

Did You Know More Than 300,000 Central Marylanders Are Food Insecure?

Imagine not knowing where your next meal is coming from and not having access to healthy food within a reasonable distance from your home.

That is what it means to be “food insecure.” Food insecurity is the lack of available nutritious and safe food; some contributing factors include lack of grocery stores in neighborhoods, lack of transportation and increases in food costs (Food Research and Actions Center). It is rooted in poverty. For example, 18 percent of Baltimore City residents live in a “food desert,”¹ which is a geographic area composed of low-income residents who do not have access to healthy foods including produce, whole grains and low-fat milk. Food insecurity affects one’s ability to learn and slows cognitive development. There is increased susceptibility to illness and negative health outcomes such as diabetes, coronary disease and childhood obesity. And also, requests for food assistance consistently rank among the top five calls received by 2-1-1 Maryland at United Way of Central Maryland (2-1-1 MD at UWCM), our 24-hour health and human services hotline.

With food insecurity challenges in mind, United Way of Central Maryland (UWCM) gathered information on the current food security system landscape in central Maryland, reviewed food initiative practices at other United Ways and conducted interviews with leaders and focus groups with these stakeholders:

Anne Arundel Food Bank
Maryland Hunger Solutions
BaltiMarket (virtual super market)
Maryland Food Bank
Baltimore City Food Policy Advisor
Meals on Wheels
Brown Advisory
Moveable Feast
The Classic Catering People

Real Food Farm
Family League of Baltimore
Santoni’s Super Market
First Fruits Farm
USDA Food and Nutrition
Howard County Food Bank
The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
2-1-1 MD at UWCM
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future

What we learned:

- Food security is a critical, mounting need in our region.
- Access to healthy and affordable food is a particular challenge in low-income communities.
- Cost of food is rising.
- Solutions are multifaceted and vary by jurisdiction.
- UWCM is a key convener of stakeholders.

UWCM’S GOAL: ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

With our commitment to addressing the basic needs of the region’s most vulnerable residents and knowing that food is a necessity, UWCM has set a bold goal that can be attained with your help.

Expand sourcing of healthy, affordable food for low-income individuals in central Maryland by at least 1.5 million pounds each year and expand infrastructure so that 60,000 people have more consistent access to it.

HOW WILL WE EXPAND ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD?

1. SOURCING more healthy food locally

This includes growing (contract growing and farm expansion) and gleaning.²

2. DISTRIBUTING healthy food to low-income households

This includes transportation and refrigeration/storage at food banks and pantries.

3. INCREASING ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

This includes after-school meal programs, virtual supermarkets, FSP (Food Supplement Program aka “food stamps”) benefits accepted at farmers markets, Harvest of Plenty (holiday baskets), education and access to public benefits, Healthy Food Drives, etc.

FOOD STATISTICS

- Central Marylanders comprise 50.2 percent of those who are food insecure in Maryland. (Feeding America)
- At the national level, emergency food programs had a 46 percent increase in clients seeking services between 2005 and 2010. (Feeding America)
- The average FSP benefit in Maryland is \$32.61 a week per person. (USDA Food and Nutrition Service)
- Each year more than 3 million pounds of gleaned fruits and vegetables are distributed to low-income individuals and families throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. (Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network)

Food Insecurity in 2011	
Maryland	651,370
Central Maryland	327,300
Anne Arundel County	46,770
Baltimore City	130,050
Baltimore County	92,360
Carroll County	14,270
Harford County	23,550
Howard County	20,300

Feeding America

Increase in Food Supplemental Program February 2006-February 2011	
Maryland	118%
Central Maryland	107%
Anne Arundel County	146.2%
Baltimore City	83.3%
Baltimore County	152.3%
Carroll County	135%
Harford County	109.2%
Howard County	169.2%

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Farmers Markets			
Jurisdiction	Number of Markets	Number that Accept FSP Benefits	Percentage
Maryland	129	14	11%
Central Maryland	55	10	18%
Anne Arundel County	7	1	14%
Baltimore City	20	5	25%
Baltimore County	14	3	21%
Carroll County	6	0	0%
Harford County	3	1	33%
Howard County	5	0	0%

Maryland Department of Agriculture

HOW MUCH IS NEEDED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND HOW CAN YOU HELP?

2011 - Year 1: \$500,000 Target

The initial \$200,000 is already in hand and fundraising for the remaining funds is in process:

- Maryland Food Bank
- First Fruits Farm
- MAGNET (Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network)
- Urban Farming

2012 - Year 2: \$750,000 Target

Continuation of Year 1 investments plus programs to support sourcing, distribution, and access and affordability.

2013 - Year 3: \$1 million Target

Continuation of Year 2 investments plus programs to support sourcing, distribution, and access and affordability.

GIVE: There are two main levels of giving, including:

1. An unrestricted gift directed to the Access to Healthy Food Initiative
2. A specific product or service, such as our Harvest of Plenty

VOLUNTEER: It's easy to get involved:

1. By organizing a Healthy Food Drive
2. As a volunteer gleaner, packer, stocker, sorter, server, etc.

JOIN US!

www.uwcm.org/healthyfood

² Gleaning is the gathering of produce by volunteers after the commercial harvest.