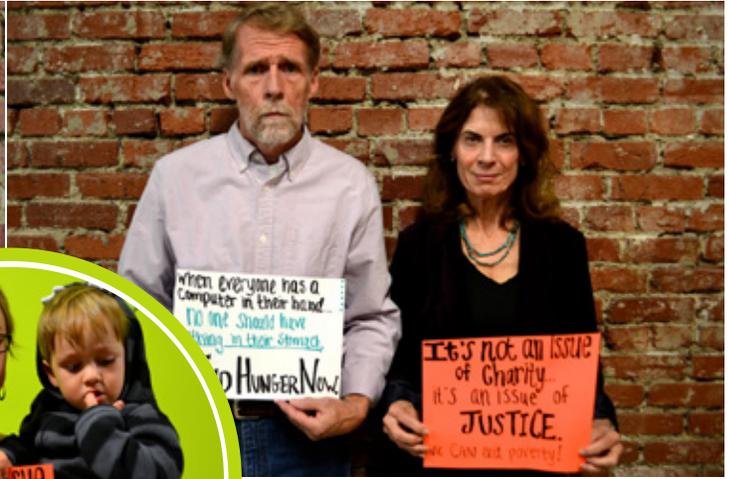


2015 Report

(Vol. 2)



JUST HARVEST

JUSTICE, NOT CHARITY: HOW TO END HUNGER

The problem of how to end hunger in the U.S. may seem overwhelming. If one took the people in Allegheny County who rely on food stamps and treated them to a Penguins game, they would fill the seats in Consol Energy Center – which holds 19,758 people – nearly eight and a half times.

With a problem of this scale, charity alone – collecting some money and some food and passing it out – just won't get the job done.

Instead, Just Harvest delivers community-wide impact through a comprehensive strategy that features:

- expanding broad public understanding and support for a strong safety net,
- public policy advocacy that reduces systemic barriers to benefits,
- local leadership on sustainable food systems to improve access to affordable and nutritious food for all,
- services that connect people to public benefits, and
- creative grassroots approaches to reach and empower our low-income neighbors.

Our strong partnerships with the City of Pittsburgh, the Allegheny County Health Department, the United Way of Southwestern PA, and many other local, state, and national allies further leverage our impact for a powerful return on your dollars.

Support Just Harvest in creating long-term solutions to end hunger and poverty. Join us. Visit us at: www.justharvest.org/donate.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report marks our transition away from our prior May-April reporting periods. It covers our work from May 1 - Dec. 31, 2015. Henceforth we will have annual reports for each calendar year, beginning with the 2016 Annual Report in early 2017.

For more information about what we're working on in 2016, including our free tax filing assistance for low-income households, visit us at www.justharvest.org.

MEDIA IMPACT

“Fighting hunger for the holidays, and year round”
– Liz Reid, 90.5 WESA | Nov. 25

“Wolf Administration to revamp fight on hunger”
– Casey Chafin, 90.5 WESA | Oct. 5

“Just Harvest statement on PA'S frozen budget”
– Ken Regal, *Pittsburgh Courier* | Sep 8

“Going it alone: Low-income single moms struggle to find help, escape judgment”
– Jennie Dorris, PublicSource | Aug. 9

“Tweak the governor's budget”
– Ken Regal & Michael Wood, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* | May 24

“Higher wages can create hunger paradox”
– Ann Belser, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* | May 3



“Snapshots of Poverty: Linda” (Just Harvest | YouTube.com)



“From Orchids to Food Stamps” (Just Harvest | YouTube.com)

Elderly women, age 65 and older, are highly vulnerable to poverty. Released in the latter half of 2015, these two short videos – one created by professional photojournalist Guy Wathen – introduce viewers to real people who experience hunger. Enabling our clients to tell their stories is a key part of our work to change attitudes about who goes hungry in our community and why.



Just Harvest activists with U.S. Representative and civil rights hero John Lewis (GA-D) in Washington, DC, June 9.

PROTECTING THE SAFETY NET

Research shows that more than half of Americans between the ages of 25 and 60 will face poverty for at least a year of their lives. Government safety net benefits must always be there for all who need them until they are back on their feet.

In June, Just Harvest empowered 60 of our clients and other low-income individuals from Allegheny County to go to Washington, DC to speak out against looming budget cuts to food stamps and other nutrition assistance programs. They met with the staff of our U.S. Senators and three local U.S. Representatives, and visited dozens of legislators on the Appropriations and Agriculture committees. The budget passed without these cuts.

Just Harvest conducted advocacy to strengthen the federal Child Nutrition Act, due for reauthorization in 2015, but extended into 2016. We won Rep. Mike Doyle's commitment to cosponsor one of the key summer food bills, and supported Sen. Bob Casey's leadership on a bill to expand WIC eligibility beyond a child's 5th birthday.

At the state level, Just Harvest played a significant role in efforts to minimize the harm to human service providers during the state budget impasse, working with Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services Secretary Ted Dallas, local legislators, and state and local coalitions.

We also worked closely with DHS officials to design strategies to protect some childless food stamp recipients from federal time limits on their benefits that will take effect in 2016.

Years of advocacy paid off with a big win in helping those on welfare become self-sufficient. Legislation to expand and make permanent PA's Keystone Education Yields Success program was passed unanimously by both houses and signed into law.

FROM OUR BLOG: June 29

...On our way to meet with legislators, we were in a Senate building corridor when a staffer from some unknown legislator's office approached. "I'm just curious – what is Just Harvest?" We explained that we were an anti-hunger organization from southwest Pennsylvania there to discuss planned Congressional cuts to the federal SNAP/food stamp program with Pennsylvania legislators.

What followed was shocking and infuriating.

"So, you want SNAP cut, right?" This young, sharply dressed woman undoubtedly had a college degree and, through her job, access to the levers of power and policymaking in the nation's capitol. Yet it seemingly made sense to her that an anti-hunger organization had traveled hundreds of miles to advocate for food stamp cuts.

One of our clients, Linda Davis, who is past retirement age and a widow, calmly corrected her, letting the woman know how important food stamps are to her – that she wouldn't be able to make ends meet without them.

"But don't you get Social Security?" the staffer asked her. "Don't you have a yard? Why don't you just grow a garden?"

We were all stunned. She might as well have said, "Why don't you just go to a food bank?"

For that is no doubt the thinking of her boss and her mentors on the Hill, and of the many Congressional legislators who continue to propose cuts to food stamps and other safety net programs at every budget opportunity...

EXPANDING FOOD ACCESS

In Pittsburgh, America's "most livable" city, nearly 1 in 2 residents live in neighborhoods without ready access to supermarkets or stores with fresh food, according to our seminal 2013 report on food deserts. A champion in sports and industry, Pittsburgh unfortunately also leads the nation in food deserts and obesity. Thousands of people elsewhere in Allegheny County also lack ready access to healthy food.

Our **Fresh Access**, **Fresh Corners**, and **food stamp assistance programs** directly improve the ability of our low-income neighbors to put healthy food on the table. We also are working to make sure low-income children in Allegheny County are getting the **free school and summer meals** they need.



Access also means being able to afford the produce that is available. Our **Fresh Access** and **Food Bucks** incentive programs help low-income households buy fresh, healthy food while supporting regional farms and farmers markets, a great source of locally-grown, nutritious food.

FRESH CORNERS

In 2015, Just Harvest and the **Allegheny County Health Department** launched Fresh Corners, a healthy corner store initiative in underserved Allegheny County neighborhoods. Fresh Corners seeks to improve communities from within by partnering with local store owners to provide affordable access to fresh, nutritious, foods.

Our staff began the neighborhood assessments, stakeholder meetings, and focus groups necessary to identify the corner store owners and communities that are ready to undertake these new ventures. We will also supply store owners with the information and materials they need to succeed.

FOOD STAMP ASSISTANCE

In dollars and cents, the impact of government safety net programs far outstrip the capacity of the charitable sector to serve people in poverty. From July to December 2015, Just Harvest's SNAP (food stamp) assistance program brought \$150,000 in benefits to over 400 households in Allegheny County.

SCHOOL & SUMMER MEALS

Our advocacy on federal Child Nutrition programs included work to boost local implementation of Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in school meals programs. CEP is a new mechanism in federal law that allows high-poverty school districts to serve school lunches and breakfasts free of charge to all stu-

dents, reducing administrative burdens and costs as well as the stigma on low-income youngsters. Most CEP-eligible schools in Allegheny County now participate, though we and local coalition partners will continue to advocate for CEP with remaining schools in 2016.

Just Harvest also played a key role in the **City of Pittsburgh's** efforts to re-brand and strengthen the city's summer food program for hungry children, now called **Grub Up**, in order to boost participation and diminish the stigma of program participation. The city's initiative also included the launch in the fall of ten new afterschool meal programs at Citiparks recreation centers, with more sites to come.

FROM OUR BLOG: August 31

Jennae Dungan is a 28-year-old massage therapist from the North Side. Massage therapy is generally low-paying, and having to be available for clients on their schedule or at a moment's notice makes it hard to get a second job.

Jennae has received food stamps for three years and heard about the Fresh Access program after attending the North Side farmers market. With the expansion of the program to 15 markets – all seven Citiparks markets and eight other markets in the area – she now goes to the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership's Market Square farmers market, which is closer to her workplace.

"I've kind of always been around different farmers markets, and we always try to grow our own veggies and fruits," Jennae says. When she needs to shop at the markets she tends to buy apples, strawberries, blueberries, and herbs.

When asked if she feels like she benefits from the program, she says that she does. "Oh yeah. Because it's convenient, and it's more fresh. The flavor...it's a little bit better," she says.



2015 FOOD ACCESS MEDIA COVERAGE



JULIA RENDLEMAN | PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE



HEIDI MURRIN | TRIB TOTAL MEDIA

"Mapping Hunger: Where are Pittsburgh's food deserts?" – Melissa McCart, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* | Oct. 23

"Fresh Access grows sixfold in two years"
– Hannah Schwartz, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* | Oct. 23

"With food, two groups help immigrants to assimilate"
– Rebecca Sodergren, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* | Sep. 30

"Fresh Corners boosts healthy store options in Penn Hills" – Kelsey Shea, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* | Sep. 30

"The people and places fighting childhood hunger in Pittsburgh" – Nadine Champs, *Kidsburgh.org* | Sep. 22

"Farm-fresh access grows in Pittsburgh's urban areas"
– Katishi Maake, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* | Jun. 15

"City offers free lunches during the summer-time"
– Jon Delano, *KDKA* | Jun. 12

"Pittsburgh expands summer meals program for children" – Lake Fong, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* | Jun. 12

"In season: Farmers market 'bonus bucks'"
– Bob Batz Jr., *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* | May 6



Inspired by “Witnesses to Hunger,” a **Drexel University Center for Hunger-Free Communities** project, Just Harvest created *Snapshots of Poverty*: a photo exhibit showcasing five client activists and their photographs. After training with a professional photojournalist, each participant was given a camera and invited to document their personal experience of poverty. Displayed at **Repair the World** in East Liberty for a month this fall, their 20 images and accompanying text captured the hardships and privations that shape their everyday existence. Collectively, they provided unfiltered and unedited narratives of the injustice that poverty inflicts on our neighbors.

POVERTY SIMULATIONS

Our poverty simulations educate the broader community about the real issues that low-income families face, the roadblocks that can be barriers to self-sufficiency, and how those roadblocks manifest in behaviors and beliefs.

Recent poverty simulation partners include: **Bishop Canevin High School, Catholic Charities, Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, and Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh.**



“An Hour of Poverty” (ClevelandFed | YouTube.com)

“2015 POLICY SUMMIT: AN HOUR OF POVERTY” – June 30

...Sheila Walker, a home-ownership program coordinator for the Huntington West Virginia Housing Authority, signed up for the poverty simulation because she wants to continue to relate to those with whom she works. “Sometimes, when you’re dealing with people with issues day in and day out, you get desensitized,” she said after the simulation ended. “I just want to remain passionate toward my clients.”

Michael Jones, a director of research at the University of Cincinnati, also participated in the simulation. “One of the things I found surprising was how difficult it was to make those ends meet when you have limited funds, when you have limited access to social services, when issues just keep coming up,” he said. “How do you deal with that? It was good to be immersed in that environment and see some of the challenges that people face....”

Michelle Park Lazette
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF CLEVELAND

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STAFF

Joshua Berman
Fresh Corners Project Coordinator

Emily Cleath
Communications Coordinator

Helen Gerhardt
Fresh Corners Project Coordinator

Rochelle Jackson
Public Policy Advocate

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FRESH ACCESS SEASONAL STAFF

Stephanie Bennett
Becky Boll
Rena Saimoto

VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to our **60** volunteers who donated **1,478** hours to make our work successful.

DONORS

Just Harvest is grateful for our **335** active members who donated nearly **\$28,000** in the second half of 2015. Your generosity, ranging from **\$5** to **\$2,500** makes our work possible.

Just Harvest Education Fund is a proud partner agency of the **United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania.**



FUNDERS

Allegheny County Bar Foundation
Allegheny County Health Department
BNY Mellon Foundation
FOOD RESEARCH & ACTION CENTER
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
PA Department of Human Services
Pittsburgh Community Kitchen
The Food Trust
United Way of Allegheny County
USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program

EVENT SPONSORS

Aetna Healthcare
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PNC Bank
SEIU Healthcare PA
TeleTracking Technologies, Inc.
United Food and Commercial Workers - Local Union #23
United Steelworkers of America
University of Pittsburgh - School of Social Work
UPMC Health Plan



This boy donated \$1,100!

Aaron Berger saw his recent Bar Mitzvah as an opportunity to express his principles—those that he hopes will guide him in his adult life. Excited by how we take direct action to end hunger, an issue he has long cared about, Aaron decided to donate a large portion of his Bar Mitzvah gifts to Just Harvest.

Thank you, Aaron. Your gift honors and humbles us.

* Service to Just Harvest ended in 2015.

OUR MISSION

To educate, empower, and mobilize the citizens of our community toward the elimination of hunger and economic injustice in our communities by influencing public policy, engaging in advocacy, and connecting people to public benefits.



ACTION AGAINST HUNGER

16 Terminal Way
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
(412) 431-8960
www.justharvest.org



Copies of Just Harvest's official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Dept. of State by calling toll-free within PA (800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.