



# OFRAH Oregon Faith Roundtable Against Hunger

...Addressing the Root Causes of Hunger in Oregon

<http://ofrah.wordpress.com/>

## WHAT CAN JUST ONE PERSON DO?

A personally-handwritten letter matters.

Constituents matter.

Having all your friends write MATTERS!

## SUMMARIES OF THE OREGON FAITH ROUNDTABLE AGAINST HUNGER PORTLAND GENERAL MEETINGS

### JULY: ENDING POVERTY THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY

**Paul Schroeder, the Coordinator of Faith-Based Resources for JOIN, presented the New City Initiative.** New City Initiative began as CUSINA; Paul Schroeder is its founder, CUSINA began in 2007 as a unique partnership between Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Portland, Oregon, and JOIN. The CUSINA concept was to take the “genius” of the Holy Trinity Community—its rich experience and heritage of traditional Greek cuisine—and turn this into an opportunity to engage and create a new kind of supportive community with people transitioning out of homelessness. The result: a six-week series of Greek cooking classes taught by six local Greek restaurateurs. Its fundamental purpose is to build relationships and community.

### AUGUST: ENDING HUNGER BEFORE IT BEGINS

**The Oregon Hunger Task Force and Partners for a Hungry Free Oregon presented its 5-Year Plan “Ending Hunger Before it Begins: Oregon’s Call to Action.”**

Oregon is the 2<sup>nd</sup> hungriest and food insecure state: 1 in 5 Oregonians rely on SNAP (food stamps). 48.6% of students are eligible for free school meals. 240,000 emergency food boxes are issued each month.

The Oregon Hunger Task Force set three goals with specific recommendations for each:

1. Increase the economic stability for people, communities, and the state
2. Cultivate a strong regional food system in Oregon
3. Improve the food assistance safety net (including school community gardens)

### SEPTEMBER: 30 WAYS TO FIGHT HUNGER IN 30 DAYS

**Sarah Flynn of Oregon Food Bank West presented opportunities for advocacy and community involvement** through Hunger Action Month, and becoming a Community Food Champion. Washington County has one of the highest rates of food insecurity in the state—demand for emergency food boxes has increased 28%--OFB’s much larger facility is necessary to fill a need. The meeting included a tour of the new Oregon Food Bank Facility with a Learning Garden and the Nutrition Kitchen.

### OCTOBER: FOOD: LOCAL CHALLENGES & GLOBAL ISSUES

Emily Harris, host of Oregon Public Broadcasting's "Think Out Loud" moderated a panel discussion on the complexities of buying local, supporting local organic food and the effects of the global economy.

### NOVEMBER: OFRAH’S ANNUAL HARVEST OF HOPE BREAKFAST

## **JANUARY: MOM AND DAD, CAN YOU SPARE 700 MILLION DOLLARS?**

**OFRAH presented "Healthy Elders, Healthy Communities,"** its plan to engage the faith community in encouraging seniors in Oregon to enroll in SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps). Through this plan OFRAH engages denominations and faith communities to encourage their congregations to share key information. Faith communities have an important reach to senior populations, both through their members and through their relationships with others in their community.

Two-thirds of Oregon seniors eligible for SNAP fail to take advantage of this federal program. That's \$700 million of their tax dollars that we left on the table. Yet many seniors are financially constrained—the economy has wrecked many a carefully constructed retirement strategy.

Oregon ranks third in the nation for hunger or Very Low Food Security. In our country, hunger is often a hidden problem. SNAP is a program that helps people eat right when money is tight; with SNAP, nutritional and healthy food within reach of low-income households

## **FEBRUARY: WE ARE IN THE BUSINESS OF HOPE**

Oregon ranks third in the nation for hunger or Very Low Food Security. We were recently second but another state got worse; for the hungry in Oregon, nothing changed. But something must change and **Partners for a Hungry-Free Oregon presented its 2011 State Legislative Agenda** while there was an opportunity for change while the State Legislature in session.

The vision for the Partners for a Hungry-Free Oregon 2011 State Legislative Agenda is "an Oregon where all children, families and individuals have the opportunity to be stable, hunger-free and healthy, with a foundation in place to succeed in school, work and life. One goal is to put more money in the pockets of the poor and low-income so they can buy food themselves.

## **MARCH: EVERYONE DOES BETTER WHEN EVERYONE DOES BETTER**

Because of a shortfall of 3.6 billion dollars, Oregon has a small pie of a budget where everyone must receive a smaller slice of the pie. Sometimes when there are not even enough small slices for everyone to share *we must ensure that the poor and vulnerable are fed first*. But they have a smaller voice, or no voice at all, and it's difficult to be heard.

When business and larger interests are mobilized and using a loud voice, the rest of us must be spiritually resolved to speak for those who are hungry, homeless, worried about their health.

People of faith must advocate for a slice of the pie before nothing is left. We take the principles from our traditions, use our faith-based lens, rely on stories from our congregations, those we know, those we serve, and we speak for them. Presented by **Kevin Finney of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon**

## **APRIL: WHO GET'S HURT?**

**Chuck Sheketoff, Executive Director for the Oregon Center for Public Policy** presented on "Addressing Poverty at the State Level." Oregon's revenue shortfall today is \$3.6 billion dollars. Without a discussion on new revenue sources, the Oregon State Legislature looks to reduce the projected deficit through eliminating some tax credits and reducing a lot of tax expenditures. Who gets hurt?

55,000 dependent children in Oregon receive help from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)." \$506 is the maximum cash assistance a family of three that qualifies would receive each month.

Under proposed legislation, a single parent would have 18 months to find a job, without job training programs, before the TANF limit expired. Families currently have a 60-month *lifetime* limit to receive TANF, which includes job training.

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