



----- F O O D F O R T H O U G H T -----

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In this issue:

1. Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF)
2. Cathedral-Building
3. Hunger Hits Home conference report
4. Hope Awards banquet report
5. Member recruitment for Hunger Commission 2005
6. Passage of AB 1796
7. Staff transitions
8. Hunger Banquet

1. **Featured organization: Community Alliance with Family Farmers** (Information provided by Temra Costa, Sacramento Valley Regional Coordinator)

Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) is a statewide, 25-year-old member-supported, non-profit organization headquartered in Davis. Its mission is to build a movement of rural and urban people who foster family-scale agriculture that cares for the land, sustains local economies, and promotes social justice. Members include urbanites, farmers, environmentalists, eaters of food, rural activists and youth.

Economic Options and Community Food Systems

With the increasing consolidation of agricultural land matched with global pressures that are affecting local farms in California, the Economic Options and Community Food Systems Program Area of CAFF has been developed for the purpose of addressing the challenges to the future sustainability of family farms here in the state. Small scale farms are increasingly needing innovative searches for markets that are less accessible to agribusiness. CSAs (Community Supporting Agriculture direct marketing), farmers' markets, and the creation of other direct relationships with consumers are avenues of achieving success that the big guys can't pursue because of their size and being out-of-touch with direct markets and local populations. CAFF is focusing efforts on researching these markets and creating new prospects with an eye to the development of long term relationships between farmers and consumers. The four main goals of this program area are: 1) **expanding** market options for farmers, 2) **educating** communities about local economies of scale and the importance of local food production, 3) **developing** viable economic alternatives to counter the trend of agricultural consolidation, and 4) **improving** access to local produce.

These four objectives of the program are manifested in projects such as Farm to School; in point of purchase marketing initiatives such as Buy Fresh, Buy Local; and in local networking among health advocates, grocers, retailers and restaurants.

The expansion of direct marketing options is occurring on many fronts all over California. By building relationships with restaurants, grocers, and school districts, farmers are able to access and help build the next generation of consumers. Creating direct links to consumers takes time, energy and most of all, marketing! CAFF is currently working on addressing marketing issues that are affecting farmers' ability to enter these avenues via a statewide Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign along with regional promotions such as Capay Valley Grown for Yolo County. The superior quality and variety of foods grown in California make it a small wonder that they aren't currently being utilized more in local markets.

Making links with local markets and educating communities has proven to be key to the success of local food system economies. Consumer education and increased knowledge of how food choices have direct societal, health, economic and environmental impacts, and create solidarity between the people who grow our food and those who eat it. One particular area that has been receiving a lot of attention nationwide has been nutrition, or a lack thereof, in the American diet. Increasing "health epidemics" generate frustration for farmers struggling to make a living by providing the products that offer a solution. That is why CAFF has been partnering with health advocates to steer people to fresh, local and seasonal fruits and vegetables in an attempt to reverse poorly constituted diets and at the same time support our local farms.

CAFF develops viable alternatives to counter the global trend in agriculture, but also works to increase access to food by the underserved. Farms donate a great deal of their product to those who need it most. Through foodshare programs, food banks and programs such as Senior Gleaners and Meals on Wheels, farms offer free produce to improve the dietary standards of the public. As the number of farms decreases, so does access to fresh fruits and vegetables. A cornerstone of the effort to reverse this trend is the family farm--a force for feeding the hungry and ensuring our future food security.

2. Cathedral-Building: Creating a Community Food-Secure and Free of Hunger by Cindy Nelson

Hunger is big and mostly hidden in Sacramento. That is the main finding of "Hunger Hits Home," a report released by the Sacramento Hunger Commission earlier this year.

In 2001, nearly 5%, or roughly 56,000 adults were food insecure in Sacramento County. The term "food insecurity" is defined as being uncertain about having access to food, or being at risk of hunger. Surrounding us are the agricultural fields of the great Sacramento Valley that supply the region, the state, and the world with an abundance of food year round -- how is it that we have hunger and food insecurity in the midst of such plenty? FoodFirst, a think tank based in Oakland, likes to say that hunger is not caused by a scarcity of food but by a scarcity of democracy.

Bill Shore, author and founder of Share Our Strength, in Washington, D.C., says that "whether in our own backyard or halfway around the world, hunger is the most basic and universal indicator of economic distress. Wherever you find people suffering from hunger, you find people without adequate health care, education, and economic opportunity."

A lot of good people do a lot of good work with a lot of money to alleviate hunger. Yet, despite this, hunger does not diminish; in fact, it gets worse year after year.

If we really want to make a difference in the long run, we have to begin working beyond the safety net to address the root causes of hunger, not just the symptoms of food insecurity. Hunger is a sign of poverty, of a precarious food system, and of a population increasingly ignorant about food, agriculture, and the social inequities in our community. Community food security is work that addresses the root causes of hunger rather than simply hunger itself.

With inspiration from Shore's ideas, the Sacramento Hunger Commission recently began to re-focus its efforts, away from strictly doing anti-hunger work to focus more on a comprehensive, long-term approach to building a food-secure community. A task force of the Commission has spent the past 10 months on this re-focusing, which we call "cathedral building."

The idea of "cathedral building" comes from Shore's book, *The Cathedral Within*. Cathedrals, those magnificent buildings all across Europe, usually took three or four hundred years to build. Those first cathedral builders had to imagine something that had never been built before, they had to have tremendous confidence and a sense of selflessness in order to pursue something they would never live to see finished, and they had to have great passion and persuasion to get future generations to carry on the work.

Our "cathedral," the new vision of the Hunger Commission, is to see our community one day food-secure and free of hunger. Chances are, none of us will live to see that day. But, we want to imagine it and inspire others as we lay the groundwork for "building our cathedral."

Food is more than nourishment and sustenance for the body. It is also what connects us to each other, and to the past and the present. Again, from Shore:

The idea of people going hungry has always struck me as one of exceptional poignancy. The need to eat not only unites us all but underscores a basic human frailty. Nature marks time in eons, yet each of us needs to eat every few hours, a fraction of time almost too infinitesimal for nature to measure. But the need is true and unrelenting, for each and every one of us, no matter how rich or poor, powerful or oppressed, weak or strong – it is an emblem of our humanity. It's almost as if nature had created an infallible way to remind us, daily, regularly, that we are bound to and dependent upon every other living thing on the planet.”

We owe it to each other and to future generations to create a community that is food-secure and free of hunger.

3. Hunger Hits Home – Sacramento’s First Planning Conference for Long-Term Community Solutions by Jake Salcone

On October 7th, at the Robertson Community Center in North Sacramento, individuals doing sustainable agriculture, nutrition education, and anti-hunger work convened for the first time, to discuss long-term solutions for community food security. Approximately 70 individuals from food closets and food banks, farms and farm advocacy organizations, social services, and schools and nutrition education groups came together to learn about food security topics, brainstorm needed action, and visit local food security projects.

The day began with a moving overview of hunger by Commissioners Steve Caruso and Cindy Nelson. Educational presentations followed on the topics of root causes of hunger, food production capacity and security, food and nutrition education, and access to healthy foods.

County Supervisor Don Nottoli and City Councilmember Ray Tretheway, both of whom had been strong supporters of the conference, joined us for an excellent locally-grown lunch. Conference planning group chair Juan Yniguez commented that both “seemed to be pleased with the turnout and tenor of the day.”

Following lunch, about 25 people participated in a bus tour of three local food security projects: Sacramento Food Bank Services, Soil Born Farm, and the Grant Union High School’s Environmental Organization (GEO). It was a very informative and inspirational tour.

Soil Born Farm founder Shawn Harrison emphasized that people need to be a part of the production of their food. Tour participants will not soon forget seeing Shawn yank a bunch of organically grown turnips from his garden and shaking them at observers while bursting out, “This turns people on! People need to see this!”

Grant Union High School students made an equally striking impression when they presented their progressive garden and salsa production project completely independent of their teacher, Ann Marie Kennedy.

Sacramento’s First Planning Conference for Long-Term Community Solutions met its grand expectations. Many participants commented how great it was to see individuals from all aspects of community food security discussing solutions together. Juan Yniguez seemed to capture everyone’s post-conference sentiments when he said, “I truly hope that we stay together and make a significant contribution to ending hunger and increasing food security in our region. In reality, our work has only begun.”

4. HOPE Awards banquet report (information provided by Judie Wilson)

The 6th annual HOPE Awards were presented after a gourmet dinner at the Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church Family Life Center on Thursday, Oct. 21.

--Longtime Sacramento activist Mary Watts received the Hunger Commission’s top recognition, the “Hero Fighting Hunger Award”. Through her program, Tender Loving Care, Watts has demonstrated her longstanding commitment to the community through her daily soup kitchen and her holiday dinner programs, and her work on behalf of the homeless.

--There were six winners of HOPE Awards out of 19 nominees:

- 1) The **Auburn Journal**, recognized for a series of articles which have provoked response to the needs of homeless and hungry in Placer County.

- 2) In cooperation with WIC, **Colonel Samuel Harris** and his Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School have provided garden plots which have brought families together and furthered the rich Hmong gardening heritage.
- 3) **Doris Lemaster** has co-founded and worked for 22 years on the Sunrise Christian Food Ministry, a food closet supported by 22 churches in the Citrus Heights area.
- 4) While serving as a member of the board of directors of the Elk Grove Community Food Bank, **Jean Sadler** has chaired the annual “Kids Can” food drive, spearheading a very substantial increase in its impact.
- 5) **George Spencer** was recognized for his outstanding performance as a volunteer worker and Seniors Advocate at the Sierra Arden Neighborhood Food Closet.
- 6) **Cora Sy**’s award recognized tireless work with Loaves and Fishes, Helping Hands, and the Wind program, plus providing 900 meals at Thanksgiving and 1200 at Christmas. She participates in and provides extensive support for an annual medical mission to the Philippines.

-- Other nominees for HOPE Awards were:

- o Carolyn Gavranich, Martha Jacoby and Sharon Junge of the UC Co-operative Extension for Placer County
- o Reverend Michael Christopher and HIS Bread of Life Ministry
- o John Dangberg, Tom Kigar and Eric Schlender of Capital Area Development Authority (CADA)
- o Pat Davis and Kevin Howe of Pat Davis Design
- o Patricia Dawkins of Eating for Life: Health Ministry, 5-day, Greater St. Stephen Baptist Church
- o Crystal Ham of the Elk Grove Community Food Bank Services
- o Bill Jeppesen of Effective PR, Inc.
- o Eric Krengel from Kennedy Estates, Mercy Housing California
- o Monday Outreach under the leadership of John Marshall at the Church of the Harvest
- o Cindy Nelson of the Sacramento Hunger Commission
- o Robbie Niles of Hillsdale Boulevard Baptist Church
- o Jim & Betty Park from Faith Presbyterian Church
- o John Rodriguez of Smogman
- o Debra Vernon of RWE SCHOTT Solar, Inc.

-- Golden Achievement Awards, for years of continued service to the hungry, went to:

- + Raley’s & Bel Air for their “Food for Families” program.
- + Loaves and Fishes Inc. for their multi-faceted programs at their Sacramento dinner site.
- + Sharing God’s Bounty, a program of St. Philomene’s Catholic Church in Sacramento.

-- A special “Unsung Hero” award was presented to Hunger Commissioner and Executive Board member Judie Wilson of Granite Bay. She was honored for her more than 45 years of volunteerism from scouting to running the St. John’s, Folsom Food Closet, to her service on the Hunger Commission as Outreach Chair for the annual Summer Lunch program and as HOPE Awards chair for the past 3 years.

5. Member recruitment for Hunger Commission 2005

There’s still time (barely) to apply for membership on the 2005 Hunger Commission—applications must be received by December 6th. Call Peggy Roark or download the application form from the Hunger Commission web site: www.targethunger.com, and submit it to:

Peggy Roark, Program Manager
 Sacramento Hunger Commission
 909 12th St., Sacramento 95814
 phone: 916/447-7063, ext 335
 fax: 916/447-7052
proark@communitycouncil.org

6. Passage of AB 1796

Californians who are former felony drug users (not pushers) and their families are now eligible for food stamps. After an 8-year ban, California has joined 32 other states and territories in allowing food stamp benefits for otherwise-eligible drug offenders in numbers estimated at 1,640. The new law will also bring into the state an estimated \$1.8 million in food stamp benefits for California families. The new electronic benefit cards will essentially eliminate fears of food stamps being traded for drugs.

7. Staff transitions

- **Jake Salcone**, who joined the Hunger Commission staff as a VISTA in November 2003, is now a Program Associate. He will still be involved with the edible landscaping project and its expansion, as well as follow-up to the Avondale/Glen Elder Community Food Assessment. Jake will also play a major

role in strategic planning, Hunger 101, and the effort to enable Food Stamp participants to use their EBT cards at local Farmers' Markets.

- **Jessie Brouwer** began working as a VISTA with the Hunger Commission on November 11. She received her B.S. in horticulture from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and has replaced Jake as our Kennedy Estates edible landscaping project VISTA.

8. Hunger Banquet

A unique program and discussion on local and global hunger and food security

- Saturday, December 4, 5:30 to 8:00
- Sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Community Church
At 7560 Florin Road, Sacramento
- Tickets \$1 (cash & in-kind donations for local food closet accepted at door)
Tickets at UUCC, or at door, or call 492-1677
- The event aims to foster discussion and generate action on local hunger issues.

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