

Waterloo Area Hunger Thought Leader Meeting – 2/21/2014

Topic One: Telling the stories of hunger in Iowa

- 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
 - Need to combat false perception that only chronically poor people use food banks, help the general public understand that food banks are a resource for the whole community, including middle class families or anyone who has fallen on hard times
 - Northeast Iowa Food Bank: we provided bottled water to the fire station after sections of the city lost water service this winter, it would have been good if the media coverage had mentioned that food banks were involved
 - 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”
 - Community Action Agency: Need to tell the story of basic services provision as a whole, people working on hunger and those working on housing, health care, other social services have a lot in common
- 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
 - Partners of the food banks (ie people at area businesses, churches, local governments) need to tell associates and employees about their involvement in alleviating hunger
 - Community Foundation: “It’s not that people don’t want to know or don’t care, rather it’s a matter of telling stories often and in many ways to reach people with a personal touch and personalized stories”

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

- Partnerships with businesses as a source of volunteers, board members, and funds
 - Northeast Iowa Food Bank: “John Deere is key for our backpack program, Community Foundations help in every county, United Ways help a lot... there’s probably not a major business in the counties we serve that is not supporting us 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, people to serve on boards, etc.
- Local governments – county and city level, can be valuable partners in alleviating hunger
 - Northeast Iowa Food Bank works with county health and other county programs: “Black Hawk county gives us money every year to operate a food pantry in their county”
 - Funding for county hunger programs can be difficult to acquire

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

- Opportunity to partner with “nontraditional” organizations such as museums, sporting associations, internationally focused organizations with mutual benefits
 - Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area: as a network of museums and historical sites, “we highlight Iowa’s historical contribution to feeding the world, we see an opportunity to bring local hunger issues into museums to tie into the historical stories we tell the kids and adults who visit us”
 - Self Help International: as an organization focusing on alleviating global hunger, “we want to collaborate to address hunger here as well”
 - New NASCAR racetrack in Newton could be an opportunity to further draw attention to hunger in Iowa through the Drive to End Hunger partnership
- The League of Women Voters is organizing 6 public forums in January – April while the state legislature is in session, people who care about hunger should speak up at these meetings

Resources and Next Steps:

- Northeast Iowa Food Bank’s Barbara Prather will serve as the point person for future Waterloo 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 – please contact them with ideas for improvement

- www.createthegood.org – opportunity to attract volunteers
- www.iowahungerdirectory.org – opportunity to network with other organizations fighting hunger across Iowa

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