

## Community Strategies for Reducing Hunger

Kansas communities can implement the following strategies to reduce hunger:

- Display posters or informational brochures, such as *Your Guide to Kansas Food Resources*, in public locations throughout the community. The food programs include Food Stamps; Women Infants and Children (WIC); free and reduced price meals through the School Nutrition Programs; Elderly Nutrition Programs; and various Commodity Programs. In addition to the federally-sponsored nutrition programs, many communities have local or privately sponsored programs such as food pantries or meal sites that provide food to those in need.
- Organize community food drives - a simple way to raise community awareness about the problems of food insecurity and hunger, and to engage broad segments of the community. Food collected through these efforts may be distributed in a variety of ways, such as through local food pantries or emergency meal programs.
- Organize community food pantries through donations and volunteer labor. Some food pantries also serve as distribution points for federally-sponsored commodity distribution programs.
- Create community emergency meal programs which are often privately supported and locally based, using volunteer labor. Meal programs frequently operate from churches or other community locations.
- Coordinate federally-funded summer meal programs for school-aged children and operate by community groups.
- Promote farmers' markets which bring nutritious, locally-grown fresh produce to community residents, often at lower prices than comparable items offered in retail stores. Some farmers' markets participate in the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, where seniors may exchange program checks for locally grown fresh produce.
- Establish a community gardening program to help low-income families supplement their diets with nutritious fresh foods by making garden plots and seeds available to community residents who wish to grow their own fresh produce. These programs offer the additional benefits of community-building and enhanced self-sufficiency through skill development.
- Promote food cooperatives or bulk purchasing groups. These programs generally operate as buying clubs where members pool their resources to purchase foods in bulk quantities at discounted prices, or as retail cooperative food stores that maintain an inventory more like regular food retailers. Co-op members often purchase items at discounted prices in return for their voluntary work contributions.

- Promote the Heartland Share Program. This program, which operates distribution sites in more than 200 Kansas communities, offers participants a monthly 'share' of foods purchased through group purchasing power at savings of up to 50 percent. To earn the discounted price, participants perform two hours of community service each month. Multiple shares can be purchased, so long as additional community service hours have been fulfilled. This program is open to households at any income level, and is a creative way to stretch food budgets while also strengthening community involvement.
- Organize and support food recovery and gleaning programs. Estimates suggest that more than one-fourth of the edible food supply in the U.S goes to waste through losses at various stages in the marketing system. Many of these foods (such as blemished produce that does not meet retail market standards, or excess quantities of prepared foods) can be safely recovered to provide nutritious meals. Recovery efforts can be organized as part of national initiatives such as the St. Andrews Society or America's Second Harvest, or on a local level.
- Provide educational programs to help families learn to stretch their food budget further while providing nutritious meals for their members. County extension offices are a good community education resource.

**For more information on these and other strategies, consult the following resources:**

*Together We Can! A What, Why, and How Handbook for Working to End Hunger in Your Community.* United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, January 2000. FNS-315.  
[www.fns.usda.gov/fsec/FILES/wecan.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsec/FILES/wecan.pdf)

*The National Nutrition Safety Net: Tools for Community Food Security.* United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. January 2000. FNS-314.  
[www.fns.usda.gov/fsec/FILES/SafetyNet.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsec/FILES/SafetyNet.pdf)

*Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit.* United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Assistance Research Program. July 2002. E-FAN-02-013.  
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan02013/>

*Hunger in the Heartland: Hunger and Food Insecurity Among Kansans, 1995-2000.*  
<http://www.khi.org>