

Conference call with Jonathan McCracken, Senator Brown's legislative aid
July 20, 2010
4:00 to 4:30 pm

Attendees:

Tony Siebeneck, Feed Lucas County Children
Kim Emch, Serving Our Neighbors (SON) Ministries
Beth Stewart-Magee and Alex Martin, Clintonville Community Resource Center
Steven Garland, E.L. Hardy Center
Cheryl Edwards, Ashtabula County Children Services
Christina Lenigar, Ohio University Kids on Campus
Nina Leonard representing Debbie Nerderman, YMCA of Greater Dayton
Jill Weiszner, Camp Chabad
Barbara Klie, Family Services of Middleton,
Mary O'Shea, The Cleveland Foodbank
Thea DeRosa, The Cleveland Foodbank
Susan Stobbs, Community Action of Belmont County
Anthony Battaglia, OAKS Family Care Center
Rev. Pan Defusco, Washington United Church of Christ
Diane Payton, Whole Again International
Cathy MacIntyre, Community Action of Portage County
Dustin Speakman, Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks
Nora Nees, Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks

Dustin Speakman, Director of Community Services at the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks, summarized the AmeriCorps*VISTA Summer Associate program. Last year 54 Summer Associates were assigned to 12 SFSP provider across the state and brought over 4,000 new participants into the program and served an additional 100,000 meals, as well as developed and coordinated innovative activities for both participants and their parents or guardians. This project received the honor of being awarded the Congressional Hunger Center's Victory Against Hunger award for 2010. This year we are working with 20 SFSP providers and over 100 Summer Associates engaged in similar work. This resource has been a tremendous benefit to sites in enhancing their activities, ability to complete paperwork and provide targeted and sustained outreach about the program to the community.

Nora Nees, Director of Child and Senior Nutrition at the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks, spoke to the tremendous support Senator Brown has given in working tirelessly to strengthen child nutrition and other programs that work to stabilize struggling families and communities and Ohio at large. Senator Brown has long acknowledged the needs of Ohio families and communities, reading letters from Ohioans at risk of losing their unemployment insurance on the floor of Congress.

Jonathan McCracken, legislative aide to Senator Brown, spoke to the Senator's recognition of the most vulnerable Ohioans and Senator Brown's long-time interest in the SFSP. While Ohio is

slowly and steadily increasing participation in free and reduced priced lunch programs and SFSP, creative approaches to increasing the number of children participating in SFSP are always helpful.

Tony Siebeneck, of Feed Lucas County Children, spoke to problems that limits on the number of sites a nonprofit sponsor can operate can cause in reaching children who are eligible for the programs.* FLCC expects to serve 250,000 to 300,000 meals and could potentially serve more were limits on the number of sites removed. He also spoke to the need to provide clarity and consistency on financial viability requirements to operate CACFP programs.

Kim Emch, of Serving Our Neighbors (SON) Ministries in Hilliard, Ohio, spoke to the unique administrative burdens of operating an SFSP site in a suburban setting. While many low income children live in suburban settings, they do not qualify for “area eligibility,” or simplified reporting because of the demographics of these communities.* The time and energy that goes into staffing the administrative side of SFSP operations is daunting to organizations wishing to start a site. The AmeriCorps*VISTA Summer Associates have been a tremendous help, spending nearly half their time helping with the paperwork requirements and half doing outreach, organizing activities and otherwise supporting the sites where they are placed.

Beth Stewart Magee, Clintonville Resource Center, spoke to the need to advertise existing programs. They are an Ohio Benefit Bank site and see so many of the new poor who don’t know about existing programs or how to access these programs. *

Steve Garland, E.L. Hardy Center, has identified 5,500 kids in the zip codes of 43211 and 43214 who are eligible but unserved by open sites in their area. There are no sites within walking distance. They operate 25 sites, are at the limit of the number of sites allowable for non-profit sponsors, but would be willing to add on as many as 20 or 30 more sites to feed a larger portion of children.* Other sponsors in the area are unable or unwilling to expand. Recreation Centers have been closing as a result of state and city budget cuts.

AmeriCorps*VISTAs have been able to vastly expand the outreach and activities that sites are able to provide at breakfast and lunch. The sites operated serve 300 kids every day and many of the sites have volunteers with great intentions but without the resources and energy to provide activities. These activities bring in many kids. Activities coordinated by VISTA’s include sports and playground activities, reading programs, computer lab support and assistance to help tutor kids in math and reading. Discipline, life skill oriented education and conflict resolution are also provided and greatly needed.

Cheryl Edwards, from Ashtabula County Children’s Services, agreed with the concerns expressed by other sites and that area eligibility should be lowered to 40% across the board. The AmeriCorps*VISTAs have done an excellent job with the sites they coordinate doing outreach and capacity building at these sites.

Jonathan McCracken spoke to the value that programs like the AmeriCorps*VISTA Summer Associates can bring to SFSP sites and responded to site issues throughout the call with insight into potential ways to resolve some of the issues expressed, including:

- * Limits on nonprofit organizations is addressed in Child Nutrition Reauthorization.
- * Area eligibility is included in Child Nutrition Reauthorization for rural areas only census tract by census tract. It might be helpful to develop a map by census tract with color coding for area eligible communities.
- * The Ohio Benefit Bank is a model for public-private partnership and one-stop for resources. It isn't a program that should be cut, particularly looking at the tough choices that will be made in the state budgeting process.
- * Historically there were some issues with SFSP sites and restrictions on the number of sites, children served were put in place and area eligibility was raised from 40% to 50%. There is a lot of consensus on the need to rethink these regulations and the cap of 25 sites will be revisited.

Jonathan McCracken asked that sites be provided with his email so that he could continue to serve as a resource to them and vice-versa in strengthening and simplifying programs like SFSP. He also asked attendees to be thinking of broad ideas in how to increase participation in SFSP, including the use of VISTA volunteers in outreach and support.