

**Notes from “Issues, questions, learning and suggestion session”
Building on Accomplishments, Learning Together
Minnesota FoodShare Food Shelf Conference – September 13, 2011**

Challenges of the Times

- Equipment breaking—using commercial & residential fridges & freezers; all have broken this year that Senior Food Shelf
- Adapting from the small food shelf style to more contemporary & streamlined—going from one afternoon a week to five days a week & two locations; how do we transition and change
- Creation of a model, how to, position descriptions for everything
- Keeping basic commodities on the shelves has been difficult; how would food shelves survive with a large cut in the TEFAP
- But TEFAP increases have not met the need of the increase of families that food shelf is serving
- Storage during “the feast”—having food located in 10 different locations when it’s available during the USDA commodity high times.
- Challenges to
- How do we fill the gaps for funding our food shelves?—loss of county funding, decrease of church funding, individuals are losing jobs...
- Helping the community understand the urgency of the matter and the quantity of the food that food shelves distribute... unfortunately their donations have become only a drop in the bucket
 - New Ulm shares the information on the radio about the poundage they give out and the poundage donated to share the deficit (each month).
- Have to address larger, political system issues that support systems—government has backed out and charitable organizations can no longer support these needs
- TEFAP rules—Serving families each month, impacting some local food shelves, esp. in rural areas
- How do we communicate the larger issue with our supporters/community??
- “The Bucket Brigade” analogy—See Jessica with Hunger Solutions for this description. If government does not continue to support their programs, churches & communities can not continue to do it.
- Cost of overhead—building, staff, repairs, etc.: costs more to maintain the same level of staff and you’re doing more work. Helping donors understand that donations need to support the “doing of the work”—staff time and location
- Food Shelves don’t have the financial infrastructure to move forward with plans and future planning

New Ideas (A):

- Using computers
 - created form to use for client month-to-month
 - Soupnet pays for software
 - We need help to give us information about software that will help us collect data
 - Data privacy issues for volunteers; we need to know the rules regarding data privacy
 - We need money to train people on the computer software
 - Online program: “strengthsfinder 2.0” – self evaluation tool for volunteers

- Create teams for your food shelf – all members of teams are volunteers
- Learning how to delegate is hard for us. Tell us how to learn these skills or where to go to learn these skills
- We need to know how to finance a food shelf
- Guidelines for food amounts for new food shelves

New Ideas (B): Is there something “new” you did this year?

- Client survey (did for six weeks): access -- identified issues getting to shelf (tallied results; expected to make changes, came out feeling good)
 - Food choices – enough variety?
 - Want fresh fruits and vegetables
 - Hours/days
- Others have done surveys. Ask the right questions to get useful information
- Did survey when moving food shelf; know how transportation limits use – seems like people find a way
- Delivery services? Some for disabled individuals. Social workers on staff assess need. Have transportation program as part of agency. Limits to client choice, so people try to get to the food shelf, rather than use the delivery service
- Work with senior residence to provide a shuttle service.
- How to work with senior citizens:
 - Difficulty with stigma or pride
 - Hard to get information to them
 - Parish nurses can help spread word/identify need
 - Some receive other services; may have foods met
 - Greater Lakes Country Food Bank and others(?)
 - Mobile food pantry – go TO senior housing
 - NAPS boxes once per month – get seniors in to see services, get more comfortable with the site
 - Have dedicated time each week for seniors only; have to define what is a “senior”
 - Seniors deferred by crowd around doors and smoking by doors
- Cooking demos
 - Working with extension – how to use weird veggies
 - Incentive to attend – get \$5 coupon to use at Farmers’ Market
 - At capacity
 - Earn points to get Thanksgiving Basket – attend 4 classes during the year to earn a turkey
- Financial Freedom classes
 - Once per month
 - Surveyed list of topics – some people didn’t want to go to any
 - Picked classes have 10 – 20
 - Had a “fair” in the food shelf rather than classroom setting – topics included: energy, save on shopping costs, how to lower bills, use thermostat setting, created opportunity for one-to-one contact, conversations and brought in people who hadn’t been using the food shelf
- Open House?
 - “Food for Thought” tours (20 – 25 people)
 - Target business and faith communities

- Talk about “gap” – participants who don’t make enough but don’t qualify for public assistance
- “Evening at the Food Shelf”
 - Mock intake, shopping experience
 - Challenge to figure out how to make budget stretch
 - Similar to “hunger 101”
 - Client experience
 - Could tie to March Campaign – kick off event with public officials!
 - Include “if we had more room, more resources, etc.!”
- Resource Fairs
- Presentations at food distributions – bring in speakers to give information on resources
- Financial Literacy programs
 - Free Lutheran Social Services train the trainer
 - People said they didn’t want them, but once they attended, they got a lot out of it
- Thanksgiving turkey program
 - challenge identifying needs
 - people show up just to get a turkey
- Lean 6-sigma consultant – working with U of M
 - Finding ways to increase efficiency
 - Look at systems
 - Need for managers to step back; analyze growth in demand
- Bridge to Benefits
 - Experience using it in a food shelf?
 - Opportunity to use interns or volunteers

Food Issues

- Cereal -- General Mills; Malt o Meal
 - Do some matching event (can food banks set up?)
 - Contact the companies directly to do wheeling and dealing
- Needed Items
 - Watch for sales
 - Coupon deals
 - Let people/groups know the need
 - Specific food item drives
- Pork Producers – Fillmore County gave donation; speak to local growers
- CIS – Rogers Wholesale; option to obtain food and share pallet with other food shelves
- Meat – finding sources (Hackensack); Second Harvest Rescue
 - Monthly ordering – can’t order fast enough to get stuff
- Second Harvest – online ordering is not available in North Central, which is very frustrating
- Crock Pot Project – recipes; giving crock pot to families at demonstration
- Plant a Row; Give a Row – local growers
- Gold’n Plump (Cold Spring) – Check directly with them; can get smaller amounts purchased
- Network within food shelves for needs
- Have a mindset that you need multiple sources; food banks are only one source

Volunteerism (issues)

- Friday crew has been judgmental – family and friends are the volunteers and it is hard to talk to them, because they are too close!
- Personality issues – too many bosses
- Job descriptions should be given to volunteers
- Volunteer handbook
- RSVP questions
- Need more volunteers of younger age for lifting
- Holiday boxes at Thanksgiving and Christmas
- Teams working together – in supervision and work

Fundraising ideas

- Golf tournaments – matching funds from Thrivent; another agency has a bank that puts it on for them
- Fire fighters put on a pancake brunch Sunday mornings in March; matching funds from Thrivent held at the fire hall
- BINGO (permits from state--four times they are allowed for free); hold them on Sunday afternoons and get donated prizes
- Request letters to top 25 givers, asking for more money the next year (ask for a specific amount)
- Moonlight bowling night, at \$15 per ticket and include raffles
- Empty Bowls
 - Cisco donated soup, Lions make soup, free will offering
 - Restaurants donate soup, artists donated bowls, people buy bowls
 - Silent auction during supper; bowls donated from individuals
- Rock the Shelf – bands come in and play, canned goods can be brought in and free will offering is taken – bands donate time. Corporations sponsored event
- March – dress up to match theme, put on skit in different congregations
- Donors Appreciation Dinners – spaghetti supper, free will offering and Toys for Tots.
- Letters out to businesses – March Campaign
- Lions Club – pancake breakfast; using organizations in the community to put on events for food shelves
- Have one or two fundraisers a year which the food shelf puts on
- Black Tie to Tie-dye – sponsorships from businesses, individual donors, restaurants and bakers donate desserts with placards out with business names; silent auction; bands; give reduced fee staggered closing times; benefits based on amount of sponsorship
- Parrot Head party & Cruise – beach clothes, leis, band, raffle tickets (can put tickets into specific items to win); sell tickets through Eventbrite.com (note: \$1.70 service charge for credit card fee)
- Churches do events for you!
- Fill the bus (March Campaign) – schools donated to fill bus
- Sponsors – Tour of Homes or Garden tours and money goes to food shelf

Client Choice

- Computer request form – identified by number (not name) only

- Client completes form
- Form goes to volunteer to fill order
- Order packed, weighed and given to client – averages about 25 pounds per person
- Centralized table for ordering – client chooses items and packs boxes
- Deliveries to homebound residents – offers convenience and socialization