

## **Cedar Rapids Area Hunger Thought Leader Meeting – 2/21/2014**

### Topic One: Telling the stories of hunger in Iowa

- Media coverage is important to reach a general audience
  - Media likes to cover events, especially collaborative events like HACAP's partnerships with retail stores and Heritage Agency on Aging's "Fill the Plate" telethon
  - Media coverage matters: after the Gazette ran a story highlighting the need for Heritage Agency on Aging's elder meal programs, they received about \$5,000 in unsolicited donations and several new volunteers joined
- Need to move beyond statistics to tell the stories of hungry Iowans
  - More people need to know about why Iowans become hungry, communicating reasons for why people become hungry increases support for hunger relief among general public
  - IFBA brought plates with pictures and stories of hungry Iowans to the statehouse last session – these were important, they "changed the focus of the conversation in a good way"
- The best way to help Iowans understand hunger is to engage them as volunteers
  - Increasing volunteer participation in roles where they interact with hungry people is important
  - This is true among the general public AND people who are engaged with hunger, one participant said: "I already knew the data component, but it wasn't until I delivered meals myself that I really understood the need"

### Topic Two: Existing and new collaborations to alleviate hunger in Iowa

- Partnerships with businesses as a source of volunteers
  - HACAP: "we can't think of a major corporation in Cedar Rapids that we don't partner with in some way"
  - Partnering with businesses to involve employees as volunteers also raises awareness of hunger by involving people who might not otherwise be reached (even those who don't volunteer themselves will hear about it)
  - Businesses can also bring in volunteers with special skill sets
- Partnerships between service providers and/or others can increase capacity and is also attractive to donors and private philanthropists

- Table to Table: “we donate food to and receive food from HACAP – use these collaborations to get out in front of service groups (for volunteers) and the press (for awareness)
- Social Media: an area for collaboration as organizations who have someone with social media experience may not have enough internally generated content to send out to their social media networks, while organizations without social media experience have content but need help pushing it out (HACAP and Table to Table will try to work together on social media moving forward)
- Partnerships with schools and churches can spread awareness and involve additional people as volunteers
  - Garfield Elementary worked with HACAP on a “Fill the Backpack Drive”, students brought home information to their parents and came back with foods for the school’s backpack program
  - There are denominations with congregations in high need and better off neighborhoods, working to involve both congregations in hunger ministries as partners can spread awareness and increase capacity
  - First Lutheran Church: “after 25 years of a Saturday meal ministry, nobody in our congregation is ignorant of hunger, now we need to expand into churches in the suburbs that maybe don’t see hunger like we do”

### Topic Three: Existing and new opportunities for engaging lowans on hunger issues

- There is a universal need to identify and channel volunteers to opportunities that match their interests and abilities
  - United Way has a volunteer website, AARP has a volunteer website
  - Maybe partner with grocery stores to bring information and opportunities to volunteer and donate straight to people as they’re buying food (this is already done successfully on a small scale, especially at farmers markets)
- Opportunity to use statewide initiatives to bring attention to hunger
  - Blue Zones, Healthiest State initiative tie in to healthy food access and hunger
  - Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is partnering with Feeding America on an initiative promoting access to healthy foods – local partnerships with this initiative may interest press and donors
- Community Days and celebrations are an opportunity to engage lowans
  - United Way: “we do 2 days of caring, engaging 1000 volunteers across many issues, maybe we could work on one day focused on action and hunger

- Local food providers and allies should be at farmers markets, county fairs, small town celebrations – people need to see that helping to end hunger is part of what their community does (source of community pride)
- Intergenerational partnerships
  - AARP: examples from other states of grandparents and grandkids in a neighborhood gardening together and donating produce and/or profits to feed hungry people in their area
  - Opportunity to co-locate summer feeding sites (funded through US government, coordinated in Iowa through the Department of Education’s Bureau of Nutrition Services, managed by local partner organizations) with senior feeding centers – Heritage AAA has had success with this

#### Resources and Next Steps:

- HACAP’s Amanda Pieper will serve as the point person for future Cedar Rapids area thought leader conversations
- The Iowa Food Bank Association is planning a “Faces of Hunger” exhibit at the Iowa capitol with pictures and stories of hungry Iowans – they want to travel the state after the legislative session, opportunity to partner on an event in your area
- AARP has additional copies of and information about the AARP Hunger Survey
- AARP would appreciate opportunities to engage AARP’s network of volunteers
- AARP and Iowa Food Bank Association have a Virtual Food Drive website: [www.iowafooddrive.com](http://www.iowafooddrive.com) – please contact them with ideas for improvement
- [www.createthegood.org](http://www.createthegood.org) – opportunity to attract volunteers
- <http://unitedwayofeastcentraliowa.org/volunteering-through-united-way/> - opportunity to attract volunteers
- [www.iowahungerdirectory.org](http://www.iowahungerdirectory.org) – opportunity to network with other organizations fighting hunger across Iowa

#### Contacts:

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