

## **Plan for Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Ashland and Bayfield Counties during fiscal year 2008**

### **Overview of Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Ashland and Bayfield Counties**

The Ashland and Bayfield Counties Nutrition Education Program was initiated in December 1995 to address the need for nutrition, food safety and food security education for limited resource families in the two-county area. Beginning in 1998, the program focus has been on impacting change in eating habits/nutrition through working with food stamp eligible children and young families. Children between the ages of four and five are establishing eating patterns. Between the ages of six and ten, those eating patterns are being reinforced; they will last a lifetime. The Ashland/Bayfield Project devotes a major portion of its energies to educating children from Head Start through elementary school during multiple group sessions in the classroom setting on the importance of using the Dietary Guidelines for Americans as the basis for food choices throughout life. Through hands-on classroom nutrition activities that excite children enough to take the information home to share, parents and older siblings are also being reached with healthy nutrition messages. During the 2005 program year, this project added nutrition instruction to middle school (grades 6-8) classrooms increasing the number of schools/classrooms covered. It is the hope of this project that children moving on from middle school will have had the 50 hours of nutrition/nutrition related instruction that research identifies as leading to stable changes in knowledge, attitude and behavior.

Reaching parents of the students we work with has also been a focus. In the early years of this project, the most widely used method of reaching parents was through information sent home with the children we had taught. We also worked directly with parents through nutrition presentations at Head Start parent meetings plus WIC and county health department clinics. While we were in specific schools, we were often asked to provide information on nutrition and our program in the school for the school newsletter. During the 2006 program year we took a pro-active approach and promoted a monthly page of nutrition information to schools for inclusion in their school newsletters or on the menu backs. This project has been most favorably received, especially in conjunction with the implementation of school wellness policies. In 2008, A/B-NEP will increase the opportunity for parent interaction by having a presence at school parent-teacher events.

During the past five years, the Ashland/Bayfield Project has increased its focus on food security in the two-county area including the establishment of a food security collaborative with representation from the two area tribes plus an additional twelve significant agencies. The Ashland/Bayfield project, through the collaborative, was instrumental in bringing a mobile farmers' market with fresh produce and nutrition education to the tribes and rural areas of the two counties where transportation and grocery stores are often lacking, farmers markets do not exist and many residents are eligible for and receive farmers market vouchers through the Aging Units or the WIC program. Nutrition around the garden programs have also increased for children as well as adults. Early programming was done with children around tribal community gardens or shelter gardens. In the past two years that education has grown to include educating parents in preparing the fresh produce for nutritious family meals as well as preserving the excess for later use. In the summer of 2006, the Bad River tribe VISTA program was moved to UW-Extension in Ashland under the supervision of the Ashland Family Living Educator. The Ashland/Bayfield Counties Nutrition Education Program has been and will continue to collaborate with the VISTA workers to expand our services in more tribal community programs as well as other low income groups throughout the area to improve food security in the two-county, two-tribe area.

## **Characteristics of the low income residents in Ashland and Bayfield Counties**

### Demographics of the Counties

Ashland and Bayfield Counties are two of the northernmost counties in Wisconsin with populations of 16,866 and 15,013 respectively. In Ashland County approximately 87% of the residents are white, while American Indians/Alaskan Natives comprise approximately 10% of the population. In the 2000 Census, the Hispanic/Latino population of Ashland County was 1.1%. During the past year there has been an increase in the Hispanic/Latino population of Ashland as workers have moved from the Twin Cities to take jobs in a sewing factory located in Ashland. These new arrivals to Ashland have impacted both the use of the Ashland Food Shelf as well as the free/reduced meal counts in the Ashland schools. Bayfield County statistics are comparable to Ashland with 89% of the population white and 9% American Indian/Alaskan Native. According to the 2000 U.S. Census data, 11.9% of Ashland County residents and 12.5% of Bayfield County residents live in poverty compared with the Wisconsin rate of 8.7%. Poverty rates of children under 18 were 13.2% in Ashland County and 16.4% in Bayfield County compared with the State average of 10.8%. Ashland County ranks 10<sup>th</sup> of 72 in individual poverty rates and 15<sup>th</sup> of 72 in the child poverty rate compared with other counties in Wisconsin. Bayfield County individual and child poverty rankings are 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> respectively. Ashland County ranks 6<sup>th</sup> and Bayfield County 5<sup>th</sup> when comparing the percent of population below 185% of poverty. Nearly 10% (9.87%) of Ashland County households have no vehicle available. Senior citizens comprise 16% of the Ashland County population and 16.4% of the Bayfield County population compared with only 13.1% of the State population. In Ashland County 9.4% of residents 65 and older are below poverty; in Bayfield County the number is 11.9%.

### Food Insecurity in the Counties

A Food Security Assessment was conducted in Ashland and Bayfield Counties by the Nutrition Coalition of the Chequamegon Region (recently renamed FEAST) with the aid of Northland College in late 2003. Thirty-nine percent of 919 respondents reported that they have enough to eat but it is not always the kinds of food they want. Twelve percent reported that they sometimes don't have enough to eat and 3% reported that they often don't have enough to eat. Top reasons given by respondents who did not have the kinds of food they wanted were: not enough money (80%), not enough time to cook (35%) and not enough time to shop (21%). Of the 12% who reported that it was too hard to get to the store, 39% reported the cause to be work schedule, 38% reported no grocery store nearby and 33% reported no car, or unreliable car. Of the 136 responding that they didn't always have enough to eat, 96% said it was due to not enough money and 26% said it was too hard to get to the store. Of 936 respondents, WIC (36%), relatives (27%) and food stamps (25%) were the top types of food assistance used. Over half (56%) of respondents reported they were currently employed.

## **Nutrition and nutrition education needs of Food Stamp Program recipients and other low-income residents of Ashland and Bayfield Counties**

Among Native Americans in both counties, diabetes is a major health concern. At Bad River Reservation, there are 243 adults diagnosed with diabetes. Overweight is another concern. In a study of obesity in children at the Bad River Reservation, being done by Dr. Adams of UW-Madison, 56% of youth ages 5-18 years are at risk of being overweight or obese. According to the Wisconsin Healthy People 2010 Data Package developed by the Bureau of Health Information and Policy in the Division of Public Health (February 2005 edition), 36% of Northern Region adults 18 and older were overweight with an additional 24% being obese. This represents an increase of 2% in the overweight category since 2000-2001. The Wisconsin Behavioral Risk Factor Survey revealed that in the Northern

Region only 12% of adults 18 and over exercised 20 minutes or more at 50% of aerobic capacity 3 or more times per week compared to the State average of 14%. There was no increase in those percentages for the Northern Region between the early 1990's and the late 1990's. Within the Northern Region, heart disease and cancer are the two diseases leading to the highest number of deaths. Proper nutrition and adequate physical activity can have a positive impact on all of these conditions.

In addition to this data, information on the nutrition education needs of food stamp eligible residents of this area was obtained through the Ashland/Bayfield Counties Nutrition Education Program Advisory Board made up of representatives of agencies that partner with this program. Again this year, in addition to the strategies this project already has in place, the Advisory Board recommended more opportunities for actual low cost meal/snack planning and preparation, identifying the W-2 Program and the developmentally disabled as the client base for this instruction. Recipes and food samples, using food shelf available ingredients, was identified as a need in serving those individuals using food shelves in the two-county area. It was also agreed that the new seniors curriculum should be promoted to senior nutrition sites in the counties.

### **Educational Projects planned for FY08**

**School Day:** Elementary and middle schools/classrooms (preschool-eighth grade), with at least 50% of the students qualifying for free or reduced lunch, will be taught nutrition and food safety based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines in multi-session groups. A monthly nutrition page distributed through school newsletters or on school menu backs will get nutrition information to parents plus reinforce classroom-teaching concepts.

**WIC:** Parents of infants/children will be taught nutrition based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines in one-on-one and learn-while-you-wait sessions at six sites in the two-county area. Focus will include the importance of physical activity as it relates to nutrition/weight management and use of the farmers market vouchers to increase food security.

**Health Clinics:** Parents of infants/children, adults and senior adults will receive nutrition education based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines through learn-while-you-wait sessions at immunization clinics held in conjunction with WIC clinics and health departments in the two-county area. An area of focus will be nutrition/physical activity as it relates to healthy weight.

**Senior Dining Sites:** Senior adults will receive nutrition education based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines through one-time and multi-session groups at five congregate meal sites in Ashland County. Six four-page nutrition newsletters will further the nutrition education of seniors at the meal sites in addition to reaching those seniors receiving home-delivered meals in both Ashland and Bayfield Counties. One focus of the education will relate to food security through use of the senior farmers market vouchers. The new senior adult curriculum will be offered at the larger senior meal sites in both counties.

**Gardens/Farmers' Markets:** Nutrition and food safety as it relates to fresh produce will be taught at 2 farmers' markets and in multiple visits to at least 6 mobile farmers' market sites through learn-while-you-wait sessions. Sites chosen, including both Bad River and Red Cliff Reservations, have a high concentration of seniors and WIC participants who have received farmers' market vouchers. In

addition, safe preservation of garden produce will be taught at both Bad River and Red Cliff Reservations in conjunction with their community garden/diabetes prevention programs.

**Preschoolers:** Children between the ages of 3-5 will be taught appropriate nutrition/food safety lessons based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines in multi-session groups at 3 Head Start sites in Ashland and Bayfield Counties. Preschoolers within qualifying school districts will also receive multi-session instruction on nutrition and food safety plus the importance of physical activity as it relates to food intake and good health.

**Parents:** Parents of Head Start/Early Head Start children and youth of school age will receive nutrition information through monthly Head Start or school newsletter articles and handouts sent home with the children. In addition, Head Start and Early Head Start families at 3 sites will have hands on food preparation experiences, including food safety, based on easy, low cost meals and the importance of balancing food intake with physical activity. Depending on the site, the hands on food preparation experiences will be one-time or multi-session. Parents of school-age children will receive nutrition information through learn-while-you-wait exhibits and one-on-one conversations at back-to-school nights at various schools in the two-county area.

**After School/Summer:** Elementary- and middle school-aged youth in two tribal communities will be taught nutrition and food safety, including simple food preservation, in multi-session groups. Education will occur around tribal garden sites and relate to garden produce grown at the sites. The importance of physical activity for lifetime good health will also be stressed.

**Adult Groups:** Adults in the Transition Housing and W-2 Programs in Ashland/Bayfield Counties will receive nutrition/food safety/resource management information through a series of classes including hands on classes in food preparation. The focus of the classes will be planning for and preparing economical meals and snacks based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines. New curriculum received in 2006 will be used for these classes.

**Food Shelves/Food Pantries:** Through learn-while-you-wait exhibits with appropriate handouts, clients at food shelves in the two-county area will receive economical food preparation ideas with a food sample and recipe built around the available food shelf foods.

**Disabled:** Disabled school-age youth and adults will receive nutrition/resource management/food safety education through a series of classes, including hands on food planning and preparation offered through facilities for the disabled in the two counties.

### **Food Security Programming Efforts Planned**

#### Methods or activities planned to raise awareness of hunger/food insecurity

Through our local food security group, FEAST, we plan to continue and expand the March for Food activities started during 2007. Through various films, panels of local experts, workshops, hands-on activities such as maple syrup making and container gardening, food security efforts should be enhanced. Home and community gardening will continue to be promoted and, through the work of the VISTAS, new gardening sites will be developed in vacant lots and parks throughout Ashland. The home garden tour, with an emphasis on the economic, nutritional and physical benefits of home

gardening will be continued. We will continue to submit articles to local newspapers and work with local governments to keep an emphasis on the issue.

Methods planned to compile data and assess status of food security

We will again collect data related to usage of the Mobile Farmers' Market at the various sites as well as the produce raised in community gardens and donated to the local food shelves. We will also collect data relative to distribution and usage of Senior and WIC farmers' market vouchers. We plan to work closely with the local food shelves and food pantry for changes in usage at those sites.

Plans to increase involvement of community groups in efforts to address food insecurity

Through FEAST, the resulting merger of the Nutrition Coalition and Sustainable Agriculture, as well as the Alliance for Sustainability and the three major communities along the Chequamegon Bay that have adopted the "eco-municipality" principles, Ashland and Bayfield Counties have a wonderful network to work within. Through this network of interested individuals, communities and organizations we are currently surveying area food producers, retailers, wholesalers, restaurants and school and community meal services for current food infrastructure as well as needs such as storage capacity, preparation/processing availability and transportation needs. Then, through advisory groups in at least 3 communities comprised of interested low-income and minority consumers, producers, entrepreneurs and others, we hope to develop additional means for getting local food from farms to tables.