

## Mobile Food Pantries: Leading the Way in Feeding America November 7, 2008



From coast to coast, Americans have been focused on the unsteady economy and the effect it will have on people with the greatest needs. Given the economic turmoil of the last few months, Feeding America has been closely analyzing the current economic situation related to hunger. The increasing needs of clients, greater expenses for food banks and pantries, and other indicators suggest that **this winter could be among the most difficult ever seen for the millions of Americans living on the brink of hunger.**

Hunger in America is widely misunderstood. Food insecurity is experienced by a diverse group of 35 million Americans. From the poor, to the unemployed, to working families, Americans are being forced to make difficult decisions about how to put food on the table.

A new poll<sup>1</sup> commissioned by Kraft Foods, our corporate partner for more than 25 years, suggests that Americans are increasingly concerned about their ability to put healthy, balanced meals on the table. Interestingly, these concerns are shared by people from different economic backgrounds. Compared to six months ago:

- 49.7% of those surveyed said economic changes have threatened their ability to provide balanced, nutritious meals from a range of food groups (including fresh fruits, vegetables and proteins) for their families.
- 44.7% said recent economic changes have threatened their ability provide enough food for their families.
- 56.3% of those making \$25,000 or less a year said they are more likely to use a food pantry.

More and more Americans are realizing that hunger is not invisible. In households earning between \$50,000 and \$75,000, 42.1% know people who are seeking assistance to provide enough food for their families, compared to 47.3% for those earning \$25,000 to \$50,000 and 63.4% for those earning less than \$25,000.

### **DIFFICULT CHOICES**

Working families are more strapped now than ever. While energy costs have moderated recently, prices for many products are much higher than they were just a year ago:

- Natural gas is up 15% and electricity costs are up 9%, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.
- Regular unleaded gas is up 13%, according to AAA.
- Food costs are up 6%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

As the Kraft poll showed, 56.1% of families earning less that \$25,000 said they now feel forced to make choices between food and utilities.



“More and more Americans are finding themselves in desperate circumstances, often worrying that they will not be able to feed their families tomorrow. We are grateful for the perseverance and creativity of our donors, who have helped us find new and innovative ways to get more food to people living on the brink of hunger.”

*Vicki Escarra, President and  
CEO of Feeding America*

<sup>1</sup> The survey of 1,000 adults 18 or older was conducted Oct. 7-14, 2008, by Synovate, a national polling firm.

## **FOOD BANKS FACE GREATER COSTS AND NEEDS**

The most recent surveys of Feeding America food banks also found significant and troubling trends.

- Nearly 99% of food bank respondents experienced an increase—estimated to be 15-20 percent—in demand for emergency feeding services within the past year.
- Last spring, 81% of the surveyed food banks indicated an inability to adequately meet demand without reducing the amount of food provided or cutting services.
- More recent reports show even greater needs this fall. South Carolina's largest food bank, Harvest Hope Food Bank, is seeing a 40% increase in hungry people (*Greenville News*, Oct. 6, 2008), and the Arkansas Food Bank Network recently reported that there are more empty shelves greeting food pantries seeking assistance (*KARK 4 News*, Oct. 6, 2008).

## **NEW DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS REQUIRED**

In addition, other circumstances are making it difficult for those with the greatest needs to access the services available. Many food distribution agencies are in counties that are more than 120 miles from the nearest food bank. The cost of transporting food and groceries to remote and rural areas has skyrocketed in the past year.

And now more than ever, many people are newly in need of food assistance and don't always know how to access emergency food services. To help meet this growing need, Feeding America has developed innovative strategies to provide more food to more people. Kraft and Feeding America have joined forces to implement one such solution—Mobile Food Pantries. Stocked with dairy products, meat, fresh produce in refrigerated compartments, as well as shelf-stable foods to provide families with balanced, nutritious meals, mobile pantries deliver food directly to people and communities in need.

## **Mobile Pantry Initiative**

We're pleased that Kraft Foods is awarding Feeding America \$4.5 million dollars over the next three years to purchase and operate up to 25 mobile pantries. By making an average of three trips a week, each mobile pantry can distribute the equivalent of more than 1.1 million meals annually to Americans who might otherwise go hungry. Over the next three years, as these vehicles are deployed across the country to neighborhood food pantries, soup kitchens, churches, schools or parking lots, it is estimated that they will provide more than 50 million meals to those in need.

This donation builds on Kraft's long-standing commitment to fight hunger and partner with Feeding America. Over a quarter of century, Kraft has provided nearly \$770 million worth of support in cash and food.

The need is great, and this is just one innovative approach to help alleviate what could become a hunger epidemic in the United States. But more help will be needed.

## **A NATIONAL CALL TO ACTION**

### ***Inaugural Fill A Bowl, Feed America Sponsor***

With the new burden on food banks, everyone must speak in a louder and more unified voice about what can be done to ensure that Americans do not have a long and hungry winter.

This fall, Feeding America is announcing a new call to action—Fill A Bowl, Feed America—which will help put additional meals on millions of tables this holiday season. Kraft will be assisting Feeding America in this effort and has pledged a matching grant of up to \$200,000 for donations made online at [www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org) starting Nov. 7.

Join Kraft and Feeding America today to Fill A Bowl, Feed America. Together, we can create a hunger-free America.