

FOOD, from page 1

SNAP (which is about the combined impact of the November cuts with the current legislation) will lead to a \$15 billion increase for diabetes alone. People who have diabetes have to eat a very specialized diet and eat very regularly, particularly if they are on medication. On the other hand, if they're only able to afford what is called high glycemic index foods like soda pop, chips and bread, potatoes — you can fill yourself up for not a whole lot of money but they tend to make your blood sugar race up and down and there are more complications to diabetes.

If you're trying to save society money, that's not how to do it. What you're doing is increasing all kinds of impairments, learning ability, hospitalizations, behavior problems, and ending probably with a wash or worse in health care and education cost. And SNAP in particular: It's the only kitchen table program in that it feeds all members of a family. You can't go to a fast food restaurant and spend your SNAP there. All of the other programs (that provide food), they only feed people in congregate settings. So when you have a blizzard and those kinds of situations, they're closed.

The dose is too low and it's going to get lower.

J.Z.: And according to the statistics, SNAP cuts could have a disproportionate affect on communities of color.

D.F.: It affects impoverished communities. It's not a racial or an ethnic issue. It's a poverty issue. I'm sure you can make a strong argument that if you're concerned about social mobility, depriving children's bodies and brains, and also making their mothers hungry and sick, pushes them further back from the starting line. There are people who can overcome it. But we can do much better. We took it as a national public health measure and goal to make sure all people in the United States have access to an adequate diet and a healthy life.

J.Z.: In economic terms, sicker children need more health care resources: The average pediatric hospitalization

costs \$11,000. It seems that there's a passing of the buck in costs here. Who picks up the tab?

D.F.: If you're interested in saving health care costs, the dumbest thing you can do is cut nutrition. Food is the cheapest medicine, someone told me once. Bad food keeps you alive but it also has toxicity. The long-term costs are in the degradation of human capital.

J.Z.: From the context of the future generation's potential for "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," in a sense, this sounds as much like a constitutional issue as a fiscal policy matter.

MULTNOMAH, from page 1

Few people have viewed this issue from as many angles as Liesl Wendt, who is serving as interim County Commissioner for the campaigning Deborah Kafoury. Wendt is on leave from her work with the state's self-sufficiency programs at the Department of Human Services. She is also a former policy advocate for the Oregon Food Bank. She was also the executive director of 211Info, the statewide reference center, which manages more than 250,000 calls for assistance each year.

"The potential of roughly \$9 billion over 10 years will have an even more significant impact to Oregon and Multnomah County," said Liesl Wendt. "These are dollars going directly to support people's nutrition and the local economy. The ripple effect is significant, and the nonprofit sector, while an incredible system, cannot make up for the loss of such support from a public structure such as SNAP."

Oregon is one of the states that participate in the so-called heat-and-eat program, which is being targeted by the cuts. That program leverages low-income energy assistance benefits to bolster SNAP benefits for low-income families. The legislation now in the pipeline would limit that program, and other bills would further restrict payments based on energy assistance.

"In that program alone, more than 18 percent of families benefit from the program and are still struggling to make ends meet," Wendt says.

Oregon's SNAP usage soared in the second half of 2009 with the impact of the Great Recession. It has remained high under the pall of high

unemployment and low-wage options in the recovery. In November, when the boost from the federal stimulus package expired, the reduction was the equivalent of losing \$1.2 million per month for Multnomah County SNAP recipients, according to county figures.

Locally, Wendt says, both nonprofit and government agencies will have to adjust as people fall through the cracks.

"In the short-term, support for local food pantries and programs such as energy assistance are going to be critical," Wendt says. "In the longer term, the city, county and state, along with our partners in the private sector, are going to need to ramp up training and skill building efforts so that those who are underemployed, unemployed especially including the long-term unemployed, have an opportunity to build skills that match what employers need."

According to the Oregon Department of Human Services, in 2012, 112,000 Oregonians worked part-time involuntarily due to business conditions — two and a half times more than in 2007. And the vast majority of the jobs lost in the Great Recession, 88 percent, were middle-wage positions paying between \$25,000 and \$50,000 salaries. Most current and former SNAP recipients work less than full time, according to the state Department of Human Services.

"It's clear that the way the economy is rebuilding is still leaving far too many people on the sidelines. In many ways these cuts are a canary in the mineshaft and a call to focus in a more concerted way on creating a path to living-wage jobs."

D.F.: It's a human rights issue, the fact that it transcends the U.S. Constitution. In fact, stuff like the Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the right to adequate food is one of the rights. I come at this from a very medical perspective, but if you talk to people who are more philosophical, from their perspective it is a huge human rights violation.

J.Z.: What should people do? It seems both sides seem ready to compromise at this point on a \$9 billion cut.

D.F.: It's \$9 billion for the Farm Bill, plus the wholesale cuts in November after the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act expired. So essentially, it's like a \$20 billion cut. You can tell your state senators: Do not compromise this budget. Do not accept the \$9 billion cut. And make it an issue in the next round of elections. How many more hungry children do you want in Oregon?

Oregon is an example of a state that had one of the worst child hunger issues. I would think people would be very worried about what's going to happen next.

This isn't a partisan issue. Fixing hunger is one place that people ought to be able to get together without partisan issues.

It's very hard to work if you're sick and cold and hungry and worried about where you're going to sleep tonight. If all your time and

energy goes into survival, it's very hard work. Also the experience of being repeatedly hungry impairs children's ability to function in a knowledge-based society.

J.Z.: So it's more vital now than it was, say, 50 years ago?

D.F.: Absolutely! Today we're in a knowledge-based economy. You can't just go out on a farm or into an industrial setting and get a decent wage. I don't think it was so important when cognitive skills were not basically the only pathway to economic participation.

What used to happen was kids were very nourished until they got to the army and got to school, and then they would have some physical "catch," an environment that improved their diet.

J.Z.: There are a lot of issues that the federal government has trimmed back on — housing and other social services among them. In this case, where do you see the line between federal responsibility and social obligation?

D.F.: I think it's at all levels of society. It is in our country's self interest. It is a federal, state and local, nonprofit and individual responsibility. But really and truly, just like protecting the borders of our country is a priority of our federal government, so should be protecting the brains of our kids.

"The experience of being repeatedly hungry impairs children's ability to function in a knowledge-based society."

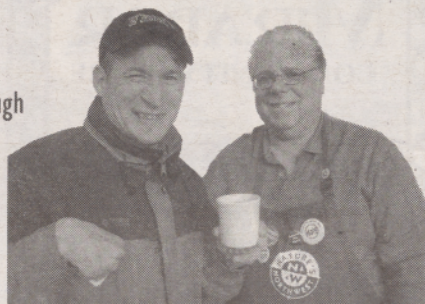
creating community,
creating change, together

SISTERS
OF THE
ROAD



We are—

- } Hospitality & Friendship
- } Community change through the Homeless Bill of Rights Campaign
- } Working together for nonviolence & justice
- } And don't forget: fun!



All are welcome —
Monday-Friday, 10am - 2:30pm

133 NW 6th Ave. in Portland
503-222-5694

www.sistersoftheroad.org



Natural Kitchen
& Home

2106 SE Division

503-231-5175

miradorcommunitystore.com

Mon-Sat 10-6 • Sun 11-5

Canning jars &
equipment,
cookware, kitchen
tools & appliances

Organic cotton
sheets, towels,
& blankets

Food dryers

Juicers

Books on meat-free
cooking, gardening
& sustainability