

# **Plan for Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Grant County during fiscal year 2008**

## **Overview of Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Grant County**

The WNEP program was begun in 1998 after the Family Living Agent identified nutrition education for FoodShare eligible families and individuals as a need in Grant County. The program has grown from a primarily adult audience to now include youth in four schools. Adult audiences now include senior citizens, developmentally challenged adults, adults working on their GEDs, and women in a shelter for abused families. The program added a 50% nutrition educator in January 2003, and increased her time to 70% in October 2003 and then to 80% in October 2004. Formal reports are annually made to the Grant County Agriculture and Extension Committee on efforts of the program and in a written report to the County Board of Supervisors.

## **Characteristics of the low income residents in Grant County**

### Demographics of Grant County

The population of Grant County is 49,362 people, with 98% being white. Grant County has a higher percentage of people aged 65 and older (15%) than Wisconsin as a whole and a lower percentage under 18. It is a rural county with a population density of 43 people per square mile and experienced a low (0.7%) growth rate in the last decade. In 1999, Grant County had a poverty rate of 11.2%, higher than the 8.7% state average. The child poverty rate is 12.6%, also higher than the Wisconsin rate of 10.8%. Sixty percent of the women in the county are working; 23% of the mothers with school age children are working. Census data shows the cities with the highest number of poor individuals are Boscobel and Platteville (a college town). About one-half of the county's food stamp eligible population is actually enrolled in the program, 2,734 individuals. Participation in the free and reduced school lunch program, among eligibles, has improved to 79%. Three of the county's ten school districts do not participate in the federal School Breakfast Program. Three school districts have elementary schools with participation in the free and reduced lunch program over or near the 50% level.

### Food Insecurity in Grant County

Hunger and food insecurity are real problems for Grant County families. Using the statewide food insecurity rate of 9%, Grant County has 1661 households that have uncertain or limited access to food. Nearly one quarter of the households in Grant County have annual incomes lower than \$20,000, with the per Capital Income being \$16,764, well below the national average of \$21,857. Poor households are more likely than others to struggle to meet their basic needs. 18% of the families headed by a single mother are below the poverty level; 26.5% of the families headed by a single mother and having children under 18 years are below the poverty level; and 36.4% of the families headed by a single mother and having children under 5 years are below the poverty level.

Grant County WIC does an exceptional job of outreach to low income families. The food insecurity rate for WIC clients is 20%, less than half the statewide average of 44%. Participation in the FoodShare Program is increasing—from 3.9% of the population (1,909) in 2002 to 5.51% of the population (2,720) in 2005. The percentage of children participating has increased from 7.4% to 10.85% in those same years. A new food pantry in Patch Grove has served as many as 65 households, clearly showing an increased need in the county.

## **Nutrition and nutrition education needs of Food Stamp Program recipients and other low-income residents of Grant County**

Grant County was included in a 2001 community needs assessment done by the Southwestern Wis. Community Action Plan, Inc. which identified a continuing need to provide nutrition and nutritional education support programs to the four counties in the southwestern corner of the state. A 2002 survey of 1425 individuals for the Grant County Health Services Analysis listed parenting skills, encompassing poor nutrition and lack of exercise and obesity, as one major area of concern.

The USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion reports that only 10% of adults in the U.S. have diets rated as “good,” 74% “need improvement,” and 16% are “poor.” Well-educated adults typically have better diets. Over half of the adults in Grant County have only a high school education, or less, making the probability that their diets “need improvement” greater.

In Wisconsin, approximately 800 low-income persons entering WNEP in 2005 were asked about their current health behaviors and practices. When asked if they serve more than one kind of vegetable to their families each day, 58% of respondents said they do this sometimes, seldom or not at all. When asked if they choose whole grain bread instead of white bread, 65% of respondents said they do this sometimes, seldom or not at all. When asked if they choose fat free or lowfat milk instead of whole or reduced fat milk, 56% said they sometimes, seldom or never do this. When asked if they think about healthy food choices when deciding what to feed their families 47% said they do this sometimes, seldom or not at all. When asked if they use the “Nutrition Facts” panel on food labels to make food choices, 85% said they do this sometimes, seldom, or not at all. When asked if they are active doing things like walking, gardening or heavy housework for at least 30 minutes most days, 38% of respondents said they do this sometimes, seldom or not at all.

The working poor have difficult challenges in providing nutritious meals for families. Children of working mothers tend to have lower overall diet quality. Children of working mothers are more likely to skip breakfast, rely more on away-from-home food sources, and spend more time being inactive.

Grant County’s elderly population of about 7585 is a part of over 27% of the households in the county. The Center on Aging serves an average of 227 lunches at 12 meal sites and delivers an average of just fewer than 187 meals to homebound seniors daily. WNEP staff provides some of the WI DHS required nutrition education. Topics covered include dietary quality and food safety.

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

**School Day:** Educational programming for elementary school age youth in four schools, during school day. Programming will be a series of nine lessons per classroom and information to parents. WNEP staff will serve as a resource for information on healthy choices to school Wellness Policy Committees.

**Preschoolers:** Educational programming for preschool children at two Head Start classrooms throughout the year. Newsletters will be sent home to parents.

**Parents:** Educational programming for parents of children via newsletters. WNEP staff will contribute to school district newsletters, promoting physical activity, healthy snacks and the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

**Job Centers:** Educational programming for adults and families working with the FoodShare office. WNEP will provide “Tip Sheets” to be distributed to clients.

**WIC:** Educational programming for pregnant women and mothers of young children at WIC clinics. Learn-while-you-wait displays and newsletter contributions will be used.

**Health Clinics:** Educational programming for families who attend health checks scheduled through the Grant County Health Department. Teaching will be to individuals on a dietary quality topic related to a state-wide evaluation project.

**Disabled Adults:** Educational programming for disabled adults at a sheltered workshop and at a semi-independent apartment complex. Programming will be done with multi-sessions groups and with newsletters.

**Senior Dining:** Educational programming for older adults at senior dining sites, through newsletters, and through food safety flyers sent with home delivered meals. Food Share outreach will be continued.

**Food Pantries:** Educational programming for persons at eight emergency food pantries. Programming will be learn-while-you-wait sessions or via newsletters. Food Share outreach will be continued.

**Adult Ed Programs:** Programming for adults participating in Adult Education classes at three different locations in the county. Most programming will be single session groups.

**Sheltered Housing:** Educational programming for adult women who are residing in a temporary shelter. Because participants move often, programming will be designed for single session groups.

**Home Visits:** Educational programming for families or individuals in their homes. One-on-one teaching for a series of lessons. Referrals will come from the Health Department, Unified Counseling, etc.

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

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

WNEP staff will continue to distribute the Grant County Food Resource Guide and to promote the Giving Garden project. Poverty Simulations will continue to be facilitated by WNEP and the Grant County Hunger Coalition to interested agencies, school districts, etc. Staff are available to speak to community groups about poverty in Grant County.

#### Methods planned to compile data and assess status of food security

Nothing is planned but this program will cooperate with any agency desiring to compile data.

Plans to increase involvement of community groups in efforts to address food insecurity  
Grant County WNEP staff are members of the Grant County Hunger Coalition. The goal of the Coalition is “to alleviate hunger, food insecurity, and the effects of poverty in Grant County through education, coordination, advocacy and service.” Staff are interested in taking part in any School Breakfast Promotion project offered.