basic needs in Chelan County.

GRANT COUNTY



Population: Moses Lake—21,713;
Grant County—93,147⁴

Moses Lake

The Community Services of Moses Lake Food Bank was featured in our first Focus on Food Security Report in 2007. At the time, participants' primary concerns were their inability to afford the healthy food they desired and their fears about how a poor diet contributes to obesity and other health problems. When we returned to this same food bank eight years later, we found a vastly different and sadder concern weighing on the minds of participants: the complete lack of services for homeless in Moses Lake. "I feel that Grant County as a whole—Moses Lake especially—needs to have a shelter," said Pam, who lives in a motel yet generously opens her home to strangers in need. "There's homeless women I've

seen at the food bank that are dirty—older women that really, you can tell they're sleeping in the bush somewhere."

"They sleep in the parks," explained Michelle, a mother who is experiencing homelessness. "You get in trouble if you're caught sleeping in the park."

"They won't even allow a tent city here," added Pam. "There's not even one of those here in Grant County, and Grant County is a huge county!"

Participants reported that people experiencing homelessness do not have a place to take a shower; using the post office bathroom is considered trespassing. Alena, a mother of two children, ages 11 and 13, said, "I just need a place to shower so I can look for a job. There's no place like that. I don't want to be scummed out. I don't enjoy being homeless. It's really embarrassing going in there hungry, dirty. They don't want to hire you."

"People just don't care anymore," said Michelle. "They don't want to help out." Jeweles, a single mother of two who gets laid off for three months every year when the Head Start program at which she teaches closes for the summer, added, "I took in four other kids. These kids had nowhere to be. Their dad was knocking on doors with all his kids, but no one would give him anything. It was the saddest thing."

Homelessness creates a barrier to healthy eating. Alena explained, "Not having the means of cooking things, I have to buy quick things, easy to eat. The food bank has a homeless package, but it's just like raviolis—nothing nutritional."

Everyone in the focus group expressed their gratitude for the food bank, but they also mentioned the food bank's location makes it difficult to access. "On 'The Base' is where all the low income people going to the food bank live, and it's far away," said Alena. The food bank is a 14 mile round trip from the part of town that has the greatest concentration of poverty, a long distance when, as Jeweles said, "We don't have the gas."

Participants also explained that the food bank provides supplemental food, but not full meals. Jeweles described it as "odds and ends," and explained, "It's a small selection. I'm sure in a big city there's more variety, more people to give you things."

Donations from the food bank are supplemented with food purchased using food stamps, but the amount of food stamps is insufficient. Michelle reported that she gets \$85 for her and her child even though they don't currently have a home, yet the thing she loves best about the SNAP program is that "my kid can eat."

Parents can further supplement what their children eat if they are able to access child nutrition programs like the school lunch program, summer meals, and WIC. Many of the women in our focus group used WIC when their children were small. Toni, a Moses Lake resident since 2001, said, "When I used it, I thought it was a really good program because it helped a lot. It's not a substitute (for SNAP), but it helps not having to use food stamps that often. It would help portion it out."



"I used to work all the time, then I had a 6 week bypass. I need food stamps. It kind of helps when I'm used to working. To go from doing all that to very little? It helps."

"You'd be amazed by how many homeless people there are in Moses Lake," said Alena, a mother of two children who came to Moses Lake 20 years ago. At the time of our focus group, Alena was experiencing homelessness after having lost her job.

Before she became homeless, Alena prided herself on feeding her children healthy foods: "It was a special treat if my kids got soda. My kids still don't have cavities." She could also cook affordable but balanced meals for her family: "I would buy meats and vegetables so I could make stews but that was when I had a roof over my head so I could store stuff."

The local food bank provides boxes specially tailored for the needs of homeless participants, but healthy foods aren't necessarily portable or ready to eat. Alena described a typical box: "You get two cans of ravioli soup, crackers, a little stick of beef jerky."

"I had chili dogs for my Thanksgiving dinner," she added. "Be grateful for what they give you."

Alena was grateful because this food was one of the only services available for homeless residents: "I even went to the police station in the winter time when it was snowing to ask for a voucher for a motel. They told me to sleep between buildings 'cause it's warmer."

"I don't want to be homeless forever," said Alena, but without services that provide for her basic needs for a place to sleep and shower, the only way to escape homelessness is to have the luck to afford the means to escape from the town itself. "I'm getting out of this town, going somewhere with better opportunities," she declared. "I have to go somewhere else for the means to survive. I'm not living right now—I'm surviving."



ALENA

Unfortunately, the high cost of gas and too little income can be a barrier to accessing free meals for kids during the summer. Jeweles said, "We can't get all the way over there: my car broke down, and we can't walk—it's a long ways."

Participants called on their elected officials to protect food assistance programs, support services for kids and youth, and services for people experiencing homelessness: "Don't take the food program—food bank or food stamps,"

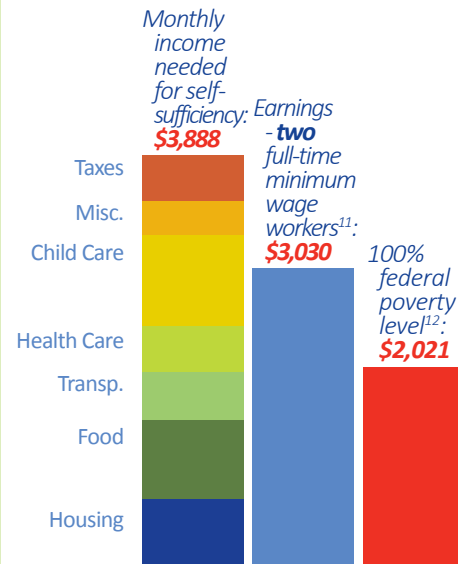
said Jeweles. "Head Start—it is amazing for little kids to go to kindergarten. Their parents are already working so hard. Taking it away would cause more pain and trauma in the community."

Jim volunteers at meals programs, including one operated by his church. He added, "There are people out there not working—I think they should be, but who am I to say? They should be able to eat and clean up."

GRANT COUNTY:

Unemployment (Aug. 2015) ⁵	5.0%
Social Security recipients (2014) ⁶	17% (15,380)
Schoolchildren eligible for subsidized meals (Oct. 2015) ⁷	68% (13,546)
Grant County	
WIC recipients (2014) ⁸	9.3% (8,704)
Total served (June 2014) ⁹ :	
▪ Basic Food (SNAP)	19,356
▪ Medical assistance	4,151
▪ TANF cash assistance	1,188

Monthly income needed for self-sufficiency¹⁰: **\$3,888**



Left bar of graph shows income for a family of four to meet basic needs in Grant county.

WAHKIAKUM COUNTY



Population: Cathlamet—538;
Wahkiakum County—4,067⁴

Cathlamet

On the rocky banks of the Columbia River sits the small town of Cathlamet. Stroll along Main Street and you'll find a handful of restaurants and stores, a pharmacy, and a small grocery store.

Having a grocery store in town is valued for its proximity in times of necessity, but without competition to drive down prices, low-income shoppers can't afford to shop there. Their best option for bargain shopping is to drive 20 miles away to the nearest big town of Longview. The distance is a barrier to accessing affordable food and that can feel isolating: "I'm at poverty level. I go to food banks—all three of them," said Heidi, who moved from Port Townsend four years ago. "I'm on the SNAP program, and I have a garden, and

sometimes I don't have food. It's scary." If you can't afford the trip to Longview, then you try to do what you can with local resources. Evie and her husband Bob are retired government workers. They rely on the food bank, supplemented by food stamps. Food bank clients are limited to just one visit per month. Evie said, "I stretch it out over the month. Sometimes when we get in the middle of the month, someone at the senior center hands me a zucchini. I make zucchini relish and zucchini bread. When I cook a chicken, I make broth. I don't throw anything away."

In general, our focus group participants could make their food bank allotments last between 4 days to up to two weeks. Jeff is a former corrections officer who lives with his daughter and her boyfriend. He said, "It could be more (food) to get to the end of the month. You're like, 'God, am I going to have enough to eat?'"

For some participants, food bank supplies don't last very long because they are limited in what items they can safely eat. "Our biggest problem is health because of his allergies, and I have a few food allergies too," said Minette, a cancer survivor who moved here with her husband, Ryan, from Texas. "The cheapest, most prolific foods always end up on the allergy scale," added Ryan.

The Helping Hands Food Bank has tried to be responsive, offering alternatives.

"The rice pasta has been very helpful," explained Minette. "They got me the soy granules," added Kit, who was diagnosed with gout. "Joy has gotten me recipes. I mix together and I have a pretend hamburger."

The food stamp program is a vital supplement, making nutritious food more affordable to fill in for what food banks can't supply. "SNAP benefits help provide what you can't get at the food bank, and I'm grateful for that," said Derek, who has lived in Wahkiakum County for most of his 32 years. By using SNAP to round out what he could get from food banks, Derek was also able to shift his limited income to pay for other necessities: "I was able to have a place to live, and I was able to do other things to pay for rent."

"I appreciate that the program exists," added Evie, regarding SNAP. "Without it, we wouldn't have fresh fruits and vegetables."

Like Evie, participants use their food stamps to buy nutritious food, but that is becoming increasingly difficult as food costs rise and SNAP benefits fall. Kari loves salads and pastas that have healthy proteins and vegetables. She reported, "It (SNAP) used to be a lot higher, but they keep cutting down more and more."

When food stamps are cut, beneficiaries eat less and their health suffers as a result. Pete has worked for most of his life as a machinist and a professional musician until disabilities hindered his ability to work. He described what life was like living on a food budget that was provided by food stamps alone: "I'd buy loaves of bread and have a jam sandwich. I lost 20 pounds last year because I just didn't have the food. I'd buy the cheapest stuff I could just to fill me up."

Food stamps are a lifeline for many of the participants who are primary caretakers of children or grandchildren while living



"I take care of three other people—that's where most of my food stamps go. I don't get that much, but I share with my kid. My kids come before I do, especially my [3-years-old] granddaughter. My daughter is working and I'm not going to let my granddaughter starve."

Ryan and his wife, Minette, moved to Cathlamet a little over a year ago. Although they were relatively newcomers to the town, Ryan had already established himself in local politics and was a ballot candidate for town council.

"It's easier for me to list food allergies than my favorite foods," Ryan told us in earnest. "He's allergic to a lot of wheat products, so he goes for rice pastas," added Minette, "but it's so expensive. We get it from the food bank."

With the exception of rice pasta and some fresh fruits and vegetables, the selection at a food bank is extremely limited when you have food allergies. While many of the participants in our group could make a food bank box last for up to two weeks, Ryan and Minette's selections last for 4-5 days.

Unfortunately, they are ineligible for food stamps to help offset the high cost of food. Their sole income is Ryan's pension and disability benefits, and the total, according to Minette, means that they are \$12 over the income limit to be eligible for SNAP.

Their fixed income is spent quickly on other necessities. "I immediately pay my mortgage, car insurance, phone, utilities," said Minette. "They go out as soon as the first of the month. We've never been late. The rest goes to food or gas or to go to the doctors."

Their budget is stretched even more thinly during the summer when they have full-time care of Ryan's sons. Needs go unmet like "car maintenance and certain furniture," said Ryan. "My kids have to sleep on mattresses on the floor." Minette added, "A birthday or a holiday for a kid. We still feel pressured to get them a little something and that's not in the budget."

Sacrifices are made, primarily in the form of skipped meals. "I starve myself," said Minette. "I try not to. When we have enough food in the house I don't do it, but when we're running low, and the kids are here, and I want my family to be fed, I will skip a meal or I will eat less than what feeds me. I never really get full because I don't think I have enough."



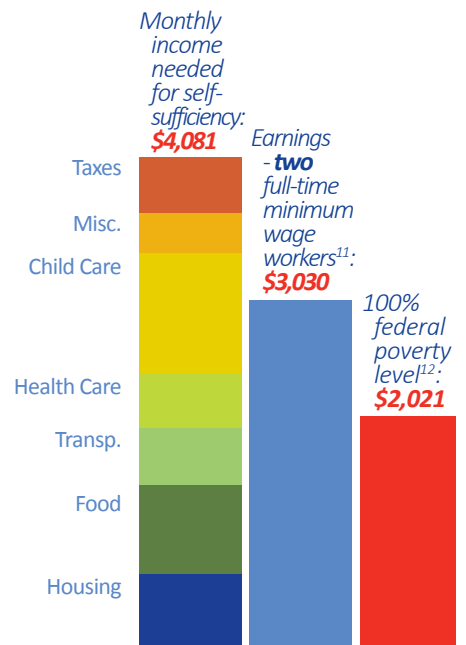
on limited or fixed incomes. To help take care of children, participants insisted on two priorities for the Legislature: raise earned wages and increase the basic needs assistance for low-income households. "I feel ashamed going to the food bank, but full-time on a minimum wage doesn't cut it in most counties," said Minette. "Raise the minimum wage. Raise the poverty level."

"Kids programs help with the kids—they're our backbone," said Kit. "Social security, food stamps, anything that helps seniors or single mothers. People who don't have housing should have something where they can get assistance. No more raises for senators: they don't get raises until we all do."

WAHKIAKUM COUNTY:

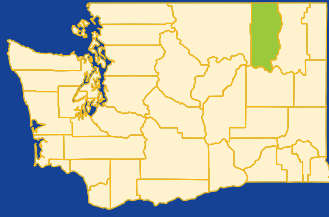
Unemployment (Aug. 2015) ⁵	4.9%
Social Security recipients (2014) ⁶	23% (1,470)
Schoolchildren eligible for subsidized meals (Oct. 2015) ⁷	
Wahkiakum County	57% (263)
WIC recipients (2014) ⁸	3.7% (151)
Total served (June 2014) ⁹ :	
Basic Food (SNAP)	645
Medical assistance	170
TANF cash assistance	47

Monthly income needed for self-sufficiency¹⁰: **\$4,081**



Left bar of graph shows income for a family of four to meet basic needs in Wahkiakum County.

FERRY COUNTY



Population: Republic—1,083;
Ferry County—7,667⁴

Republic

The mining and logging town of Republic looks much like it did when it was founded in the late 19th century, but the beauty of this remote town draws a different kind of settler than gold prospectors and lumberjacks.

"I get around a bit, but this is the type of area I want to retire in," said Steve, a Massachusetts native. Indeed there must be something about this valley town that attracts retirees. Larry and his wife Jan have been married for 55 years. A Navy veteran, Larry described how they bought property about a half an hour out of town "on the spur of the moment" and moved there three years after he retired in 1993.

The beauty of the land may attract retirees, but the remote and rural setting

creates barriers to food access. "We live on top of a mountain up here," explained Larry. "It's a very dangerous road, just wide enough for a cat. I own a snowplow but a lot of time it's not working. I can't get to the food bank. We're stuck, locked out. You've got to have something on hand that will last you 2-3 weeks."

Stocking up one's pantry is no easy feat: participants complained about how having only one grocery store in town meant high prices due to the lack of competition. Participants said that the nearest stores that offer more affordable food prices are in Omak and Colville, a trip that is at least 50 miles one way.

The price of gas makes it an expensive trip. Dee comes from a military family and provides full-time care to her husband and adult son who both have disabilities. She said, "A gallon of milk—I forget because I hardly buy it anymore—too expensive! It's over \$3 here, but in Colville it's \$2.48. You weigh that. I could get twice as much food."

Having food stamps to buy food makes it a little easier to afford the travel for a grocery shopping trip since that leaves more money for gas, but SNAP cuts erode buying power, even at bargain prices. "If they would give you a little more on the food card then you could pick stuff that's healthier for you than what you can afford on it—carbs and pastas," said

Fay, a Wyoming native who loves every kind of fresh fruit. "The problem is they've cut everyone way back on those."

Cathie is a widow whose disabilities make it difficult to leave her apartment, yet her food stamps have been cut back to the bare minimum: "I'm lucky to get \$15 per month," she said. "How is a person supposed to eat?"

"You can buy two chickens at Anderson's if you're lucky," replied Jan, Larry's wife, who is a prolific and talented cookie baker.

All SNAP households have felt cuts in the last few years, but for the many of these participants who are either retired or have disabilities, their food stamps get cut when they get a cost of living adjustment to their social security income. "They find out you get a \$15 raise, then they take \$15-\$20 from food stamps," explained Fay. "I almost want to tell Social Security to quit giving me a raise in January. You're not doing anything for me! You get whacked on the other end! I can't get caught up!"

Cuts are especially hard to endure when living on a fixed income since there is little flexibility to adjust other household expenses to make up for the loss. Some cope by eating less healthy food. "I'm on a fixed income but everything is going up," reported Dee. "Casseroles—I make more of them to fill the stomach, but it's not good for you. Better than being hungry."

Some rely heavily on staples they get from the food bank. Josh was laid off from his job and has shared custody of his kids. He said, "When I've got the kids we're eating beans and ham hocks, potato soup. They don't like eating it multiple days in a row."

For others there's no choice but to forgo necessities like medical care. "I think I have a kidney infection," said Cathie. "I try to handle it on my own but it's not



"The state's health insurance exchange has been great for my husband. He's finally able to show that he's disabled."

Josh grew up in Tacoma, and moved to Republic with his family in 1989. Unlike the rest of the participants in our focus group, Josh was neither retired nor living with disabilities on a fixed income. He was unemployed but looking for work. "My boss just ran out of work last winter, and it never really picked up this spring like it should've," he said.

Josh has custody of three children, ages 6, 12, and 13. Without work, there has had to be a lot of sacrifice to keep expenses under control. "No new toys for the kids or anything like that," he explained. "Shut off my cell phone, all that stuff."

Having kids at home during the summer means providing more meals than the kids would otherwise get for free at school. Free summer meals can help, but for Josh, it's not much of an option. "We don't use it," he said. "We live too far out of town to spend all that money on gas to get them into town."

The transportation barrier also means a missed opportunity for enrichment activities at the congregate meal sites, and the result may mean even more of a shortage of food at home. Josh said, "With kids, they're bored, so they're eating more food. I try to stop it, but it don't really happen."

Luckily, Josh has been able to get some help from a special program at the food bank that provides additional bags of food for kids during the summer months. He also gets some help from family and friends: "My little sister grows stuff and gives me overflow from her garden," he said. "I've got another neighbor who's kind of picky about the food bank box and will throw stuff into my box."

The loss of work thankfully has not meant a loss of insurance, thanks to the Affordable Care Act. "I can see a dentist now if I want to, not just the kids," he reported.

Basic needs programs are vital, helping Josh stay healthy and able to look for and find work. Cuts would be a loss of a lifeline in this temporary time of need. "Don't cut any programs," he asked of his representatives. "Look at programs already cut and put back in there."



good. What can I do? Go in, do tests that cost \$1500 per month when I can only afford to pay them \$15 per month?"

Ultimately, there's only one way to cope: "Eat less. Go on a severe diet," said Larry.

For this predominantly retired community, participants asked their representatives to protect nutrition programs. Lavonne,

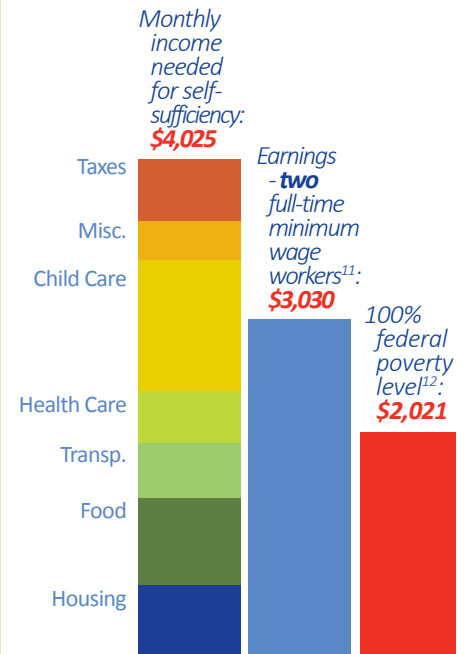
an Oklahoma native, said, "Don't cut any of them. Find things to cut without cutting any food programs."

"I agree," added Fay. "It seems they pick on the seniors. Most of us have worked really hard all our life. When you get to a certain age, you should be able to eat a decent meal."

FERRY COUNTY:

Unemployment (Aug. 2015) ⁵	5.0%
Social Security recipients (2014) ⁶	29% (2,245)
Schoolchildren eligible for subsidized meals (Oct. 2015) ⁷	
Ferry County	72% (585)
WIC recipients (2014) ⁸	1.8% (139)
Total served (June 2014) ⁹ :	
Basic Food (SNAP)	1,398
Medical assistance	476
TANF cash assistance	60

Monthly income needed for self-sufficiency¹⁰: \$4,025



Left bar of graph shows income for a family of four to meet basic needs in Ferry County.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

"There was a time I had to either get my prescriptions or eat. I took my prescriptions naturally. It's really frustrating to me. The way it's structured is so screwed up—I've worked all my life. I'm not a deadbeat. In fact I raised a daughter by myself. That wasn't easy."

—Pete, Cathlamet

Imagine waking up each morning knowing that you will spend your day trying to decide between necessities. You've worked hard your entire life, but one change of luck—an injury, the loss of a job, the sudden yet serious illness of a family member—takes a toll on your household income. There isn't enough money to cover your most basic of needs.

Luckily you can cobble together some relief with the help of several safety net programs. It isn't much, but you are so grateful because the assistance you get to pay for food or the subsidized health care coverage means that now you can stretch your limited income a little further.

The bit of assistance doesn't mean you're completely out of the woods. Having subsidized health care may mean that you no longer have to decide between food and prescriptions, but you still have to decide between food or the gas to get you to the food bank, or perhaps it means the difference between making your rent

on time or adding a handful of fresh fruits and vegetables to your diet this week.

A decision in DC or Olympia to cut even one of the programs you use or to eliminate it all together would be devastating. You'd suffer a setback or maybe even be worse off. With less income, necessities need to be prioritized, and every choice comes with a hurtful outcome for health or safety.

It doesn't have to be this way. We need our elected officials to understand the real life impact of cuts on our neighbors so that we can change the conversation from which program should we cut into one about what wise investments we can make of public funding to help raise all of us together, leaving no one behind.

Here are some of our thoughts and recommendations about those investments, investments that help all Washingtonians by lifting families out of poverty and strengthening the safety net that keeps our most vulnerable from falling through the cracks.

1. Restore and strengthen SNAP benefits

- No more SNAP cuts
- Update basis for SNAP allotments to the Low Cost Food Plan
- Protect the flexibility and elasticity of SNAP

SNAP is the first line of defense against hunger. For so many hungry, low-income individuals, SNAP is a lifeline, providing them the means to buy food that is not available at their local food bank

or to help them meet health, allergy, and dietary restrictions. SNAP is valued by both low-income people who need the program and by employers: SNAP stimulates our economy, generating jobs in the grocery, agriculture, transportation and warehouse industries while keeping adults healthy for work. For every \$5 of SNAP benefits that are spent, \$9 of economic activity is generated.¹³

Yet SNAP benefits have been slashed in the last few years and continue to be scrutinized for additional cuts. Cuts mean one thing for hungry individuals: they don't eat. We oppose cuts to SNAP and in fact urge lawmakers to restore and strengthen the program.

One action Congress can take towards strengthening SNAP would be to update the basis for calculating SNAP allotments by using USDA's Low Cost Food Plan instead of the Thrifty Food Plan. The Thrifty Food Plan was designed to provide guidance for meeting basic nutritional needs on an emergency food/minimum diet basis. With current market prices, the weekly allotment for a family of four under this plan is 2/3 of a fish stick and two slices of cheese.¹⁴ Replacing the use of the Thrifty Food Plan for determining SNAP allotments would help increase the adequacy of SNAP benefits and increase access to nutritious food.

Congress can also protect SNAP by opposing efforts to block grant the program. SNAP was designed to be elastic, expanding in times of need and shrinking as our economy improves. SNAP is doing just that: between August 2014 to August

2015, the national SNAP caseload has dropped by over 1 million individuals and the Congressional Budget Office predicts that SNAP rolls will be back to 1995 levels by 2020.¹⁵ SNAP is working exactly as intended. If Congress wants to cut SNAP spending then the best solution is to leave it alone and continue to invest in strategies that will create jobs that pay livable wages and fuel our economy.

2. *Protect our state's food safety net*

- Maintain current funding for food banks, farmers markets, and State Food Assistance

In 2015, the Washington State Legislature restored vital funding to our food safety net. Equity was restored to the State Food Assistance Program (SFA), and the Legislature maintained increases in funding for food banks and the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) that had been added in 2014.

The restorations have been vital to helping hungry Washingtonians. Before the restoration of full benefits, SFA recipients could spend less than \$1 per meal. The need for food banks has deepened as we see more seniors in food bank lines and more working clients who make a little too much to qualify for food stamps but not enough to cover all of their basic needs. The additional FMNP funds have helped expand access for eligible families on WIC and low-income seniors by providing more vouchers to buy food at local farmers markets.

Washington can't afford to take a step

back by cutting any of these important restorations that have helped to repair the holes in our state's food safety net. These programs help make sure that hungry Washingtonians have access to nutritious food, fueling up children so that they can focus on learning in schools, keeping seniors active and independent, and helping adults stay healthy to find jobs and keep working.

3. *Increase access to nutritious food for children*

- Strengthen congregate summer meals
- Expand SNAP summer EBT program
- Improve access to healthy meals in early education programs
- Protect school meal standards
- Do no harm by finding offsets for programmatic improvements without cutting SNAP and other basic needs services.

Children should have access to nutritious food where they live, go to school, and play. The 2010 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization (CNR) bill expired on September 30, 2015, and so Congress may return to the work of passing a new bill to authorize these programs. Here are our recommendations for a strong and effective CNR.

First, Congress should strengthen the congregate summer meals program, making the program more accessible to children who are eligible for free and reduced price school meals. Congress should improve area eligibility requirements, allowing for summer meals sites in areas where 40% of

children are eligible for school meals instead of 50%. Congress should also break down barriers to service provision, permitting providers to use summer funding to serve meals year round and providing grants for innovations in overcoming transportation barriers.

We can also help prevent summer nutritional loss by expanding the summer EBT pilot program, providing a temporary EBT card during summer months to all families with children who are eligible for a free or reduced price lunch so that they can buy the food they need to make up for missed school meals. To ensure the most efficient use of these funds, a summer EBT should be operated through SNAP, as SNAP is widely accepted at grocery stores, farmers markets, and other vendors and allows families to tailor their purchases according to nutritional and cultural needs.

A stronger CNR would also allow homes and early education centers that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to get additional funding in order to provide

"Ten years ago it was easier to borrow a cup of sugar or soy sauce, but now neighbors are really stingy now."

—Ada, Lummi

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS *(CONT.)*

another meal or snack for children in their care for more than 8 hours. This would increase access to more healthy food for young children and help low-income parents who work long hours.

We also see strong evidence that the healthier nutrition standards for school meals that were established in the 2010 CNR are working in combatting obesity and that kids and their parents like the meals prepared with fresher, more nutritious ingredients. We must continue to uphold these standards, based on expert opinion and scientific evidence and cannot erode nutrition on the basis of political opinion.

Finally, improvements to CNR programs cannot be made at the expense of other nutrition assistance and safety net services for low-income people. As we have already seen from the stories of our focus group participants, the safety net is precariously delicate for families such that increases to one program that are offset by another program used by the family only sets them back instead of lifting them up.

4. Break down barriers to participation in school breakfast

- Amend the definition of instruction time to include learning during breakfast
- Require high-need schools to make breakfast a part of the school day

According to the Food Research Action Center, Washington ranks 43rd in the nation when it comes to participation in the school breakfast program.¹⁶ Breakfast is an essential asset to boost

educational performance, helping children focus on learning instead of empty stomachs, and proven to reduce absenteeism and behavioral disruptions.¹⁷

Washington can improve our participation rate in breakfast by making it easier for schools to provide breakfast after the bell. One small, technical policy change would be to permit schools to count as instruction time the time that is spent by students eating breakfast while engaging with their teachers in educational activities.

A bigger, but important step, would be to require high need schools to make breakfast a part of the school day and to provide start-up grants for affected schools to cover the costs of adapting their breakfast service model accordingly. When breakfast is served during the school day, students are present at school to eat this important meal and get down to the business of learning.

5. Make nutritious food more affordable

- Restore Washington's Farm to School Program
- Expand markets for Washington's farmers
- Support SNAP incentive program

Obesity is frequently linked to food insecurity and food insecurity is directly linked to household income. Our focus group participants expressed a desire to eat healthily but cite the high cost of nutritious food as a barrier. Congress and our Legislature should support efforts to make nutritious food more affordable

and provide incentives for using SNAP benefits to buy healthier foods.

At the state level, Washington should increase funding for the Farm to School and Small Farms Direct Marketing Programs. Housed at the Washington State Department of Agriculture, these two programs provide training, technical assistance and support to Washington growers to help expand the markets at which they can sell their produce and products. In addition to farmers markets, these programs help farmers understand the regulations and health codes that help them safely ship and sell their products for use in school meals, child care centers, senior centers, and other institutions. When farmers are able to make a livable wage, they can afford to donate more or sell food at-cost for distribution by food banks. It's a win-win, helping our growers earn a living wage and increasing access to nutritious food for hungry Washingtonians.

At the federal and local level, we recommend increasing support for programs like Fresh Bucks and other programs that incentivize the use of SNAP benefits on fresh fruits, vegetables, and nutritious food by providing a match that doubles the value of SNAP's purchasing power when buying these food items at farmers markets.

6. Address the core causes of hunger: reduce poverty and inequality

- Restore the TANF cash grant
- Protect the Housing and

"I'm a single mom that's done everything. I make a certain amount over and aren't eligible (for food stamps.) That's why the food bank does come in handy."

—Jeweles, Moses Lake

Essential Needs Services and the Aged, Blind, or Disabled Cash Assistance Programs

- End discriminatory pre-screening practices
- Support living wage job initiatives
- Repair our tax system to promote fairness and sustainability

Our fight to eliminate hunger will never succeed unless we tackle its root causes. We support efforts that help to reduce poverty and inequality.

In 2015, the Legislature restored 9% of a 15% cut to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash grant. In 2016, the Legislature should fully restore TANF cash benefits which help families with children pay for necessities like rent, hygiene products, diapers, and car repairs. When income is expanded to pay for these necessities, this leaves more flexibility in the household budget to pay for food.

Washington should also continue to protect the small but vital Housing and Essential Needs Services and the

cash assistance program for the Aged, Blind, or Disabled. Like TANF, these programs help people with disabilities who are unable to work cover their non-food essentials, lessening the need to choose between food and housing, health care, or other necessities.

Washington should also help reduce the barriers to opportunities to find work or housing by ending discriminatory pre-screening practices. Washington should eliminate the Source of Income pre-screening tool that allows landlords to ask housing applicants to disclose the sources of their income, including public assistance. Washington should also "ban the box," that is, prohibit the requirement for job applicants to disclose whether they have committed a felony. Employers can find that information when conducting a criminal background check of a candidate, but unless we ban the box, employers are potentially losing out on qualified, motivated candidates and individuals who have served their time and are working towards a better life yet are facing nearly insurmountable barriers to gainful employment.

Although we support the strengthening of our public safety net, we also envision a Washington where all of us prosper and can be self-sufficient. Towards that end, we support efforts that create jobs that pay livable wages so that no one who is able to work has to hover near the precipice of poverty. Their earned income helps them pay for all of their basic needs and have a cushion in savings for emergencies or to build retirement.

Finally, Northwest Harvest supports budgets that restore and protect our safety net by finding fair and sustainable revenue. An all cuts approach to balancing budgets is unfair because it asks low-income Washingtonians who, under our regressive tax system, pay a greater share of their wages in taxes to make an even greater sacrifice by cutting the support programs that help them meet their basic needs.

Join Us!

At Northwest Harvest, we are committed to ending hunger in Washington by freely providing nutritious food to hungry people throughout our state and by advocating for strategic investments of public funds in the programs and services that are essential to helping low-income people meet their basic needs. We hope you will join us in our movement to end hunger by speaking up and taking action with us. Together, we can make Washington a better place for all.

"Put yourself in our shoes. Live on what we live on and then wake up to reality. They have no clue about what we go through. It's not that we want to be in our situation. Put yourself in our shoes, then live on what we do, then decide to not cut this."

—Laurie, Republic

PROCESS AND POVERTY MEASURES

Process

Focus groups were held in 2015 at five locations across Washington, representing rural, urban, and suburban areas in Whatcom, Chelan, Grant, Wahkiakum and Ferry Counties.

Food bank staff recruited clients representing a range of ages and life circumstances. Staff informed all participants that the group was not a requirement of receiving food. Northwest Harvest paid participants \$30 for attending the two-hour focus group and offered snacks during the session. Northwest Harvest staff members conducted the groups, following a transcript of 45 questions we ask each year; however, for the Lummi group, we adjusted some questions to find out more information about tribal food and assistance programs. Some participants chose to remain anonymous; those whose photos and names appear here have given informed consent.

Poverty Measures

The following are definitions of terms and data included in the report:

Self-Sufficiency Standard¹⁰ Included for each community is a graph of a self-sufficiency standard for the geographic area showing what is needed for a family of four to adequately support themselves (specifically, two adults, one pre-school and one school-age child). The guidelines used come from *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington State*, developed by Dr. Diana Pearce of the University of Washington. Dr. Pearce

developed a methodology for calculating the costs of basic necessities for families of different sizes in different areas of the state. These numbers are updated periodically, and for this report, we use the most recent numbers available. The graphs demonstrate that families above the official poverty guideline fall far short of having the resources necessary to meet their basic needs.

100% of federal poverty¹² The official measure of poverty in the U.S. was developed in 1963, based on the cost of a basic food diet for a household, multiplied by three to estimate that household's expenses. Experts believe the current poverty measure is flawed because of changes in family expenses over the past four decades, with the costs of housing, health care and childcare taking a significantly larger share of a household budget.

In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau released the **Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM)**¹⁸ This measure takes into consideration the costs of food, housing, utilities and clothing. It also takes into consideration governmental non-cash benefits, such as food stamps, and is adjusted according to regional differences in cost of living. This SPM found 48.4 million poor people in 2014 in the U.S., or 1.4 million more than the official definition of poverty.

The Supplemental Poverty Measure does not replace the official poverty measure, which is still used to determine eligibility for benefits like Medicaid, Medicare, and the federal food stamp

program called SNAP, but we call your attention to it here because it is also a measure that shows the significant role that safety net programs can play for low-income households. For instance, according to the SPM, last year, SNAP lifted 4.7 million people above the poverty line, a measure not reflected in the federal poverty measure.¹⁹ Since the supplemental measure has not been adopted as the official federal measure of poverty, we continue to use the federal poverty thresholds and compare it to the Self Sufficiency Standard to portray poverty in the counties that were visited for this year's focus group report.

Minimum Wage¹¹ Included in our data section for each county is a measure showing earnings for two adults working full-time at minimum wage. Since Washington has the highest state minimum wage in the nation at \$9.47 per hour for 2015, some may think that level of pay would be adequate to sustain a household. The graph shows that even with two people working full-time at minimum wage of \$9.47 in 2015, they fell short of meeting self-sufficiency standard in that county.

ANNOTATED REFERENCES



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⁴City and county populations (2014 estimate): <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/53000.html>

⁵Unemployment Information: United States Dept of Labor; Bureau of Labor Statistics. <http://data.bls.gov/map/MapToolServlet>

⁶OASDI Beneficiaries by State and County, 2014. http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/oasdi_sc/

⁷State of Washington, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Child Nutrition Services. Free and Reduced-Price Meals Eligibility. October 2015 Count. (Data obtained pre-publication, subject to change)

⁸WIC: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/DataandStatisticalReports/HealthBehaviors/WIC.aspx>

⁹ESA Briefing Book, June 2014. <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/manuals/briefing-book>

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¹¹Washington state Department of Labor and Industries: Washington State Minimum Wage, 2015. <http://www.dol.gov/whd/minimumwage.htm>

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¹⁵Congressional Budget Office, "The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2015 to 2025," January 2015.

¹⁶School Breakfast Scorecard: 2013-2014 School Year, Food Research Action Center http://frac.org/pdf/School_Breakfast_Scorecard_SY_2013_2014.pdf

¹⁷The Future of School Breakfast, Washington Appleseed. <https://schoolbreakfastwa.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/breakfast-after-the-bell-1.pdf>

¹⁸Supplemental Poverty Measure Overview

¹⁹Supplemental Poverty Measure 2015. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-254.pdf>

"With unemployment, it's really hard. My entire living situation has been compromised. I've been having to do more day to day work instead of having a pay check. That's just how it has to be."

—Daniel, Leavenworth



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