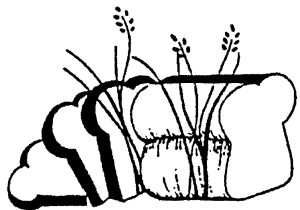


# WAUKESHA COUNTY NUTRITION COALITION



Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition

## One-stop shopping

The Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition's web site, <http://www.wcncwaukesha.org>, contains the Food Assistance Directory, coalition meeting information and other updates. To learn more, contact Coalition Coordinator Melinda Stuart at 262/970-4713.

*'We always need more food.'*

Unfortunately, the need for emergency food hasn't gone away. A recent study shows rising demand for food and a need for more food donations. Food providers, sad to say, suffer periods when the cupboards are bare.

Fewer grocery stores in the city and limited access to those stores add to food-security problems.

Coalition members say food programs now serve more older and newly unemployed empty nesters.

"I have noticed one of the age groups that suffers the most is in their fifties," one member says. "... they are just at the point where they're gonna start saving some money and (then) they get fired."

## • EVALUATION RESULT: Networking saves county \$\$\$

*T*he Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition is a network of 30-plus members dedicated to ending hunger in Waukesha County. Formed 10 years ago, the coalition represents food pantries, meal sites, shelters, congregations, community and government programs.

The coalition recently worked with specialists to study the group's impact. Relying on focus groups and interviews with past and present coalition members as well as community stakeholders, an **evaluation concluded the coalition has accomplishments** worth sharing with the community!

Perhaps **most striking is the value of networking**. Members say **monthly meetings** keep them informed of other service-providers' activities and **prevent duplication** – saving both the county and coalition members time and money. Members know and understand each other's missions, allowing them to do a better job of serving – and referring – clients. One member sums up the spirit of the group: "We're not reinventing the wheel. We're sharing information."

The coalition offers a forum for professional development, a **pool of shared experience** and knowledge, and a sense of belonging that keeps members motivated to persevere in their mission to eliminate hunger. Like a rope with many threads, the **Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition lends power and strength** to the efforts of many individuals.

## • EVALUATION RESULT: Projects stunt hunger in county

*'Programs are amazing! I take information back to our staff to educate.'*

*M*ajor coalition accomplishments include the following ongoing programs:

- **Garden cleaning** - donated 126,000 pounds of fresh produce from farmers' markets, local gardeners and other gardens to food pantries.
- **Food recovery** - distributed \$1.2 million worth of food from 100 businesses to 55 agencies.
- **Poverty simulation** - reached more than 400 community leaders, agency staff, educators, law enforcement personnel and elected officials with poverty simulations showing the day-to-day struggles of low-income residents.
- **Food assistance directory** - distributed a directory (printed in Spanish and English) listing local nutrition assistance, emergency food outlets and meal programs throughout the county.

### Surveys define hunger

To learn more about the extent of hunger in Waukesha County, the coalition has conducted several research projects over the past 10 years.

- One, a 1995 survey revealing a large number of families going hungry in resource-rich Waukesha County, led to the coalition's formation.
- A second survey in 1999, showing that 70 percent of those filling out questionnaires at county food-assistance sites were either hungry or at risk of going hungry, sparked a strategic plan for the coalition to address the hunger crisis.
- The coalition is currently conducting a third survey to identify the nutritional needs of families with young children.

*Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA.*