

A publication of
the Sacramento
City/County Hunger
Commission, a program
of the Community
Services Planning
Council

Winter 2002

Issue 13

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

by Stephanie Wilson - Sacramento Hunger Commission

Traditionally, community development in low-income areas start with a needs assessment of a neighborhood which is then used to compile a list of “barriers” residents face to living a stable, healthy life. Asset-Based Community Development turns this thought process around and encourages community development by identifying the skills and resources that currently exist in a neighborhood. The ABCD approach is to then work to link these positive assets together to improve the overall well-being of residents by building relationships between neighbors, local associations and institutions through voluntary efforts. Volunteerism is critical to the success of

Asset-Based Community Development. According to the creators of the ABCD philosophy, “historic evidence indicates that significant

community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort”.

The Sacramento Hunger Commission has obtained funding to use the ABCD approach to improve food access in low-income neighborhoods. Staff will facilitate three discussion groups in low-income communities in Sacramento using a food related ABCD discussion tool they have created. Residents participating in the discussion groups will devise a list of assets and resources they possess and make recommendations for linking those resources together to improve food access in their neighborhood. The food access ABCD tool was tested by one low-income community group in the fall. Results in-

cluded the implementation of a grocery store carpool, in which one resident who has a car will pick up two other residents who do not own vehicles. The three residents did not know each other prior to the discussion group. In an evaluation of the discussion group, the resident with the car noted, “I knew where (the other residents) lived, but had never been introduced to them. I would never have just walked up and knocked on their door to offer them a ride, but now that we have talked and I know what they need, I am happy to help”. The carpool group will also share coupons and other resources with each other while they shop. Participants of the discussion group also expressed an

“Historic evidence indicates that significant community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves.” - John McNight

interest in implementing free community workshops on a range of nutrition related subjects, some of which they could teach themselves, to be held at the local community center.

In addition to facilitating the discussion groups, Hunger Commission staff will also work with community members on further developing at least one recommendation each group sees as a priority.

For more information on Asset-Based Community Development, check out <http://www.nwu.edu/IPR/abcd.html>.

For more information about the Sacramento Hunger Commission’s adaptation of ABCD to improve food access in low-income communities, call Stephanie Wilson at (916) 447-7063 ext 331.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Issue 13, Winter, 2002

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The Sacramento City/County Hunger Commission is a 21 member voting body comprised of diverse representatives of the Sacramento community. The Hunger Commission was created in 1990 with joint funding from the City and County of Sacramento.

The Hunger Commission believes that hunger can be prevented and is not acceptable in a just society that values the dignity and worth of every individual.

Therefore, the goal of the Hunger Commission is to eliminate hunger by assuring that all people are able to provide themselves adequate food for an active healthy life.

To do so, the Commission addresses root causes of hunger and creatively pursues positive improvements by:

- * Effectively advocating for people who are hungry

- * Serving as the area's primary information source about hunger and opportunities for the community to eliminate it

- * Coordinating community resources to increase opportunities and education for people to become self-sufficient

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Stone Soup Community Garden

By Kim Frinzell, RD

Nationally, and locally the incidence of childhood obesity has doubled in the last thirty years. Community empowerment theories suggest that collective community decision-making and action are essential for overcoming social, economic, organizational and political barriers to achieve sustainable changes when addressing complex health issues like obesity.

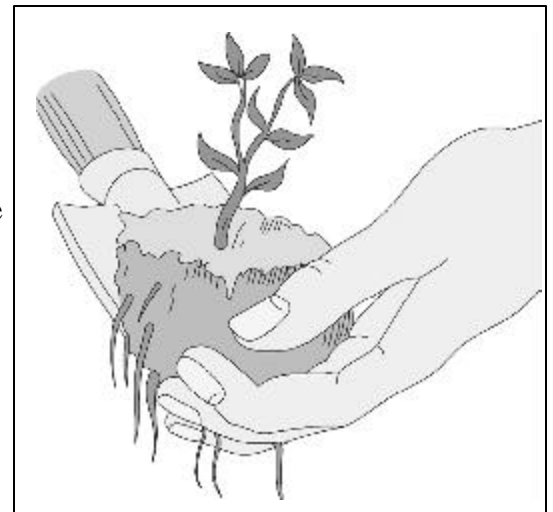
The overall goal of the Stone Soup Community Garden and Education Project is to provide a positive environment to show parents practical hands-on ways to apply the concepts of health, nutrition, and positive parenting skills that families have learned to their daily lives. Specific goals of our garden project are to increase knowledge of the health benefits of fruit and vegetables, increase

consumption of fruits and vegetables, and increase physical activity. There will be 70 free of charge garden plots for 70 families.

Cooking demonstrations, classes, and activities will be

provided along with regular community events. Examples of classes include, how to pack a healthy lunch, parent-child food tasks, and physical activity games for the whole family, and cooking what you grow. Community garden studies have shown that families involved with gardening are more likely to eat healthier.

This project comes with support from the Del Paso Heights/North Sacramento community. Currently, over 80 families have shown interest in the garden project. Likewise, we have the direct support and collaboration of 8 different agencies serving the Del Paso Heights Community.



State Budget Update

In recent years, anti-hunger advocates have worked very hard to win victories for food and nutrition programs. Many of these victories, including the California Food Assistance Program and infrastructure funding for food banks, were won in years with large budget surpluses.

This year, however, anti-hunger advocates will be working with a deficit State budget. The Governor's proposed budget, released on January 10, attempts to close a \$12.5 billion gap. The largest share of proposed spending reductions comes from human services programs.

Hunger in California is on the rise. Food banks are seeing more and more families, including working families, at their pantries. There is a huge gap between the number of people eligible for food stamp program and the number participating in the program.

In light of this situation, anti-hunger advocates will continue their efforts to push California to provide the best safety net possible. Some of the issues anti-hunger advocates will be working for this year include:

- **The Red Tape Reduction Act:** This act would replace the monthly reporting currently required for all food stamp recipients with more reasonable and cost effective reporting.

- **Raise the Vehicle Exemption for CalWORKs/Food Stamps:** Currently, families with a vehicle worth more than \$4,650 are likely not eligible for food stamps. Last year, the Governor vetoed legislation that would have raised the vehicle exemption to \$15,000.

- **Food Bank Funding for Operations and Infrastructure:** This funding would help food banks store and distribute more food, and help food banks purchase trucks, forklifts and other equipment.

- **Tax credits for Donations of Food to Food Banks:** A.B. 727 would provide a tax credit for taxpayers who donate agricultural products to food banks and other charities.

- **School Breakfast Expansion:** This legislation would require all low-performing schools to use part of their state funded school improvement grants to serve school breakfast.

Food Stamp Reauthorization Update

The Federal Food Stamp is due to be "reauthorized" in 2002 as part of the Farm Bill. This program reauthorization happens every 5 years, and is an opportunity to advocate for improvements to the program. Reauthorization began last summer, months earlier than expected, due to concerns that less funding would be available in 2002.

At this point, the House has completed their version of the Farm Bill. The Senate hoped to complete their work on the Farm bill in December, but were not successful. The Senate will resume discussions at the end of January.

The House bill includes some modest improvements to the food stamp programs, but does not include any restoration of food stamps for legal immigrants. The Senate Farm Bill includes some benefit restoration for legal immigrants who have worked in the United States for four years, children of legal immigrants, refugees, and disabled people. In early January, the Bush Administration proposed restoring food stamp eligibility to legal immigrants who have lived in the country for five years or more. Advocates were pleased to see the Administration propose this restoration.

Several positive amendments have been filed in the Senate that would affect the Food Stamp Program. Advocates will be encouraging Senators to support amendments that will increase food stamp eligibility, including an amendment by Senator Durbin, (D-IL). This amendment would exclude the value of one car for determining food stamp eligibility, and would restore food stamp benefits to all elderly legal immigrants. This amendment would be especially important for California, which has a very restrictive policy on car vehicle exemption.

At this point, it is very difficult to predict when the Farm Bill will be completed. When Congress reconvenes later this month, the work on the Farm Bill could move very quickly, or stall for several weeks or months. **For additional updates on the Farm Bill, please visit www.cfpa.net or www.frac.org.**



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