



Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan

Feeding America is the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization, serving an estimated 25 million low-income Americans each year through its network of 205 food banks and their 63,000 charitable feeding agencies, including food pantries, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters.

The current recession and the rise in unemployment are having a profound effect on the nation's food banks. In early September 2009, Feeding America conducted a brief survey of food bank members to learn more about the challenges faced by food banks, their member agencies, and clients served. A total of 176 food banks participated in the survey. What we found was that 99% of all participating food banks reported increases in demand for emergency food assistance over the last year. The average increase in demand across the network from Summer 2008 to Summer 2009 was 30%. However, the increase in need for services over the last year varies across the nation, ranging from 5% in some areas to more than 150% in others. Local economic circumstances, such as plant closings, can have a significant impact on need but it is also clear that high unemployment across the nation – which reached 9.7% in August – is a critical factor in the rising need for emergency food.

It's becoming increasingly more difficult for many food banks and their agencies to meet the needs of their clients, especially when new clients arrive all the time. Despite the fact that the nation's food banks delivered 2.63 billion pounds of food between July 2008 and June 2009 – an increase of 21.4% over the prior year --many are struggling to meet this increase in demand.

Here is a snapshot of what Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.



Formerly named
America's Second Harvest®

Estimated increase in demand or need for emergency food assistance:	We currently distribute 14% more food than one year ago.
Local factors impacting changes in demand:	<p>Since 1977, Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan has grown from distributing just one or two million pounds of food a year to about 28.6 million pounds annually, equivalent to more than 404,000 meals per week.</p> <p>An estimated 600,000 people in Southeastern Michigan are believed to be at risk of suffering from hunger. Each June when schools close, 250,000 children across Southeast Michigan no longer receive free or reduced priced meals, thus putting them at increased risk for going hungry. The Food Banks are able to alleviate some of the risk by providing food to approximately 77, 949 children.</p>
Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:	<p>Unemployment Underemployment Mortgage/Rent Costs Inadequacy of SNAP (formerly Food Stamp) Benefits</p>
Client trends include:	<p>More requests from existing clients More first-time users More children</p>
The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to turn people away:	Occasionally
The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to reduce the amount of food available per person or household:	Occasionally

Additional Comments: *Southeast Michigan, including Detroit is facing the highest rates of unemployment and joblessness in the country. The national rate of unemployment is 9.4%. The rate in Michigan is 15% and the rate in Detroit is an astounding 28.9%. To compound the crisis, in December an estimated 90,000 residents in Southeast Michigan will see their unemployment benefits expire. The non-profit sector is asked to be the safety net for increasing numbers of people in crisis.*



For further information, please contact:

John Kastler
Vice President ISS
Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan
Detroit, MI
313-923-3535 ext 240
jkastler@gcfb.org