



WCNC Outlook

Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition—2009

Harvesting Hope

For inmates at the Waukesha County Huber Facility, spending time learning about gardening and nutrition from UW-Extension educators represents a step forward in their lives.

It's a "chance to do something constructive," Ray Cunneen, a corrections counselor at the work-release jail, says. "A lot of them take real ownership and pride as the garden grows and develops."

The partnership with Huber started in 2000, when the Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition received a \$10,000 grant to increase access to fresh produce through gardening. It began with a 20-foot-by-20-foot plot in the Waukesha County Community Gardens, with 29 inmates harvesting 132 pounds of produce. Last year, over 160 inmates grew more than 1000 pounds of vegetables. The Nutrition Coalition continues to apply for funding to maintain this program. All produce goes to the Food Pantry of Waukesha County.

"In 2000, we had groups of six people meeting once a week, remembers Ann Wied, a Waukesha County UW-Extension horticulture educator. "Now, due to overwhelming interest, we have groups of 15 participating twice a week."

From June through September, inmates walk to the garden from the nearby Huber Facility, to spend an hour learning gardening and healthy eating. Each lesson includes making a healthy snack from the garden such as zucchini salsa, spinach strawberry salad and watermelon punch.


Inmates say they enjoy the fresh air as well as the learning and service aspects. "I used to go to the food pantry when I was broke for food," says a participant, "so this is my way of giving back."

In just one session at the garden, another participant says she learned about transplanting seedlings, to give gardeners a head start and tomato ladders. "I want to do my own garden," she says.

In addition to tomatoes, the 45 X 70 -foot plot includes purple beans, yellow wax beans, peppers, eggplants, cucumbers, carrots, squash, and for a splash of color – pansies and petunias.

Corrections counselor Ray Cunneen emphasizes the value to inmates of the horticulture and nutrition curriculum. "It's not so much the physical aspect, but the educational component, he says. "They're exposed to the whole concept of healthy eating and the appreciation of actually putting effort into growing food."

Over 90% of participants felt they had learned information they would use or share with others and 95% said they would eat more fruits and vegetables. The hope is that the healthy lifestyle concepts presented during the lessons will carry over into participants' lives once they are released from prison.



Stepping Up to the Plate in Southeast Wisconsin

Hunger and food insecurity is becoming an increasingly urgent issue for many Wisconsin families. Statewide, approximately 560,000 people or one out of eleven households are food insecure (UW Impact report, 2005). This means that these households do not have access at all times to enough for an active healthy lifestyle. Low-income families are especially at risk for living in food insecure households (44%) or in households that regularly go hungry (19%)(impact report 2005).

According to 2000 census data, 8.7 percent of Wisconsin citizens and 10.8 percent of Wisconsin children live in poverty. In Waukesha County, 42% food pantry users have gone hungry in the last year. Additionally, 78% said food did not last through the month. (Food Pantry Survey 2008) Researchers have linked food in-

security to negative outcomes for children such as lower test scores, poorer school achievement, increased behavioral and health problems (see, e.g. Center on Hunger and Poverty, 2002).

There are indications that things may be getting worse. The current economic recession coupled with rising costs in food may cause more households to become food insecure. Issues such as lack of transportation also contribute to the growing crisis.

In response to the growing need, Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition partnered with the Wisconsin Food Security Consortium and other local agencies to hold a south east regional hunger summit, held on October 22, 2008. It brought together 102 participants from Waukesha, Rock, Walworth, Racine and Kenosha and Milwaukee Counties. Attendees represented a variety of organizations from area churches, local food pantries, ACCESS, the Boys and Girls Club, the Salvation Army, the Department of Public Instructions, community gardens, Meals on Wheels, UW Extension, and Community Action. Waukesha County had 16 participants in attendance.

Each participant was asked to complete an evaluation. There were 44 respondents. When asked if the Forum had increased their knowledge of the causes of hunger and the range of possible solutions, 93 percent said yes. When asked if participants would be willing to contribute to a collective response to hunger, 90 percent responded that they would.

Participant Comments
“There are still barriers to using the breakfast programs in schools.”
“The extent of hunger close to home is really shocking.”
“The problem is more than just the price of food. I hadn’t considered transportation and access to stores.”
“The problem is more widespread than I thought.”
“That transportation is a major problem, that Wisconsin does not provide nearly enough school breakfasts, that there is a growing need for more effort to combat hunger and that the use of food pantries is growing.”

The individuals from Waukesha County met after the Summit to discuss next steps. These are some of the suggestions.

1. Plan an annual fight hunger day in Waukesha County.
2. Strengthen relationships with for profit businesses to encourage partnering on hunger issues.
3. Develop a more inclusive resource directory.
4. Increase communication with local media.



Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition 2009					
JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
January 20 Topic: Salvation Army	February 17 Topic: Legislative 101/ Child Nutrition Act	March 17 Topic: Hebron House *Advisory Committee Mtg	April 21 Topic: County Budget Over-view –	May 19 Topic: Working with Mental Health Clients	June 16 Topic: ACCESS
JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
July 21 Topic: Immigration	August 18 Topic: Farmers' Market Survey Project	September 15 Topic: Self Help Court / Legal Aid	October 20 Topic: PACE – Poverty Awareness for Community Engagement	November 17 Topic: Common Ground	No Meeting Happy Holidays

Accomplishments in 2008

1. Printed and distributed Waukesha County **Get Active** guides at three neighborhood events. The guides continue to be shared at community events and can be downloaded from the website www.WCNCwaukesha.org
2. Collected over 15,000 pounds of fresh produce through the garden gleaning program.
3. Held poverty challenges in Sussex for both Hamilton High School staff and community volunteers.
4. Completed 400 pantry client surveys, representing more than 1100 residents at five Food Pantries throughout Waukesha County.
5. Participated in the regional hunger summit—see opposite page for article
6. Continue to hold monthly educational meetings open to both member sand non-members, distribute food assistance directories, work with the food recovery program, and educate the community on issues of



2009 Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition

Membership Form

The Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition currently has over 30 member agencies representing food pantries, meal sites, shelters, congregations, community and government programs. Anyone who is concerned about hunger and food security issues in Waukesha County is welcome to become a member.

Benefits of being a Member

- Relevant Meeting Topics
- Networking Opportunities
- Updates on issues in the community
- Partnership Opportunities
- Exciting Projects
- Problem Solving
- And much more

Membership Requirements for 2009:

- Attend minimum of 2 meetings per year
- Contribute \$10 per agency membership fee
- Support the mission of the nutrition coalition (listed below)

If you would like to be a member of the Nutrition Coalition please fill out and send in the form below.

Any questions—call Melinda Stuart at 262-970-4713

University of Wisconsin, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties cooperating. UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming including Title and ADA. WNEP education is supported by the USDA Food Stamp program, UW-Extension and local partners. Food Stamps can help provide a healthy diet. To find out more about Food Stamps, families with minor children can call 262/695-7971 or if you are elderly or disabled, call 262/548-7708

Agency Name (if not representing an agency please fill in individual's name):

Mailing Address:

Please send this form and \$10 agency membership to:
UW-Extension /WCNC
515 W. Moreland Blvd.
Administration Center Rm G22
Waukesha, WI 53188

Make checks payable to:
Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition

Email Address(es) (To receive agendas, minutes & other WCNC info. via email rather than U.S. mail):

Phone Number(s):

Names of agency representative(s):

A representative of my agency will attend a minimum of two coalition meetings a year and support the mission of the Nutrition Coalition:

Mission: *Through collaboration, cooperation, and information sharing, the Waukesha County Nutrition Coalition works to prevent hunger and food insecurity, provide information and education on nutrition issues, and promote social policies that achieve food security while honoring the dignity of those we serve.*

Signature _____