

HEALTH MATTERS

Poor Families Scramble as Resources Shrink

Food Stamps don't cover rising costs

(AP) — Danielle Brown stands outside a Chicago market at midnight for her first chance to buy groceries since her food stamps ran out nearly two weeks ago.

For days, Brown said, she has been turning cans of "whatever we got in the cabinet" into breakfast, lunch and dinner for her children, ages 1 and 3.

"Ain't got no food left, the kids are probably hungry," said Brown, a 23-year-old single mother who

relies heavily on her \$312 monthly allotment of food stamps—a ration adjusted just once a year, in October.

This is what the skyrocketing cost of food looks like at street level: Poor people whose food stamps don't buy as much as they once did rushing into a store in the dead of night, filling shopping carts with cereal, eggs and milk so their kids can wake up on the first day of the month to a decent meal.

"People with incomes below the poverty threshold are in dire straits because not only are food prices increasing but the food stamps they are receiving have not increased," said Dr. John Cook, an associate



Lynda Wheeler shops with her daughter, Jaime, 2, on Chicago's South Side.

professor at Boston University's medical school who has studied the food stamp program, particularly how it affects children.

People like Brown wait for the stroke of midnight, when one month gives way to another and brings a new allotment of food stamps.

Dennis Kladis began opening his family owned One Stop Food & Liquors once a month at midnight nine months ago to give desperate families a chance to buy food as soon as possible.

"I'm telling you, by the end of the month they're just dying to get back to the first," said Kladis, who has watched other stores follow his lead. "Obviously, they are struggling to get through the month."

Jean Daniel, a spokeswoman for the Agriculture Department, which runs the food-stamp program, said there is only so much the aid can do.

"Food stamps were designed to be a supplement to the food budget," she said. They "were never intended to be the entire budget."

As prices rise, the number of

Americans relying on food stamps has also climbed by 6.1 percent in the past year, increasing from 26.1 million in February 2007 to 27.7 million in February this year. The sputtering economy, persistent unemployment and the mortgage crisis have all contributed to the increase. The Agriculture Department expects the overall number of participants to reach 28 million next year.

For Lynda Wheeler, who receives \$281 in food stamps each month, the rhythm of life has been one of shopping for food, running out of food and then turning to churches, food pantries and friends for help. And all the while, she is doing things like cutting milk with water to make it last a bit longer.

"You get it on the first and it runs out by the 14th and 15th," said Wheeler, a single mom who brought her 14-year-old son and 2-year-old daughter shopping at midnight with the Link card, the Illinois version of food stamps.

The consumer price index for food rose 5 percent last year, the highest gain in nearly two decades. It is especially grim news for the

poor.

Start with milk. Between March 2007 and this year, a gallon of milk jumped from just over \$3 a gallon to nearly \$3.80, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. During the same period, eggs climbed from about \$1.60 a dozen to \$2.20. Bread, chicken and tomatoes are all more expensive than last year.

And just getting to the store is a lot more expensive. Since October, the cost of gas has shot up nationally from \$2.70 a gallon to \$3.62, according to the Lundberg Survey, a petroleum market research firm.

Diane Doherty, executive director of the Illinois Hunger Coalition, said she's seeing people more frantic for food than ever.

"The level of desperation is just frightening," she said. "People are calling, saying they have no idea what they are going to do."

But even as demand is rising, many food pantries nationwide have been forced to cut back on the amount of food given to individual families because higher fuel costs and commodity prices have sliced into private donations to the pantries.



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Lead Hazard Tests Now Available

Free kits raise awareness

In order to raise awareness about the danger posed by lead in older homes, the Portland Regional Lead Hazard Control Program is offering free lead dust wipe kits to households throughout the Portland area.

The free kit can be ordered online at pdc.us/leadhazard or picked up at participating children's retail and resale shops.

Many homes in the Portland region built prior to 1978 may contain lead-based paint. When lead-based paint is disturbed through remodeling, daily wear and tear on doors, windows and other painted surfaces, or deteriorated by age, it creates dust. It is this dust that can poison children.

"Lead in household dust is the primary source of lead poisoning in children. Testing your home is the first step in preventing lead poisoning," advises Sarah Gourde, PDC's Lead Program Coordinator.

Even a small amount of dust can be enough to harm a child. Lead can cause permanent learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and, at very high levels, seizures, coma and even death. It is important to have children's blood lead tested at age one and two since lead poisoning does not always show symptoms.

In addition to the free lead hazard-test kits, grants of up to

\$10,000 to reduce lead hazards in older homes are available. To qualify, household income must be at or below 80 percent of the area median family income (\$54,300 for a family of four); a child under age six or someone pregnant must reside in the home and the property must be built prior to 1978.

For more information about either the free test kits or the grant program visit pdc.us/leadhazard or call 503-823-3400.

Mental Health Careers Advanced

The Mental Health and Human Service program at Mt. Hood Community College is now accepting applications for fall term. The program is limited to 40 students.

Graduates report their education prepares them to step into well-paying positions in community corrections, working with the elderly, disabled and troubled youth/child

dren or persons with mental illness.

The two-year degree program is also a great starting point for a four-year bachelor's degree as credits easily transfer to several universities.

For more information about the program and how to apply, visit mhcc.edu/pages/1228.asp or call Leslie Allen at 503-491-7178.

Walgreens Free Clinic

A traveling education and health screening clinic on wheels will arrive at the Walgreens at 6116 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. and Ainsworth Street Thursday, May 22 offering six free health screenings valued at \$115.

The health tests are part of the Walgreens Take Care Health Tour making stops across the country. The procedures will take about 20 minutes.

The customized clinic will be open to the public between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. No appointments are necessary.

Childbirth Preparation -- Fridays, beginning May 30, from 7 to 9 p.m., the four-week series to help first-time parents prepare for a more comfortable labor and delivery with lectures, practice and discussions; \$85 per couple. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Ready or Not? -- Thursday, May 28, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., learn how to prepare your family for a major disaster. The class is free. To register, call 503-335-3500.

Cancer Survivors Day -- Saturday, June 1 from 2 to 4 p.m., at Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital's Building Three, Lower Level, cancer survivors and their families, friends and care providers will come together to celebrate life and unveil the new American Cancer Society Resource Center. This free event is open to the public. To register, call 503-335-3500.

Childbirth Preparation Class -- Mondays starting June 2, from 7 to 9 p.m., this four-week class series helps first-time parents prepare for a more comfortable labor and delivery; \$85 per couple. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Arthritis Discoveries -- Tuesday, June 3 from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. the Oasis Center at Macy's 4th Floor, downtown; \$5 fee. For more information, call 503-241-3059.

Infant Massage -- Wednesdays, beginning June 4, from 6:45 to 8 p.m., this four-week class teaches the rhythmic massage strokes designed to relax your baby (up to 6 months) and you; \$45 per couple and baby. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Breaking the Cycle Men's Conference -- Saturday, June 7, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Calvary Christian Center, 126 N.E. Alberta St., will host the workshop for men of all ages to discuss health, nutrition, addiction, communication and other issues facing men today. To register, call 503-422-8573.

Infant CPR -- Monday, June 9 from 6 to 8 p.m., for families with infants 1-12 months, teaching how to perform rescue breathing, CPR and choking maneuvers. This is a non-certifying class; \$34 fee per person. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Smoking Cessation -- Mondays, beginning June 9, from 7 to 8:30 p.m., this 11-week series will provide

HEALTHWATCH

support, coping skills, behavior modification, medication, patches, everything needed to stop smoking; \$225 fee. To register, call 503-574-6595.

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Caregiver Resource Fair -- Saturday, June 14 from 12:30 to 4 p.m. at the Legacy Emanuel Hospital Lorenzen Conference Center, the PBS documentary "Caring for Your Parents" will explore the complex issues of keeping an aging or disabled parent at home. This is a free event. To register, call 503-413-8018.

Managing Chronic Hepatitis C -- Third Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m., the informative session led by a registered nurse to help manage side effects of medications and dosage preparations and administration; doctor's referral required. To register, call 503-251-6313.

Big Brother & Big Sisters -- Saturday, June 21 from 10 to 11 a.m., this special sibling class is for ages 3-6, to help prepare them for their new role as a big brother or sister. Parents must be present. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Maternity Water Workout -- Helping new moms regain muscle tone, strength and flexibility, all in the support and freedom of the water. Call 503-256-4000 for more information.

Peer-to-Peer Recovery -- Peer-to-peer education recovery is a free nine-week course for mental health patients. Mentors who are recovering from mental illness are trained to teach coping strategies to others. For more information, call 503-228-5692.

Bereavement Support Groups -- Free, confidential group meetings for those who have experienced the death of a loved one offered on various nights and locations. For information and registration, call 503-215-4622.

Leg Alert Screening -- Check for peripheral arterial disease with this safe, simple screening using ankle and arm blood pressure. The fee is \$40. To schedule an appointment, call 503-251-6137.

Stroke Alert Screening -- Check your carotid arteries with a painless ultrasound to assess your risk. Fee \$40. To schedule a screening, call 503-251-6137.

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#8 FRIENDS OF HOOP SEATTLE (WA.)
6:15PM
#4 TEAM FREDDY JONES (OR.)
VS.
#5 TEAM CALIFORNIA (CA.)
7:30PM
#2 SEATTLE ROTARY SELECT (WA.)
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8:45PM
#3 TEAM REEBOK USA (USA)
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