

# HUNGER IN AMERICA 2006

A REPORT ON HUNGER AND EMERGENCY FOOD DISTRIBUTION



Be a Part of the **SOLUTION**



3655 Reed Street  
Winston-Salem, NC 27107  
[www.hungernwnc.org](http://www.hungernwnc.org)



# HUNGER IN AMERICA 2006

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

*This report is excerpted from a comprehensive study commissioned by America's Second Harvest – The Nation's Food Bank Network. Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC is a certified member of America's Second Harvest*

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America's Second Harvest - The Nation's Food Bank Network*

- 1** About America's Second Harvest and Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC
- 2** About *Hunger in America 2006*
- 3** Who Seeks Emergency Assistance in Northwest NC
- 5** The State of the Emergency Food Assistance System in Northwest NC
- 6** *Hunger in America 2006* - Special Report for Forsyth County
- 7** *Hunger in America 2006* - Special Report for Guilford County
- 8** *Hunger in America 2006* - Special Report for North Carolina
- 9** *Hunger in America 2006* - Summary of Nationwide Results
- 10** How Can You Help?
- 11** Federal Assistance and Hunger-Relief
- 12** Acknowledgments

# ABOUT AMERICA'S SECOND HARVEST—THE NATION'S FOOD BANK NETWORK AND SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK OF NORTHWEST NC

## AMERICA'S SECOND HARVEST

America's Second Harvest—The Nation's Food Bank Network is the largest domestic hunger-relief charity in the United States. The Network consists of more than 200 food banks and food-rescue organizations. The America's Second Harvest Network secures and distributes more than 2 billion pounds of food and grocery products to charitable feeding agencies, which, in turn, feed an estimated 25 million Americans in need each year.

Members of the America's Second Harvest Network serve nearly every county in the U.S. including metropolises, suburbs and rural communities. Members serve people regardless of race, age or religion. Hunger does not discriminate and neither do America's Second Harvest Network members.

## SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK OF NORTHWEST NC

A certified member of America's Second Harvest, Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina collects and distributes food and grocery products to more than 380 partner agencies providing 650 programs that annually feed thousands of hungry people and others in need throughout 18 counties:

- ▶ Alamance
- ▶ Alexander
- ▶ Alleghany
- ▶ Ashe
- ▶ Caldwell
- ▶ Caswell
- ▶ Davie
- ▶ Davidson
- ▶ Forsyth
- ▶ Guilford
- ▶ Iredell
- ▶ Randolph
- ▶ Rockingham
- ▶ Stokes
- ▶ Surry
- ▶ Watauga
- ▶ Wilkes
- ▶ Yadkin

Since opening in 1982, Second Harvest Food Bank has distributed more than 90 million pounds of food and grocery products. Second Harvest Food Bank receives donations from national donors through America's Second Harvest; local food manufacturers and distributors; local grocery stores, caterers and restaurants; USDA commodity programs; a State Nutrition Assistance Program grant from the North Carolina General Assembly, a Community Garden and community food drives.

## TERMS

**Food Bank:** A charitable organization that solicits, receives, inventories and distributes donated food and grocery products pursuant to grocery industry and appropriate regulatory standards. The products are distributed to charitable human-service agencies, which, in turn, provide the products directly to needy clients through various programs.

**Food Insecurity:** USDA's measure of lack of access, at all times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members; limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods.

**Food Insecurity with hunger:** An involuntary state that results from not being able to afford enough food.

**Food Pantry (Food Closet):** A charitable distribution agency that provides its clients food and other grocery products for home preparation and consumption.

**Food Rescue Organization/Program:** An organization or program that collects prepared and/or perishable foods, from sites such as restaurants, hotels and caterers pursuant to its local health department and/or appropriate regulatory standards. This food is distributed either directly to needy people or to charitable human-service agencies, which, in turn, provide the food to needy clients through various types of programs.

**Poverty Guidelines:** The poverty guidelines are issued each year in the *Federal Register* by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds, another version of the federal poverty measure, for administrative purposes, for instance, determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs.

2006 HHS Poverty Guidelines	
Persons in Family or household	Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and D.C.
1	\$9,800
2	\$13,200
3	\$16,600
4	\$20,000



## ABOUT HUNGER IN AMERICA 2006

### PURPOSE

In order to solve the problem of hunger, first we must understand it. To that end, *Hunger in America 2006*, the largest study of domestic hunger ever conducted, provides an in-depth look at who is in need, how the need is met and by whom.

The America's Second Harvest Network seeks not only to immediately alleviate hunger through distribution of food and grocery products to people in need, but also to solve the problem of hunger in the long-term through public education and advocating changes to programs and policies that support low-income Americans and ultimately end hunger. This study is integral to these efforts.

*Hunger in America 2006* chronicles the nature and incidence of demand for emergency food assistance which, in turn, helps charitable feeding organizations better address the burgeoning need through program development and refinement. The results also better inform public policy discourse so that federal nutrition programs can better serve those in need.

### METHODOLOGY

*Hunger in America 2006* is the independent research conducted on behalf of America's Second Harvest—The Nation's Food Bank Network by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR), a leading social policy research firm based in Princeton, NJ.

America's Second Harvest contracted with MPR to work with 156 member food banks and food rescue organizations. Nationally, client data was amassed through face-to-face interviews with 52,000 randomly-selected clients of emergency food programs served by America's Second Harvest food banks and food rescue organizations across the country; 30,000 partner agencies of America's Second Harvest food banks and food rescue organizations completed a survey.

The report for Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC's 18-county service area is based on 564 client interviews and 257 agency surveys.

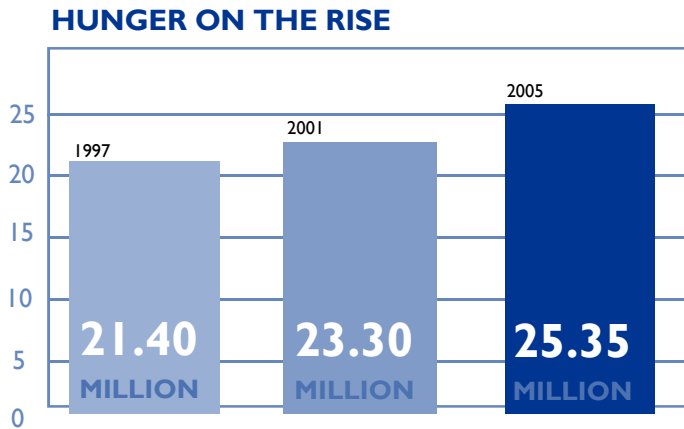
All aspects of the study were overseen by an independent review team comprised of noted social scientists, including demographers, nutritionists, academics and statisticians, who reviewed everything from the survey instruments to the final results.

For more information about methodology, please refer to the complete study at [www.secondharvest.org](http://www.secondharvest.org).

The results of *Hunger in America 2006* should be discomfoting. It is difficult to understand how people living in this land of plenty can have to make decisions between paying for food or other household necessities. It is troubling that children and seniors, the country's most vulnerable citizens, may have to forgo their most basic need—the need for food—because of a lack of resources. *Hunger in America 2006* tells the stories of more than 25 million needy Americans, including 134,000 Northwest NC residents. *Hunger in America 2006* is the largest, most comprehensive study of its kind ever conducted. The study provides authoritative, comprehensive, and statistically valid data on the national charitable response to hunger and the people served by private hunger-relief agencies.

## HUNGER REMAINS HIGH ACROSS THE NATION

The America's Second Harvest Network of food banks and food-rescue organizations provides emergency hunger-relief services to an estimated 25.35 million low-income people each year, or roughly 9% of all Americans. This represents an 8% increase since *Hunger in America 2001* and an 18% increase since *Hunger 1997*:



## SOME OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS for NORTHWEST NC...

- ▶ One in every 14 citizens residing in Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC's 18-county service area receives help from its network of partner agencies providing emergency food assistance. These agencies serve an estimated 134,000 different people annually.
- ▶ More people than ever are relying on emergency food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters.
- ▶ Second Harvest Food Bank partner agencies serve the area's most vulnerable citizens. More than one-third are children, many are seniors, and the average annual income is \$10,560, with 86.3% of all client households with incomes at or below 130% of poverty.
- ▶ Second Harvest Food Bank is by far the most important source of food for the emergency food assistance agencies it serves.
- ▶ The majority of pantries, soup kitchens and emergency shelters (60.7%) are affiliated with a faith-based organization.
- ▶ Volunteers play a critical role in sustaining the emergency food system.

## WHO SEEKS EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE IN NORTHWEST NC?

*Hunger in America 2006* shows that Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC serves some of the most vulnerable populations in the region.

### THE POOR AND NEEDY

#### Low Income

Clients seeking emergency food assistance from Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC's partner agency network are typically living below the federal poverty line. The average household income among all client households was \$10,560, with 86.3% of all client households with incomes at or below 130% of poverty.

Too many survey respondents indicated they had faced difficult choices no one should have to make: 63% had been forced to choose between food and utilities; 52% had to choose between paying for food or paying rent or mortgage; and 55% had to choose between paying for food or medicine or medical care.

#### Resource Poor

In addition to low incomes, recipients of emergency food typically do not have a lot of resources. 8% are homeless; nearly 41.3% do not have access to a working car.

Only 35% of the client households receive food stamps. Recipients stated that food stamp benefits lasted an average of 2.1 weeks.

Among households with children ages 0-3 years, 44% participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women and Children (WIC). Among households with school-age children, 52% participate in the federal school lunch program.

#### Food Insecure

According to the Federal government's own measure of hunger, 87% of all people served by emergency programs of the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC are "food insecure." (Includes client households that are food insecure with and without hunger.) **Among households with children, 91% are food insecure and 47% are experiencing hunger.** This data refutes the argument that requests for emergency food are driven simply by the lure of free food.

# WHO SEEKS EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE IN NORTHWEST NC? (Continued)

## CHILDREN

Children are especially vulnerable to issues of hunger and poverty. Nearly 81,500 children across Northwest NC live in poverty. Hunger has long-lasting, devastating effects on the health and development of children. Research indicates that even mild under-nutrition experienced by young children during critical periods of growth may lead to reductions in physical growth and affect brain development.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly 44,000 (33%) of the people served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs are children under the age of 18.

## SENIORS

Scientific evidence supports good nutrition as critical to the health and life quality of America's seniors.<sup>2</sup> Because of issues that relate specifically to age, including decreased mobility and limited outside assistance, the elderly are especially vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition.<sup>3</sup>

Nearly 9,500 people (7%) served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs are age 65 or older.

## THE SICK

Poor health not only affects seniors, but working-age adults as well. In fact, fair or poor health can lower job attendance or performance or restrict employment altogether.

45% of households served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs report having at least one household member in poor health. More than half of all clients reported receiving SSDI, Worker's Compensation or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in the previous month.

## THE WORKING POOR

Despite a strong economy in the 1990's and continued recovery from the 2001 recession, Northwest North Carolinians are still finding it hard to make ends meet.

More than one-third (37%) of all households served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs had one or more adults working.

When considering the employment status of all adults in client households, 22.8% of adult clients are currently employed (8.3% full-time; 14.5% part-time); 6.7% have been unemployed for one to two years.

A very small percentage of adults (4.2%) reported that traditional "welfare" payments (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or TANF, and/or General Assistance) were the household's primary source of income in the past month.

## SINGLE-FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

The majority of adults served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs are women (67.5%).

The *Hunger in America 2006* data is consistent with the USDA Food Security studies which show that low-income households with children were more affected by food insecurity than other low-income households and low-income mothers with children were "especially vulnerable to both food insecurity and hunger."<sup>4</sup>

## ALL RACES AND ETHNICITIES

The faces of the clients we serve are as diverse as the faces of America.

Among those served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs, about 57.1% are non-Hispanic white; 39.3% are non-Hispanic black; 2.3% are Hispanic.\*

\*Multiple responses were accepted for race.

## EDUCATION, POVERTY AND HUNGER

U.S. Department of Education and Census Bureau statistics indicate a link between education levels and future earnings. In the general U.S. population, 16% of adults have less than a high school diploma or equivalent.

By contrast, among those served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs, 43.8 have not completed high school or attained the equivalent. This data strongly suggests a link between low educational attainment and the likelihood of being poor and needing emergency food assistance.

<sup>1</sup>Tufts University School of Nutrition Science and Policy, *The Links Between Nutrition and Cognitive Development of Children*, 1998

<sup>2</sup>*Nutrition, Aging, and the Continuum of Care*, from *The Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 2000, 100:580-595

<sup>3</sup>USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, *Food Insecurity and the Nutritional Status of the Elderly Population*, May 2000

<sup>4</sup>USDA-Economic Research Service, 2005, *Household Food Insecurity in the United States: 2004*

# THE STATE OF THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE SYSTEM IN NORTHWEST NC

For the purposes of this study, the emergency food assistance system is defined as those private non-profit agencies that exist primarily to alleviate hunger in their communities.

*Hunger in America 2006* looks at the three main types of emergency food providers: pantries, kitchens and shelters. Excluded from this report are the tens of thousands of local agencies that provide after-school meals to low-income children, senior congregate meal sites, and similar local charities that provide food as part of their activities but that do not exist primarily to alleviate hunger.

Substantial resources are required to operate emergency food programs effectively, including community support, food, staff and physical space.

Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC provides much of the food distributed by its partner agencies providing emergency food assistance: 67% of the food distributed by pantries, 38% of the food prepared and served at soup kitchens and 34% provided by emergency shelters.

Second Harvest Food Bank is also the primary distributor of the federal (USDA) commodity donations -The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) to its partner agency network.

The *Hunger in America 2006* study also examined the capacity of local hunger relief agencies to meet client needs, including the overall stability and sustainability of the hunger programs. 49.6% of pantries, 66.2% of kitchens and 51.9% of shelters believe they are facing one or more problems that threaten their continued operation. Of these, 36.6% of food pantries, 61.9% of all kitchens, and 48.2% of shelters referred to funding problems as a threat to their on-going operations.

## CLIENT SATISFACTION

Emergency food recipients were asked about how satisfied they were with the amount, variety and quality of food provided to them at local agencies. The level of satisfaction is high across emergency food providers. 96% of adult clients said they were either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the amount of food provided to them. 97% were satisfied with the quality of food they received.

Emergency food recipients were also asked how they were treated by the staff or volunteers who distribute the food or serve the meals to them. 86.7% of recipients say that they are treated with respect “all of the time” by the agency staff.

## CRITICAL SUPPORT — VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers play a critical role in sustaining the emergency food system. The overwhelming majority of programs use volunteers, with 58% of food pantries and 13% of soup kitchens having no paid staff whatsoever.

The median number of volunteer hours during the previous week of this study was 34 for pantries, 114 for kitchens and 107 for shelters. The midpoint (\$7.90) of the current minimum wage (\$5.15) and the average hourly earnings from service occupations (\$10.65) can be used to obtain a dollar value of volunteer hours.<sup>5</sup>

## FAITHFULLY FEEDING THE HUNGRY

The hunger-relief agencies and programs served by Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC are predominantly faith-based organizations and represent the full and rich gamut of religious beliefs and practices in American society.

More than half (60.7%) of all agencies served by the Second Harvest Food Bank self-identify as “faith-based” or religion-affiliated organizations: 84.4% of all food pantries, 63.4% of soup kitchens and 51.5% of shelters are faith-based.

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. “National Compensation Survey: Occupational Wages in the United States, 2004” August 2005, Table 1, p.3

# HUNGER IN AMERICA 2006

## SPECIAL REPORT *prepared for* SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK OF NORTHWEST NC — FORSYTH COUNTY

The information in this report is drawn from a national study, *Hunger in America 2006*, conducted for America's Second Harvest—The Nation's Food Bank Network. *Hunger in America 2006* looks at the three main types of emergency food providers: pantries, kitchens and shelters. The Forsyth County report is based on 170 client interviews and 58 surveys of agencies served by Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC. Excluded from this report are local agencies that provide after-school meals to low-income children, senior congregate meal sites, and similar local charities that provide food as part of their activities but that do not exist primarily to alleviate hunger.

### KEY FINDINGS...

#### WHO SEEKS EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE IN FORSYTH COUNTY?

In Forsyth County, Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC provides food for an estimated 11,500 different people annually through its partner agencies providing emergency food assistance. Approximately 1,500 different people receive emergency food assistance in any given week.

#### THE POOR AND NEEDY

##### Low Income

- ▶ 65% of client households served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs in Forsyth County had incomes below the official federal poverty level during the previous month.
- ▶ 58.4% of client households have an average annual income below \$10,000.

##### Resource Poor

- ▶ 33% of clients served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs in Forsyth County report having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities or heating fuel.
- ▶ 30% had to choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage.
- ▶ 24% had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.
- ▶ 49% of client households are receiving Food Stamp Program benefits; however, it is likely that many more are eligible. Recipients stated that food stamp benefits lasted an average of 2.1 weeks.
- ▶ Among client households with school-age children, 60% participate in the federal school lunch program.
- ▶ 12% of clients are homeless.

##### Food Insecure

- ▶ 84% of all clients of Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs in Forsyth County are food insecure, according to the U.S. government's official food security scale. This includes clients who are food insecure without hunger and those who are food insecure with hunger.
- ▶ 23% of the clients are experiencing hunger.
- ▶ Among client households with children, 95% are food insecure and 15% are food insecure with hunger.

#### CHILDREN

- ▶ 48% of the members of households served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs in Forsyth County are children under 18 years old.

#### SENIORS

- ▶ 3% of the members of households served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs in Forsyth County are elderly.

#### WORKING POOR

- ▶ 43% of households served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs in Forsyth County include at least one employed adult.

# HUNGER IN AMERICA 2006

## SPECIAL REPORT *prepared for* SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK OF NORTHWEST NC — GUILFORD COUNTY

The information in this report is drawn from a national study, *Hunger in America 2006*, conducted for America's Second Harvest—The Nation's Food Bank Network. *Hunger in America 2006* looks at the three main types of emergency food providers: pantries, kitchens and shelters. The Guilford County report is based on 200 client interviews and 65 surveys of agencies served by Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC. Excluded from this report are local agencies that provide after-school meals to low-income children, senior congregate meal sites, and similar local charities that provide food as part of their activities but that do not exist primarily to alleviate hunger.

### KEY FINDINGS...

#### WHO SEEKS EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE IN GUILFORD COUNTY?

In Guilford County, Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC provides food for an estimated 41,700 different people annually through its partner agencies providing emergency food assistance. Approximately 5,600 different people receive emergency food assistance in any given week.

#### THE POOR AND NEEDY

##### Low Income

- ▶ 84% of client households served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs in Guilford County had incomes below the official federal poverty level during the previous month.
- ▶ 61.7% of client households have an average annual income below \$10,000.

##### Resource Poor

- ▶ 73% of clients served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs in Guilford County report having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities or heating fuel.
- ▶ 68% had to choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage.
- ▶ 54% had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.
- ▶ 34% of client households are receiving Food Stamp Program benefits; however, it is likely that many more are eligible. Recipients stated that food stamp benefits lasted an average of 1.8 weeks.
- ▶ Among client households with school-age children, 67% participate in the federal school lunch program.
- ▶ 9% of clients are homeless.

##### Food Insecure

- ▶ 92% of all clients of Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs in Guilford County are food insecure, according to the U.S. government's official food security scale. This includes clients who are food insecure without hunger and those who are food insecure with hunger.
- ▶ 61% of the clients are experiencing hunger.
- ▶ Among client households with children, 94% are food insecure and 62% are food insecure with hunger.

#### CHILDREN

- ▶ 27% of the members of households served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs in Guilford County are children under 18 years old.

#### SENIORS

- ▶ 8% of the members of households served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs in Guilford County are elderly.

#### WORKING POOR

- ▶ 41% of households served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs in Guilford County include at least one employed adult.

# HUNGER IN AMERICA 2006

## SPECIAL REPORT *prepared for* NORTH CAROLINA

The information in this report is drawn from a national study, *Hunger in America 2006*, conducted for America's Second Harvest—The Nation's Food Bank Network. *Hunger in America 2006* looks at the three main types of emergency food providers: pantries, kitchens and shelters. The North Carolina report is based on 1,902 client interviews and 1,194 surveys of agencies served by America's Second Harvest food banks in North Carolina. Excluded from this report are local agencies that provide after-school meals to low-income children, senior congregate meal sites, and similar local charities that provide food as part of their activities but that do not exist primarily to alleviate hunger.

### KEY FINDINGS...

#### WHO SEEKS EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE IN NORTH CAROLINA?

America's Second Harvest food banks in North Carolina provide food for an estimated 1,098,200 different people annually through their network of partner agencies providing emergency food assistance. Approximately 130,300 different people receive emergency food assistance in any given week.

#### THE POOR AND NEEDY

##### Low Income

- ▶ 70% of client households served by America's Second Harvest food banks in North Carolina had incomes below the official federal poverty level during the previous month.
- ▶ 54.1% of client households have an average annual income below \$10,000.

##### Resource Poor

- ▶ 49% of clients served by America's Second Harvest food banks in North Carolina report having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities or heating fuel.
- ▶ 41% had to choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage.
- ▶ 38% had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.
- ▶ 40% of client households are receiving Food Stamp Program benefits; however, it is likely that many more are eligible. Recipients stated that food stamp benefits lasted an average of 2.3 weeks.
- ▶ Among client households with school-age children, 58% participate in the federal school lunch program.
- ▶ 10% of clients are homeless.

##### Food Insecure

- ▶ 73% of all clients of America's Second Harvest food banks in North Carolina are food insecure, according to the U.S. government's official food security scale. This includes clients who are food insecure without hunger and those who are food insecure with hunger.
- ▶ 35% of clients are experiencing hunger.
- ▶ Among client households with children, 69% are food insecure and 35% are food insecure with hunger.

#### CHILDREN

- ▶ 29% of the members of households served by America's Second Harvest food banks in North Carolina are children under 18 years old.

#### SENIORS

- ▶ 9% of the members of households served by America's Second Harvest food banks in North Carolina are elderly.

#### WORKING POOR

- ▶ 33% of households served by America's Second Harvest food banks in North Carolina include at least one employed adult.

# HUNGER IN AMERICA 2006

## SUMMARY OF NATIONWIDE RESULTS

The information in this report is drawn from a national study, *Hunger in America 2006*, conducted for America's Second Harvest—The Nation's Food Bank Network. *Hunger in America 2006* looks at the three main types of emergency food providers: pantries, kitchens and shelters. The national report is based on 52,000 client interviews and 30,000 surveys of agencies served by the America's Second Harvest Network. Excluded from this report are local agencies that provide after-school meals to low-income children, senior congregate meal sites, and similar local charities that provide food as part of their activities but that do not exist primarily to alleviate hunger.

## KEY FINDINGS...

### WHO SEEKS EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE IN AMERICA?

America's Second Harvest food bank and food rescue organizations provide food for an estimated 25.35 million different people annually through their network of partner agencies providing emergency food assistance. Approximately 4 million different people receive emergency food assistance in any given week.

### THE POOR AND NEEDY

#### Low Income

- ▶ 68% of client households served by America's Second Harvest had incomes below the official federal poverty level during the previous month.
- ▶ The average monthly income for client households is \$860.

#### Resource Poor

- ▶ 41% of clients served by America's Second Harvest report having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities or heating fuel.
- ▶ 35% had to choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage.
- ▶ 32% had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care.
- ▶ 35% of client households are receiving Food Stamp Program benefits; however, it is likely that many more are eligible. Recipients stated that food stamp benefits lasted an average of 2.5 weeks.
- ▶ Among client households with school-age children, 62% participate in the federal school lunch program.
- ▶ 12% of clients are homeless.

#### Food Insecure

- ▶ 70% of all clients of America's Second Harvest are food insecure, according to the U.S. government's official food security scale. This includes clients who are food insecure without hunger and those who are food insecure with hunger.
- ▶ 33% of the clients are experiencing hunger.
- ▶ Among households with children, 73% are food insecure and 31% are food insecure with hunger.

### CHILDREN

- ▶ 36% of the members of households served by America's Second Harvest are children under 18 years old.

### SENIORS

- ▶ 11% of the members of households served by America's Second Harvest are elderly.

### WORKING POOR

- ▶ 36% of households served by America's Second Harvest include at least one employed adult.

# HOW CAN YOU HELP?

## BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION...

- 1 Invite a representative of Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC to speak at a meeting or function for your business, civic group, community organization or faith community.
- 2 Recruit members of your business, civic group, community organization or faith community to volunteer at Second Harvest Food Bank and be a part of our good works (weekdays and/or for our monthly Volunteer Saturday).
- 3 Volunteer to tutor at one of our 10 Kids Cafes, a program of America's Second Harvest feeding hungry children locally, or help plant and harvest fresh produce in the Community Garden at The Children's Home for the Second Harvest Food Bank.
- 4 Hold a food drive or become involved in a community food drive to collect donations for Second Harvest Food Bank.
- 5 Work with our development staff to plan and organize a *Making Room at the Table* potluck to raise awareness of local hunger issues and funds for Second Harvest Food Bank.
- 6 Organize your own event to raise funds for Second Harvest Food Bank through a fasting weekend, car wash, bake sale, etc. Consider timing it to coincide with National Hunger Awareness Day in June.
- 7 Stay abreast of current hunger-related legislation. Register at [www.hungeractioncenter.org](http://www.hungeractioncenter.org), sponsored by America's Second Harvest. You'll learn about current hunger-related legislation and can quickly and easily MAKE YOUR VOICE COUNT by signing on to letters about current hunger-related legislation.
- 8 Talk with your Congress members, state representatives and local officials and ask them to *Be A Part Of The Solution* to end hunger by supporting hunger-related legislation.
- 9 Learn about the critical role of federal assistance in creating a hunger-free America. Start by reading the next section of this report.
- 10 Be A Part Of The Solution — Act TODAY!

# FEDERAL ASSISTANCE AND HUNGER-RELIEF

## FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

The Food Stamp Program is the nation's largest federal food assistance program and the largest non-categorical entitlement program for low-income people. Participation in food stamps is crucial to helping low-income families attain a nutritionally adequate diet and move toward self-sufficiency. Unlike welfare or TANF, food stamps are not time-limited. Food stamps are targeted to reach low-income people who have the most difficulty affording an adequate diet.

Despite the important role food stamps serve in reducing hunger, only slightly more than one-third (35%) of emergency food recipient households nationwide - 3.8 million in all - participate in the Food Stamp Program even though many more are income eligible. Of the 3.8 million households served by food banks and enrolled in food stamps, the overwhelming number - 3.2 million - are food pantry users.

Nationally, 56% of eligible people participate in the Food Stamp Program.<sup>1</sup> Food stamp benefits last three weeks or less for 8 out of 10 food stamp recipients receiving assistance through the America's Second Harvest Network.

**The high level of need for income and nutrition assistance evidenced by emergency food recipients in the America's Second Harvest Network suggests a need for greater participation in federal food assistance programs, especially the Food Stamp Program.**

The findings of the *Hunger in America 2006* study are generally consistent with the federal government's food security study which estimates that just over half of food insecure households participated in one or more of the three largest federal food assistance programs: the Food Stamp Program; National School Meals Programs; or WIC.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> US Department of Agriculture: Food and Nutrition Services. *Reaching Those in Need*

<sup>2</sup> *Household Food Security in the United States, 2004; 2005*, USDA- Economic Research Service, pp. 26-31.

## 2007 FARM BILL REAUTHORIZATION

Next year, the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress is slated to adopt major farm and food legislation in an omnibus multi-year authorizing law, commonly called the "farm bill."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the House Agriculture Committee have held a series of field hear-

ings on the bill to provide interested stakeholders (farmers, conservationists, nonprofits, etc.) with an opportunity to voice their thoughts about program funding and legislative changes that should be included in the 2007 farm bill.

## Key Nutrition Programs Authorized Under the 2007 Farm Bill

### The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

TEFAP is a federal program that provides food at no cost to low-income Americans in need of short-term hunger relief.

In most instances, local food banks combine TEFAP food with privately donated food. This "leveraging" of TEFAP commodities with privately donated food extends TEFAP program benefits beyond the budgeted amount for the eligible programs. Federal commodities through TEFAP provide some of the most nutritious products received by hunger-relief charities nationwide.

Programs like TEFAP serve the public good in two primary and important ways: first, high quality, nutritious food gets to hungry Americans in an efficient manner utilizing the efficiencies and volunteer labor of the private sector, and second, the agricultural economy is strengthened through surplus commodity removal.

### The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) provides nutritious food packages for seniors, low-income pregnant and postpartum women and children up to age six. Approximately 88% of program participants are poor seniors who rely on CSFP commodities.

The CSFP is a critical nutrition program for many low-income seniors who live on a fixed income and who find it increasingly difficult to make ends meet due to spiraling health care and housing costs.

Ensuring that these vulnerable Americans are able to access wholesome, nutritious foods through CSFP is extremely important. Hunger increases the risk for stroke, exacerbates pre-existing ill health conditions, limits the efficacy of many prescription drugs, and may affect brain chemistry increasing the incidence of depression and isolation.

## **Key Nutrition Programs Authorized Under the 2007 Farm Bill (Continued)**

### **The Food Stamp Program**

The Food Stamp Program is the cornerstone of the federal food assistance programs, providing crucial support to low-income working families, children, seniors, and other needy Americans.

Households must meet eligibility requirements and provide information and verification about their household circumstances. Nationwide, approximately 60% of people eligible to participate in the program were enrolled.

A key strength of the Food Stamp Program is its entitlement nature, allowing the program to respond rapidly and effectively when disaster or economic recessions hit. With few exceptions (notably 1981-1983 following substantial program cutbacks), food stamp case loads have closely tracked the unemployment rate, rising as unemployment rises, and falling when it declines.

### **Conclusion**

Federal nutrition programs have a direct, positive impact on the financial security and stability of low-income households; the agricultural sector, including farmers and processors; businesses, such as grocers and financial institutions; and state and local governments.

It is essential that Congress supports a strong nutrition title in the 2007 Farm Bill that strengthens and enhances critical anti-hunger programs, such as TEFAP, CSFP and the Food Stamp Program to ensure that these initiatives reach as many low-income families, seniors and children as possible.

# HUNGER IN AMERICA 2006

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Food is a basic human need and right. No one should have to go to bed hungry or have to choose between buying groceries and paying rent. We hope this study will inform public policy, energize the response among the public and private sectors, and ultimately provide a better understanding of the complex issue of hunger facing the millions of people it affects. Ideally, it will bring us one step closer to ending hunger in our local communities, region, state and nation.

*Hunger in America 2006* reports for Forsyth and Guilford Counties would not have been possible without the generous support of Wachovia.

Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC's participation in *Hunger in America 2006* was coordinated by Daisy Rodriguez, Agency Outreach Coordinator. Her commitment and leadership in this effort are greatly appreciated.

Special thanks are in order for our *Hunger in America 2006* Volunteer Team. Thirty-one trained community volunteers joined a team of trained staff members to conduct a total of 564 face-to-face interviews with randomly selected clients of partner agencies across Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC's 18-county service area. We are grateful to each and every volunteer and staff member who participated in this study. It is our hope and theirs that positive change will result for the thousands of individuals in need served by Second Harvest Food Bank emergency assistance programs.

Many thanks, too, go out to our partner agencies that completed surveys following their random selection through methodology established by Mathematic Policy Research, Inc. With *Hunger in America 2006* results in hand, Second Harvest Food Bank will work to grow our capacity to serve all our partner agencies as they work every day to feed not just the bodies, but the hearts and souls of those in need.

Finally, we thank the 564 adults across our 18-county service area who agreed to share their stories with us, often answering personal or sensitive questions, thereby allowing us to participate in the study.

Special Thanks to Wachovia for their support of  
Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC's participation in  
Hunger in America 2006



SHARING THE ABUNDANCE SO NO ONE GOES HUNGRY

3655 Reed Street  
Winston-Salem, NC 27107  
phone (336) 784-5770  
fax (336) 784-7369  
[www.hungernwnc.org](http://www.hungernwnc.org)

