

HEALTH

Need for Food 'Disturbingly' High

Oregon poverty rate has people strained

For the second year in a row, Oregon Food Bank agencies shelled out more than 1 million food boxes to families in need in Oregon and Clark County, Wash.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's most recent data, Oregon's poverty rate is growing. More than a half-million Oregonians now live below the poverty rate of \$23,050 for a family of four. And one in five Oregonians participate in SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, previously known as food stamps).

"Requests for emergency food stubbornly continue to climb," said Janeen Wadsworth, interim CEO of Oregon Food Bank. Food box distribution has increased 41 percent



since the beginning of the 2008 recession and is up 10 percent from 2010.

But unemployment isn't the only driver, said Wadsworth. "Underemployment and limited benefits have forced people with jobs to seek emergency food," she said. The high

cost of food, gas, utilities and rent makes it even more difficult for families to cover basic expenses.

"The downturn in the local economy has brought many new faces from all walks of life to receive services for the first time in their lives," said Marlin Martin, director

of the CCA Food Bank in Clatsop County.

A typical emergency food box contains a three-to-five day supply of groceries. On average, recipient households turn to pantries about four times a year.

Altogether, the Oregon Food Bank Network, which consists of 20 regional food banks and 945 partner agencies, provided a record 83.4 million pounds of food--equivalent to more than 2,000 semi-truck loads or about 64 million meals.

At the same time that lines at food pantries continued to grow, resources are down.

"Distribution of emergency food in our county continues at disturbingly high rates at a time when acquiring resources is more challenging than ever," Martin said.

USDA commodities to food banks in Oregon dropped almost 60 percent - from 18 million to 8.5 million pounds - during the last fiscal year.

To make up the difference and to provide for the growing need during that year, OFB dipped into its reserve fund for the first time to purchase more food for distribution, said Wadsworth.

"Even so, our network is straining to meet the unprecedented requests for emergency food," she said. The proposed cuts to SNAP (included in the farm bill) would greatly increase the number of Oregonians seeking emergency food and would simply overwhelm our network."

Wadsworth asks Congress and the community for help. "We ask for your continued support as we work to eliminate hunger and its root causes."

Consider writing your U.S. senator or representative and tell them we need to maintain SNAP, she said.

For more information, visit oregonfoodbank.org or call 503-419-4170.

Food Bank Leader Hired

Oregon Food Bank's Board of Directors has appointed Susannah Morgan, executive director of Food

Bank of Alaska, as chief executive officer of the Oregon Food Bank, effective Nov. 5.

The board selected Morgan after a national search, following the retirement of Rachel Bristol.




Susannah Morgan to lead Oregon Food Bank, serving Oregon and Clark County, Wash.

"Susannah brings 13 years of extensive experience in the non-profit sector and strong leadership in food-banking in the national arena," said Arnie Gardner, chair, OFB Board of Directors. "She has the passion, vision and skills to build on OFB's successes and to move OFB forward during a time of tremendous need and opportunity. We are thrilled to welcome her to Oregon Food Bank and look forward to introducing her to our community."

"I am very excited to join the outstanding Oregon Food Bank team," said Morgan. "Oregon Food Bank and the statewide OFB Network of regional food banks

and partner agencies are respected nationally for their holistic approach to ending hunger. I am honored that I will have the opportunity to use my commitment to collaboration and my dedication to innovative solutions to pursue the fight against hunger in Oregon."

Under Morgan's leadership, Food Bank of Alaska and its network tripled food distribution, made a significant impact on child hunger by becoming the largest sponsor of the Summer Food Service Program in Alaska, established Alaska's first mobile food pantry and built Alaska's first anti-hunger advocacy program.



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Food benefits to increase for some

As of Oct. 1, some households qualified for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, may see a very small increase in their monthly benefits.

Every year the federal government makes changes to the standards used in determining a person's eligibility to receive benefits.

This year, the USDA's Food and Nutrition Services has increased the current maximum deductions allowed for utilities and shelter. Therefore, clients with deductions falling between the old and new caps will see their monthly benefits increase by up to \$3.

Clients do not need to take any action to see how the new standards might affect them. Program eligibility requirements remain the same.

The state will automatically recalculate cases and increase benefits for those who qualify. Any additional amounts will show on the client's October issuance of benefits.