



Conference Takeaways: MontCo Emergency Food System Conference

January 30th, 2015

We thought the MontCo Emergency Food System Conference was a great success! To make sure we captured the conversations, ideas, and resources shared at the conference, we made this takeaway sheet. We hope it's helpful!

General takeaways:

- **There are a lot of great people doing great work around food in MontCo.** There are over 50 food pantries and soup kitchens and dozens of collaborative and advocacy organizations. Lots of people who had been working in the county for years met people that they didn't know at the conference.
- **We have a lot to learn from each other.** Everyone we heard from has found impressive ways to improve nutrition, increase donations, and serve their neighbors better.
- **Most pantries want to increase access to fresh food and improve nutrition.** Most providers have struggled with how to best serve their clients good food and have come up with a myriad of solutions, including donations from farmers (see below).
- **Demand for services is rising and is becoming more complex.** The economic and cultural landscapes of poverty and hunger have been changing in the US and the county. More people are coming who work full time, more people have special dietary needs, and more people are coming in general.

Table discussion takeaways:

- **Many pantries** are switching to choice pantries, creating gardens in their backyards, expanding their services, and much more.
- Here are some examples we captured:
 - **Larry Tse from Greener Partners** mentioned that his farm is *looking to donate fresh produce* in the summer, contact him at lawrencetse@gmail.com

- **The Benefits Data Trust** is helping to enroll seniors in SNAP
- **Shepherd's Shelf** is helping connect clients to Veterinary services and pet food
- **Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities** has started a WISE Shopper Program that teaches clients about nutrition
- **Loaves and Fishes Pantry** has started a cleaning product program
- **Philabundance** has a Grocers Against Hunger program that connects a pantry with a grocery store that wants to donate food
- **The Food Trust** is providing education to corner stores on nutrition and healthy food
- **St. James** is partnering with local restaurants to have them give 10% of profits to pantries
- **Keystone Opportunity Center** is hosting food drives at supermarkets where pantry gives a list to patrons of what they need, and they purchase food for pantry.

Presentation takeaways:

- **If you want funding**- look towards The North Penn Community Health Foundation. The Foundation has started a new focus on food security. It is funding coalitions of food pantries, individual pantry projects, and is now starting a new round of capacity grants. Contact Tamela Luce at TLuce@npchf.org
- **If you want to know your clients**- try the Norristown Client Survey. With funding from the Foundation, Catholic Social Services surveyed the clients they served and learned valuable lessons about their needs and preferences. CSS is doing a second round of the survey soon and your pantry can participate. Contact Liz Peteraf at epeteraf@CHS-ADPHILA.ORG .
- **If you're interested in serving children**- look at Manna on Main Street's new program. With funding from the Foundation, it has created a multi program system to get healthy foods to kids, such as the Cool Kids Corner in its pantry. Contact Suzan Neiger Gould at execdir@mannaonmain.org.
- **If you want to network with your fellow food providers**- join a local coalition! We heard from Advocates Against Hunger in Norristown and its impressive produce market, and there are three other groups across the county that food providers can join:
 - *Advocates Against Hunger* (Norristown). Contact Kary LaFors at AdvocatesAHLaFors@aol.com.
 - *The Intercounty Food Network* (Western coalition). Contact Sherrie Fazekas at 610-970-5995x3.

- *The Nutrition Coalition* (North Penn). Contact Julie McCabe at Julie@mannaonmain.org.
- *The Eastern coalition*. Contact Pat Druhan at pdruhan@cadcom.org
- **If you want to know about food providers in MontCo-** MAHN is trying to create a network. MAHN has data, maps, and graphs on providers' services, food, facilities, operations, and capacity. MAHN is also hosting conferences, writing a newsletter, and supporting the local coalitions. Contact montcoantihungernetwork@gmail.com
- **If you need civil rights training** or any other state training, contact Pat Druhan at pdruhan@cadcom.org.