

MAKING STONE SOUP



Community-Driven Efforts to End Hunger in Utah

ABOUT UTAHNS AGAINST HUNGER



Utahns Against Hunger (UAH) creates the political and public will to end hunger in Utah. Founded in 1978, the non-profit organization first coordinated emergency food distributions and worked with faith-based agencies to increase public awareness of hunger. As the organization grew, UAH recognized the importance of public policy and legislation to meet the needs of hungry Utahns. The agency established itself as a statewide advocate dedicated to promoting and improving the federal food and nutrition programs. Our initiatives include informing legislators of hunger in their communities, providing resources and assistance to individual clients, and engaging state agencies and community groups in anti-hunger efforts. UAH is not only identifying barriers to food access across the state but also devising alternative solutions that strengthen communities and local economies. By ensuring the right to food for all Utahns, we aim to improve lives and eliminate hunger.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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MAKING STONE SOUP:

*Community-Driven Efforts
to End Hunger in Utah*



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INTRODUCTION

Utah, we like to say, is a place where neighbors take care of neighbors. We pride ourselves on having strong community values. We help each other through hard times, so that everyone has the chance to succeed.

Yet, 213,000 Utahns live in poverty. That is one in every ten people, and over forty percent (43.5%) of these individuals are children under the age of eighteen. Utah has the seventh highest rate of food insecurity (14.8%) and the tenth highest rate of food insecurity with hunger (4.6%) in the country. Food insecurity is lack of access to enough food to meet one's basic needs without relying on emergency services. Hunger is defined as the uneasy or painful sensation caused by lack of food, which can lead to malnutrition over time

Since our inception almost thirty years ago, Utahns Against Hunger (UAH) has been a leading advocate for ending hunger in our state. We recognize the important role that Utah's emergency food network plays in helping low-income Utahns – over 614,000 last year – to put food on the table. In addition to emergency food, UAH supports the federal food and nutrition programs, which provide participants with not only nutritional but also economic benefits. The Food Stamp Program assisted 123,411 Utahns in 2004, while the average daily participation in the National School Lunch Program was 288,281 students.

It is evident from the astounding number of Utahns who are hungry, food insecure, and/or impoverished that the emergency food network and the federal food and nutrition programs are still not meeting the needs. Some of our neighbors are not being cared for, and our communities are not as strong as we would hope.

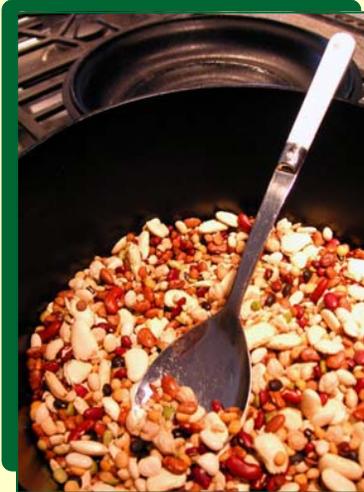
To reverse this situation, we must address hunger and food insecurity where it exists: right here, at home. Furthermore, we must look to ourselves for solutions. At UAH, our long-term vision for ending hunger is one in which communities come together to reclaim their food system and devise new ways to ensure that all members have access to adequate and nutritious foods.

In conceptualizing this vision, we are reminded of "Stone Soup," the familiar childhood fable, in which three weary travelers arrive one night in a village bearing only an empty pot. The villagers, hungry themselves, hide the little food they do have and turn the travelers away. But the travelers claim to have everything they need, fill their pot with water, and set it over a roaring fire. After announcing that they are making stone soup, each traveler with great ceremony pulls a stone from his pocket and drops it into the water. Despite their initial skepticism, one

by one the villagers offer the little food they have to be added to the soup. Finally, a delicious and overflowing soup is enjoyed by all. The travelers leave the next day, but the village is restored to its past splendor as a thriving community, for the lesson of stone soup is never forgotten.

The moral of the story is clear. Individually, the villagers' cupboards appear bare, but collectively they have a feast. The contribution of a little by many is enough to improve the lot of the entire village. Not only is everyone fed, but also the villagers recognize themselves as a community with a shared sense of responsibility for one another's wellbeing.

We are beginning to see such community-driven efforts to end hunger appear across the state of Utah. Similar to the stones in the soup, advocates and community leaders are taking the lead in initiating various projects that improve our health and wellness.



They look to an array of local organizations, whether community service providers, faith-based groups, or other non-profits, to provide the projects' substance, much like the meat and vegetables do in the soup. Just as the spice adds flavor to make the soup worth eating, our elected officials are responsible for funding the work of these local organizations, so that they are viable and better able to address the needs. Lastly, growing numbers of average Utahns are uniting behind innovative solutions to end hunger and food insecurity in our communities. Binding everything together, they are the water or broth of our stone soup.

In this publication, we address several examples of this phenomenon: farm-to-school initiatives, gleaning projects, community food security assessments, and local school wellness policies. In addition, we profile Ogden, Utah, a significantly diverse and relatively low-income town, where residents are beginning to reconsider their collective access to food.

Utahns Against Hunger is excited to participate in locally-based and community-driven work to create a just and sustainable food system that benefits us all. We hope that you will join us in making Utah's own stone soup.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY?

Imagine a community, whether it is a neighborhood, a town or city, or any other group of connected individuals, whose residents are working together to ensure a healthy and affordable food system. In this community, the farmer negotiates with the high school principal to provide fresh fruits and vegetables for the students' meals; neighbors cooperate with one another to buy a plot of land to start a community supported agriculture project; and emergency food providers help their clients with not only food boxes but also cooking tips, nutritious recipes, and strategies to better manage meal preparation time. These collaborative efforts result in an autonomous community that is in control of its food system. But what if this ideal were not a dream but a reality? What if Utah were ready to invigorate its food infrastructure?

The community food security movement encourages all members to invest and be active in the wellbeing of the community at multiple levels. Through a network of local and corporate supermarkets, farmer's markets, community gardens, and anti-hunger initiatives, a community can create a distinct food web that minimizes barriers to food access. All families, regardless of income, are then able to purchase nutritious and culturally sensitive ingredients that allow them to prepare wholesome meals for their children and the elderly. Beyond the family sphere, local institutions such as schools and health centers partner with other community actors, area farmers, social justice workers, and religious leaders to construct programs and services that improve the overall quality of life.



Communities across the country have already begun, and in some cases completed, community food security projects that have benefited the local economy and given residents a real stake in how food is produced and distributed to its members. Ranging in geography from Berkeley, California, to Detroit, Michigan, the concept of community food security has resulted in many creative and innovative solutions to food access issues that have affected the young and old alike. Utahns Against Hunger is an emerging leader among anti-hunger organizations that hopes to implement community-driven food models on a statewide basis. This grassroots approach integrates existing food system models, such as the emergency food network and federal food and nutrition programs, with a more organic approach to ending food insecurity and hunger across the state.

SHOW-AND-TELL: BRINGING THE FARM TO SCHOOL

Remember school lunch? Cold, limp French fries, crunchy things in the macaroni and cheese, green jell-o that bounced like a rubber ball, and the sugary orange drink that stained your upper lip – you had no idea where it all came from, and you didn't really want to find out.



Thankfully, hundreds of schools across the country are choosing a new model for school food, one that is not only fresh and nutritious but also grown close to home. The “farm-to-school” or “farm-to-cafeteria” model developed out of the community food security movement. Schools purchase products from small farmers in the area and serve them to students in the cafeteria and for snacks. Small farmers, who tend to favor organic and sustainable growing practices, are able to stay in business and feed their own families. Food does not have to travel as far from farm to plate, thereby reducing carbon dioxide emissions from delivery trucks. Students gain access to healthier, more nutritious food and learn about how our food system works. In some schools, students visit the farm or the farmers visit the classroom, helping to build important and lasting relationships.

In Utah, students in the Salt Lake City School District are currently eating apples grown on local farms. Utahns Against Hunger hopes to help these farm-to-school projects develop and expand in the next few years. We are not alone: many of Utah's school food service directors want to bring farm products into their cafeterias. In a 2005 survey of these directors, half of those who responded were interested in serving locally grown food in school meals. To facilitate the process, UAH has founded a farm-to-school working group, which has begun initial conversations with school food service directors and identified local distributors and farmers. We hope these efforts will lead to school menus featuring farm-fresh foods that make our children happy and healthy.

SHARE THE HARVEST

At first glance, the large group of people standing outside of the First Presbyterian Church of Ogden seemed to be a strange assembly: children scampered between the legs of their parents; adults stood clustered into small groups, chatting idly about the weather and local news; and the veterans, both in age and of the event, reclined in lawn chairs, some having snagged the best seats under the surrounding oak trees. The reason that brought over 1,530 community residents together that Sunday morning was not based on faith or worship. Rather, people had arrived as early as nine o'clock in the morning to receive free fruits and vegetables.

Share the Harvest, an annual event co-sponsored by local churches and farmers, provides low-income Utah residents with fresh produce that they might not otherwise be able to purchase. Started over twenty-three years ago by Utahns Against Hunger, Share the Harvest enlists farmers to donate any extra, unpicked crops at the end of the fall harvest.

Then volunteers, ranging from Boy Scout groups to single individuals, "glean" the farmland, picking, washing, and packaging the fresh fruits and vegetables to distribute to food insecure families at sites across the state. Local anti-hunger organizations help to publicize the event and oftentimes hand out bilingual food stamp applications and emergency food pantry information to families waiting in line. This dual approach to focusing on hunger offers an invaluable service: answering the immediate need while involving the larger community.

This year Share the Harvest helped out 414 families, distributing over 20 tons of food to food insecure and hungry Utahns. "The big thing is that it has become a community event – high schools, Weber State University, farmers, volunteers, home gardeners, and youth groups – all help out. But even with this community response, the need increases every year," comments Ina Sheehan, the president of Share the Harvest. Community-based efforts like Share the Harvest not only bring nutritious and needed food to Utahns but also encourage residents to work together to bring lasting change.



ASSESSING THE NEEDS



When approaching any new situation or potential problem, one must first collect the necessary data and information to get a sense of what has already been tried, what efforts have been successful, and what pieces are missing. A Community Food Security Assessment (CFSA) follows the same logic: in order to identify barriers to food access, community members must collect data to see what resources are available and what the limitations are of the existing programs. A CFSA also calls attention to gaps in service, helping to inform residents and policymakers of ways to fix and enhance their community.

In a nutshell, a CFSA is a comprehensive research project that carefully considers the challenges a community faces in order to identify long-term goals while creating practical solutions to more immediate food concerns.

The most exciting facet of a CFSA is that it gives community residents and leaders the investigative tools to review and improve their food system. This self-run project promotes a unique and enduring vision for the community, giving each participant (and everyone is a participant!) a chance to add his or her insight to what might be done on a greater level. This process is also a learning one, as everyone involved must challenge him or herself to think about how he or she buys or acquires food, what food services are helpful and available, and even what kinds of foods he or she eats regularly.

The idea of conducting a research project often conjures up terrible images of long hours spent typing up the report, technical charts, and unending lists of figures. A CFSA offers a more casual approach that can still yield valuable information. Standard data-collecting techniques, such as interviews and questionnaires, provide personal insight into how residents, policymakers, and local organizations view the community's food system.



Focus groups, an informal gathering of twelve to fifteen interested individuals, serve as a “group interview” that allows more flexibility in how the information is collected and discussed. Visuals, such as maps and graphs, are an alternate and easily interpretable method of showing access to food. All of these approaches are acceptable ways to appraise the wellbeing of a community.

Because a CFSA offers such a unique and

COMMUNITY FOOD

collaborative methodology for evaluating food concerns, Utahns Against Hunger sees it as a starting point to help communities tackle hunger on their own terms. By collecting data that will both inform and motivate community residents to be active stakeholders in the future of their food system, a CFSA has the potential to incite important changes in rural and urban centers across the state.

SECURITY ASSESSMENT

OVERWEIGHT BUT UNDERNOURISHED?

TRUE OR FALSE??

1. In the United States today, it is more common than not for an adult to be overweight or obese.
2. Tens of millions of Americans reported facing food insecurity, or lack of access to adequate food, in 2004.
3. A person can be both overweight/obese and food insecure.

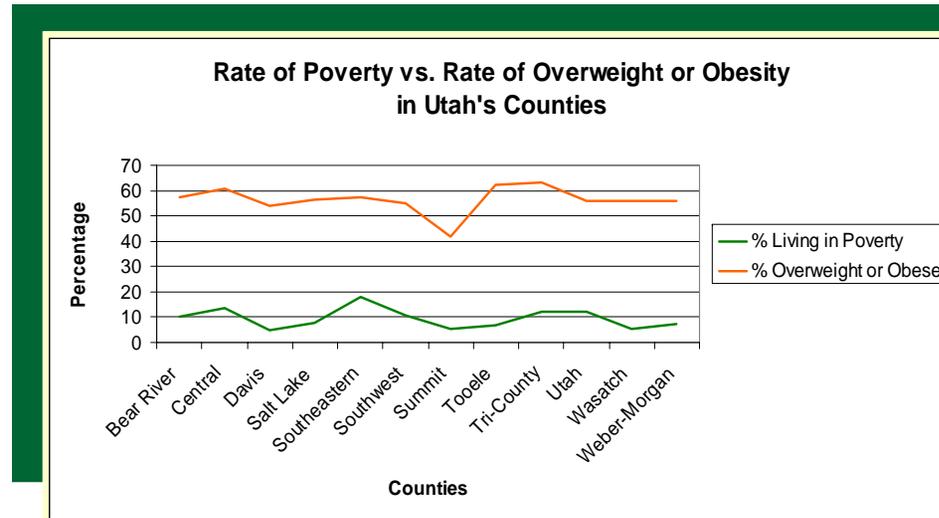
Believe it or not, all three statements are true. In the United States we are facing a dual public health crisis. On the one hand, the majority of Americans, or 65%, are now overweight or obese. On the other hand, last year 38.2 million Americans faced food insecurity, or “limited or uncertain availability of nutritious foods.” What’s surprising is that these two groups – the overweight/obese and the food insecure – are often one and the same.

How can that be?

Overweight and obesity are the result of increased food intake, particularly less nutritious food, and decreased physical activity. As a society, we are eating more meals away from home, indulging often in the treats offered by vending machines and fast-food joints, engaging in little exercise, driving for longer stretches of time, watching hours of television and endlessly surfing the net. Such lifestyle trends generally contribute to unhealthy weight gain.

While the rates of overweight and obesity are rising across all sectors of society, low-income individuals and families appear to be disproportionately affected. Households with limited income tend to face added challenges, making it difficult to follow a healthy lifestyle. Many lack the resources to afford adequate and healthy food on a regular basis. Not knowing where one’s next meal is coming from presents an additional stress.

It seems counterintuitive that a person could be both food insecure and overweight or obese. But preliminary research suggests that the reason behind this lies in the way food insecure households compensate for their lack of access to nutritious food. That is, they may adopt unhealthy eating patterns, which contribute to weight gain. These patterns can include maximizing caloric intake by eating less nutritious and calorie-dense foods, buying food for quantity rather than quality, and overeating when food is available.



The phenomenon of overweight/obesity and food insecurity has been documented primarily among low-income women. Low-income mothers often sacrifice their own nutrition in order to feed their children. There is also evidence that children, having observed their mother's chronic "feast or famine" scenario, are likely to manifest similar eating habits as they grow older.

Certainly, limited income and food insecurity are not the only explanations for why overweight and obesity are growing at a faster rate in low-income communities than higher-income ones. Determinants of one's risk of becoming overweight or obese include genetics, physical activity, and environmental influences. Nevertheless, the crucial role that food insecurity plays in the growing epidemic of overweight/obesity deserves special attention.



SITTING DOWN WITH JULIE METOS

While normally soft-spoken and mild-mannered, Julie Metos transforms into a ball of fired-up energy when the conversation turns to child health – an area in which she is one of Utah’s most-respected leaders. She currently channels her passion into work as the chairperson of the Utah Action for Healthy Kids Team, a coalition aimed at improving the school environment, so that kids can achieve optimum health and academic performance. In January 2006 the Utah Team was awarded a grant of \$25,000 from the National Action for Healthy Kids and the Kellogg Foundation to oversee the implementation of local wellness policies in Utah’s schools. Utahns Against Hunger not only worked on this grant opportunity with Julie but also counts her as a long-time partner, supporter, and even former board member. Recently, we had the opportunity to find out her perspective on childhood obesity, the obligation that schools have in addressing it, and the foods that children will eat if given the chance.

UAH: Julie, as the chairperson of the Utah Action for Healthy Kids Team, how healthy are Utah’s children?

JM: Utah children are following the national trend with more children becoming overweight at a younger age. This puts them at risk of having serious health concerns, such as diabetes, asthma, and orthopedic problems during their childhood and having adult health problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease, and some types of cancer earlier in adulthood. This introduces unnecessary health problems in an otherwise fairly healthy population of kids.

UAH: How concerned are you by the growing rate of childhood obesity both state- and nationwide? Would you describe it as a crisis or epidemic?

JM: I am very concerned because I am a pediatric dietitian, a parent, and a child advocate who believes children are our future. I feel children need to have dreams and hopes. I am not so concerned about children being heavier than the average as far as appearance, but when this many children are overweight, we know that for most of them nutrition and physical activity are missing. This impacts their ability to do well in school, participate in active living, and have long-term dreams. As a health professional, I would say it is an epidemic. As a child advocate, I would say it is a national crisis that reflects our changing nutrition and physical activity environment and our inability to prioritize the overall health and education needs of children.

UAH: Can you speculate as to why children of color suffer from higher rates of obesity than non-Hispanic, white children?

JM: Well, in addition to economics, lack of access to good health care and education certainly play a role. We also know that, for some recent immigrants, lack of knowledge about American food content and the pressure to acculturate are factors. Safety of communities can be a real or perceived concern in communities of color and other communities as well. If kids are not allowed to go out and play, options for physical activity are limited. Other issues are the marketing of inexpensive, unhealthy foods and the speed at which the food intake has changed from a traditional diet to a super-sized one.

UAH: What role can and should schools play in addressing childhood obesity?

JM: Schools can't do everything, but anytime an issue impacts learning, they are obligated to address it. Certainly, physical activity and nutrition are essential for learning, so they need to be considered a vital part of school life, not just peripheral. It seems that in an effort to improve academic achievement, the concept of the "whole" child has been left behind. But even in

the testing paradigm, healthy eating and physical fitness improve scores, so it is unwise to view them as fluff or "something that needs to be done at home and not at school."

UAH: Do you see school meals, like the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), as a public health strategy? Do these meals teach the principles of good nutrition or just contribute to unhealthy eating patterns?

JM: I think the NSLP has great potential as a public health strategy for obesity prevention. Right now, it makes a positive impact on food access for low-income kids, and this alone makes it worthwhile. As far as teaching the principles of good nutrition, I believe it depends on the school district and their food service. All of them produce meals that meet the national guidelines (when analyzed per week), but some of them do better than others in terms of variety, quality, and fruit and vegetable selection. Also, many have acquiesced to the fast food model and feel that children and teens will only eat nuggets, pizza, burgers, and burritos. I think the NSLP can easily be a model for healthy eating that is delicious and accepted by kids, but there are barriers ranging from funding and agricultural policies to family eating preferences and the

"[Childhood obesity] is a national crisis that reflects our changing nutrition and physical activity environment and our inability to prioritize the overall health and education needs of children."

INTERVIEW CONTINUED...

education of food service personnel.

UAH: As you know, all school districts that participate in the federal school meals programs must form “local wellness policies” before July 2006. What is the Utah Action for Healthy Kids Team’s involvement in these policies?

JM: Our team has written recommendations for Utah school districts to use as they write their policies, has members on several wellness committees, and has done presentations for school districts on the issue and how to approach it. We have tried to stay on top of what other states are doing, so we can share the information with wellness committee members. We are also keeping tabs on the policies being written in order to monitor their successes and failures.

UAH: In the drafting of these policies, why do you think vending has become such a controversial issue?

JM: Vending was a controversial issue before the requirement for local wellness policies was put in place, and it remains controversial because of money. Schools are poorly funded, and there is always a need to cover this gap in funding – and a vending contract meets this need. Additionally, this money is typically discretionary, so the administrator can use it where needed without a lot of paperwork. Putting this income at risk by making healthier the typical mix in a vending machine

is a step that many schools are unwilling to take, even at the expense of child health and its consequences on academic achievement.

The second thing that happens is that people view themselves as having rights as consumers, so they talk about “taking away their right to a bag of Cheetos.” This happens less often but is real for some students, parents, and staff.

UAH: How do you respond to the argument that school wellness policies or restrictions on vending deny students their freedom of choice?

JM: The first thing I say is that students don’t have a choice now. In most school vending machines the only thing available is unhealthy food and beverages, so I would like to see some healthy options that are priced to be competitive with the unhealthy ones. The next point is that choice is an illusion when you have been marketed to since you were born and the only thing advertised to children and teens are the less healthy options. The third point is that schools have a vested interest in restricting things that are not conducive to learning. Schools do it all the time when they set dress codes, restrict what can be brought to school, and prohibit smoking on campus.

Interestingly, districts across the country report that when they make changes to healthier foods in the cafeteria or vending, students from districts nearby hear about it and want the same for their own school. Many kids are convinced that healthy eating is the right thing to do, and they would like that option at their own school.

UAH: How do you anticipate the wellness policies of Utah's school districts comparing to others from around the country?

JM: There are many states much further along than Utah in developing programs and policies around PE and the school food environment. Presumably, their wellness policies will be stronger and may include more issues related to community food security. In some states, there are statewide standards that the districts have to follow, and maybe these communities will be more accepting of changes and eager to make them meaningful. Despite this, I think many of Utah's wellness policies will be excellent and others will be a good start. At the very least, each community has had to address it in some way, and that's a huge leap forward.

UAH: What direction do you see the Utah Action for Healthy Kids Team taking? What is your long-term vision for the Team?

JM: I would like the Utah Team to be known for making a difference in a state that was not initially receptive to school wellness. We are one of the most grassroots teams in the country, so I believe we have the opportunity to explore how to educate and involve parents effectively. We also can help identify which specific wellness interventions work to directly improve nutrition and physical education, thus helping to better target future plans.



I also believe we have the ability to create awareness of some of the broad societal issues that influence obesity rates, such as food insecurity, lack of access to healthy food, advertising to kids, food marketing, and the design of communities, so that people in Utah can understand the complexity of the issue beyond personal responsibility.

LOCAL WELLNESS POLICIES

We all want the best for our children, especially when it comes to education. When the state's education policy scored a dismal C+ in a 2005 national report, Utahns were shocked and angry. When closings in the Jordan School District were proposed this past fall, the school board and parents faced off in heated debates. During the 2006 legislative session, our elected officials again argued over a "school choice" bill, which would allow parents to use public funds to pay for private schools.

But what if the issue were not class size, testing standards, teaching licenses, or even the schools themselves? What if the issue is that our children are not coming to school healthy enough learn?

Children who arrive at school hungry or eat nothing but candy and soda have trouble participating in class. The reduced recess period has led to children growing restless when sitting for even short periods of time. Poor nutrition and inactivity are wrecking our children's chances to learn and thrive in an educational setting.

*"[Congress] wanted to encourage **conversations** on a local level about how best to **confront student wellness** and make their own blueprint and act on it."*

-Steve Forde
House Committee on Education and the Workforce,
where the local wellness policy requirement was written



In recognition that we need to not only cultivate children's minds but also nourish and exercise their bodies, Congress mandated that schools start paying more attention to student health. All school districts participating in the federal school meals programs now have to create "local wellness policies" by the beginning of School Year 2006-2007. These policies must address nutrition and physical education, but their specific content is to be determined by school administrators, teachers, parents, students, and other members of the community.

In the past few months, each of the forty-four school districts in Utah has been busy forming wellness committees and drafting the policies. Many important questions have been raised: Should soda be sold on campus? Should physical education be mandatory? Will kids actually eat broccoli without cheese sauce? Reaching a consensus has not always been easy, but that is because the creation of a local wellness policy is grassroots public policy at its best. Wellness policies give us the opportunity to take charge of our children's health. They unite us in determining everything from the nutritional value of school meals to the way we educate kids about the food system, ecology, and the environment.

Utahns Against Hunger has taken an active role in helping school districts develop wellness policies, particularly ones that prioritize access to nutritious food for students of all income levels. We believe schools, as perhaps our most important institution in society, can and should lead the way in improving food security, revitalizing outdoor spaces, and making our communities healthier. In doing so, we give children the chance that they deserve to learn and thrive. We make an investment in their futures and, by default, ours. Local wellness policies are the first step in bringing about the kind of education reform that everyone can agree upon.

What are competitive foods?

Competitive foods are foods offered at school other than meals served through the USDA school meals programs. They can be found in:

1. Vending Machines
2. A la carte lines
3. Concession stands
4. School stores
5. Snack Bars

OGDEN: CITY PROFILE



From the heart of downtown Ogden, the snowy peaks of the Wasatch Mountains seem close enough to reach out and touch. City dwellers and visitors alike marvel at their splendor and extol their hiking and skiing trails. But Ogden isn't just another place to enjoy the light powdery snow that won Utah the 2002 Winter Olympics bid. It is also a growing entrepreneurial and commercial hub with various industries clustering in this area. Recently, the city's business center has undergone a "renaissance" or revitalization of many local buildings and attractions.

Ogden is also distinct in that its demographic reflects the state's fast-growing Latino/a population. Additionally, over sixteen percent (16.5%) of the city lives at or below the federal poverty, whereas the state rate is closer to nine percent (9.4%). Nearly seventy percent (69.3%) of Ogden's schoolchildren qualify for free or reduced-price meals. While Ogden has a diverse and significantly low-income population, the city also has a well-established network of emergency food providers, community centers, and individuals who are working to meet the needs of its residents.

In many ways, Ogden is the city of the future in its changing demographics, increasing urbanization, and potential for change. Recognizing this cityscape as a unique opportunity for investigation, Utahns Against Hunger hopes to provide a window into anti-hunger initiatives, community food security work, and school wellness efforts being undertaken in Ogden.

Ogden at a Glance!

- Ogden began as a fur trading outpost and later became a junction city on the transcontinental railroad. It was settled by the Mormons in 1847.
- Today over one-fifth of families in Ogden speak a language other than English at home.
- The average median income in Ogden is \$34,047, compared to the state average of \$45,726.
- The city's area is 26.6 square miles.

SURVEY THIS!

For the past ten years, downtown Ogden has been a desert.

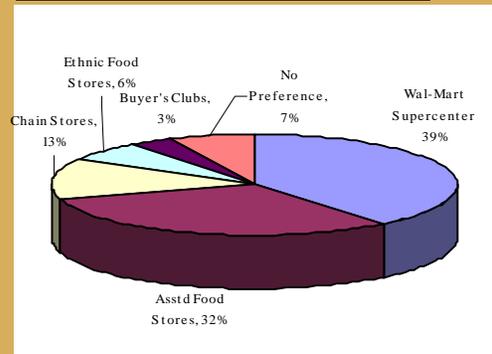
Although lacking in cacti, tumbleweeds, and coyotes, downtown Ogden has all of the attributes of a food desert: the dearth of full-size, full-line supermarkets has forced city residents to shop in the outlying areas of Ogden, many traveling to neighboring towns to find all of the necessary foodstuffs. This “supermarket gap,” approximately 3.2 square miles, particularly affects low-income residents who live in the downtown area. Coupled with limited access to transportation and other financial demands, finding adequate food for one’s family becomes, at best, a chore and, at worst, an impossibility.



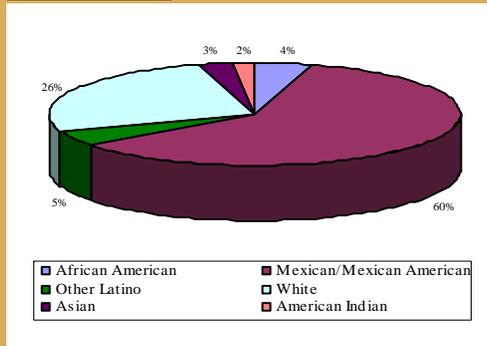
In the spirit of community food security, Utahns Against Hunger developed a bilingual and comprehensive questionnaire that asked Ogden residents, particularly those who live near the downtown area, to think about their food system and provide input into the problems they face on a daily basis. The survey asked respondents fifty-six questions, organized into the categories of basic information, food and shopping, food and transportation, community services, and final thoughts and recommendations. By forming new partnerships with community service providers, we enlisted their support in distributing the surveys to the population we were most interested in: low-income residents of Ogden.

Midtown Community Health Center, Ogden-Weber Community Action Partnership, Ogden Head Start, and Catholic Community Services all took an active role in disseminating and collecting the food surveys from 116 clients over a period of two months. Although the sample collected is a small one, it does provide a snapshot of the lives of these individuals and families.

FAVORITE GROCERY STORE



ETHNICITY



Interestingly the majority of the respondents are female (78%) and mothers (63%). The age of the persons surveyed range from 16 years to and 68 years, and the majority are between the ages of 22 and 28. Although 56% of the surveys were filled out by English speakers, six out of ten respondents are either Mexican or Mexican-American residents.

An Inside Look...

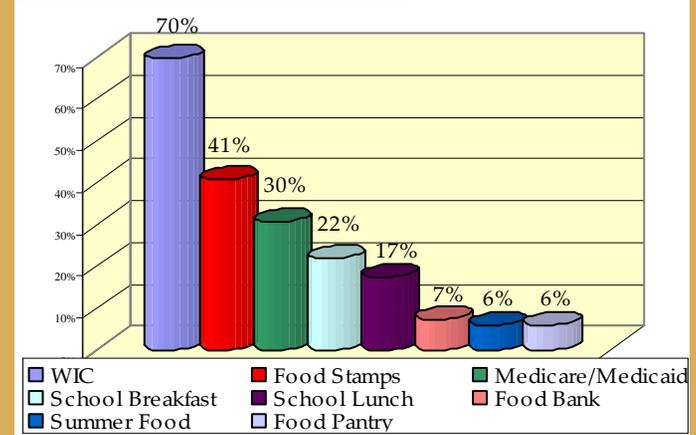
The following eight questions give you a sneak peek into the questionnaire.

1. What are three places that you buy food and beverages for you and/or your family?
2. Do you ever buy food at the Ogden Farmers' Market? Why or why not?
3. What are the 5 most important foods for you and/or your family?
4. Does access to transportation change how often you go to buy groceries?
5. Do you use any federal food and nutrition programs?
6. Do your children eat breakfast every morning? Why or why not?
7. Does anyone in your immediate family suffer from diabetes, high blood pressure, overweight/obesity, high cholesterol, and/or heart disease?
8. If you were in charge of improving the food resources in Ogden, what changes or recommendations would you make?

SURVEY THIS! CONTINUED...

The food data that emerged helps provide us with an image of the eating and shopping habits of a select group of low-income residents. The average trip to the supermarket is 11 minutes, and the shopping center of choice is Wal-Mart Supercenter. When the respondents have the means and desire to eat out, buffet-style eateries (such as Golden Corral and Chinese buffets) are the favorite, garnering 35%. Sadly the vast majority of the respondents, a whopping 82%, do not utilize Ogden’s Farmers’ Market, citing the complementary facts that they have never heard of it and do not know where it is located. On the federal food and nutrition programs front, six out of ten persons indicated that they use at least one program; WIC works, as 70% specified that they receive these benefits. Although the questionnaire was not meant to gauge health risk factors, diabetes (a disease closely correlated to unhealthy eating habits and lack of physical exercise) affected almost 60% of the respondents and/or their immediate families.

FOOD & PUBLIC SERVICES



	Survey	Ogden	Utah	United States
Population	116	77,226	2,233,1169	281,421,906
Gender – Male	22.4	50.6	50.1	49.1
Gender – Female	77.6	49.4	49.9	50.9
Ethnicity: Latino/a	65.5	23.6	9.0	12.5
Ethnicity: White	25.9	79.0	89.2	75.2
Foreign-Born	49.0	12.2	7.1	11.1
Food Stamp Use	24.1	18.8	5.2	8.6
Overweight/Obese	18.0	55.7*	58.3	65.0

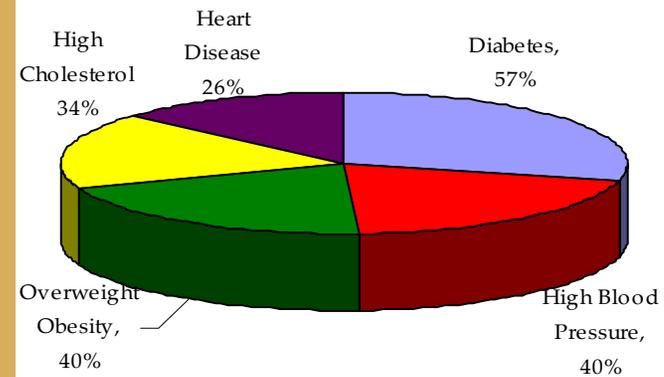
* Ogden data for overweight/obesity represents rates in Weber-Morgan county

The table compares qualitative figures from the food survey and 2000 US Census. Please recall that all survey data is self-reported. The numbers in all categories (except for Population) are in percents.



Greater themes regarding community food security can be extracted from this data sample. Although supermarkets and other food stores are accessible by car, residents who either rely on public transportation or walk have fewer options. Eating habits, employment status, and cultural preference further impact an individual's food selection. Utahns Against Hunger hopes to amass more information, both in survey and verbal form, that will motivate Ogden community leaders and residents to reclaim their food system. Through these cooperative efforts, we hope to convert Ogden's food desert into an oasis of food access.

INDICATED HEALTH PROBLEMS



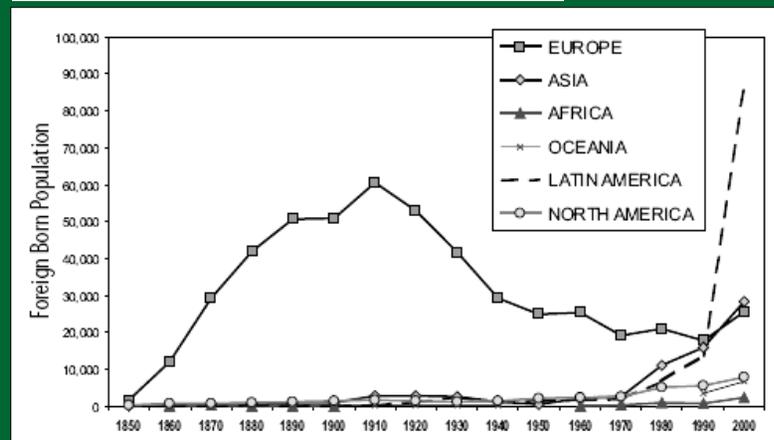
Reflecting national trends on disease susceptibility, over half (51%) of the participants and/or their families suffered from more than one diet-related ailment.

¡VIVA LATINIDAD! TALKING ABOUT THE LATEST TREND

We all have fond memories of biting into our first taco: the crispy corn tortilla crackling against our teeth blended perfectly with the savory juices of the shredded beef balanced against the lettuce, tomatoes, and mountain of cheese. Although a simple taco does not encompass the full range of Latino cuisine, the image of food is oftentimes the most visible (and most delicious) cultural marker of an ethnic group. So when burrito carts, carnicerías, and ethnic food stores bearing Spanish marquees sprang up across Ogden, it became obvious that a new wave of immigrants was making its home up north and out west.

El Rodeo Market, El Ogdentino newspaper, and La Mexicana 730 AM radio station are all representative of the Latino explosion that is transforming Ogden. The numbers show that in 2000, Latinos/as composed 23.6% of Ogden's population, making it the largest ethnic group after Whites. Latino/a advocates speculate that these are modest estimates at best, pointing to the increasing number of Latino/a businesses and neighborhoods. In fact, between 1997 and 2002, Latino-owned businesses increased by 9.2% statewide. On a related note, a few public elementary schools in Ogden are now a majority Latino/a, as are a growing number of middle schools. Latinos/as in Utah are also active participants in the labor force, outworking the rest of the United States by 4.3%.

UTAH'S FOREIGN BORN POPULATION

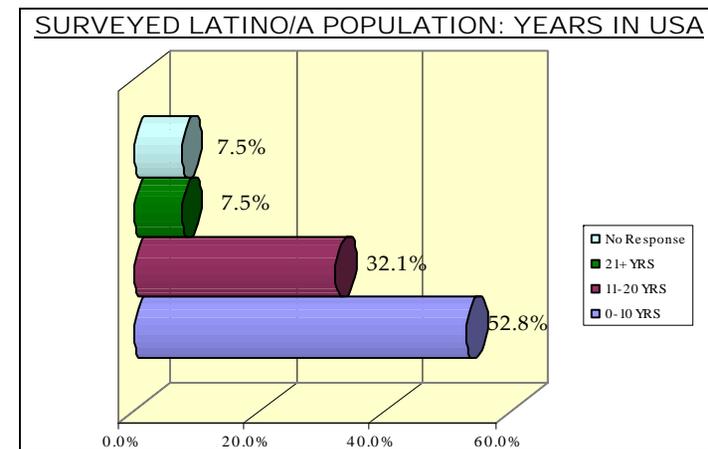


Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Jensen (1994), BEBR Calculations

You can easily pick up a copy of the Hispanic yellow pages, tune into KSGO Radio Fiesta 1600 AM, or listen to the local news in Spanish.

The data pool collected by Utahns Against Hunger mirrors the citywide trend. Almost half of the respondents (45.7%) are immigrants from Latin America, the largest group arriving from Mexico. The data also illustrates that this immigration movement is fairly recent: of those surveyed, 52.8% arrived in the United States in the past ten years and 32.1% arrived in the past eleven to twenty years. Only 7.5% of the Latino/a respondents emigrated here prior to that time. Accounts from Ogden community service providers substantiate this time scale given that the increase in Spanish speaking residents required organizations to hire translators and teach English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. The flexibility of Ogden's local agencies, such as Head Start programs and Your Community Connection, in accommodating the influx of Latino immigrants speaks to their emphasis on greater cultural sensitivity.

Apart from the statistical data, city residents can see for themselves the Latino *sabor* that permeates Ogden. Ethnic grocery stores provide an alternative shopping experience, carrying many traditional food items, like cacti (*nopales*) and papaya, that appeal to Latin American immigrants who are trying to capture flavors from home. The ambiance in Rita's Bakery,



Tenochtitlan Market, and El Mercado Herrera is a mix of the smells and sounds of a street market and the industry of your typical supermarket. Prices in these little markets are competitive with those at Maceys or Albertsons, and business exchanges are conducted in both English and Spanish. Various food carts, whether taquerias or tamale stations, are now common fixtures on street corners in downtown Ogden. These mobile "meals on wheels" are exemplary models of entrepreneurship on the local level.

All indications suggest that Ogden and its residents, old and new, are readily adapting to each other and growing together.

OGDEN SCHOOL DISTRICT

HEALTHY STUDENTS ARE SMART STUDENTS

"There has to be a better way," concluded the concerned mother of six. She had just finished recounting a story of vegetables being turned into unrecognizable, unappetizing, green mush in the school cafeteria. Her attentive listeners, other members of the Ogden School District Wellness Committee, nodded in agreement.

A few months later, the Ogden Wellness Committee has been successful in finding that better way. The final product is a comprehensive local wellness policy that will take effect in their three high schools, four middle schools, and sixteen elementary schools in the fall of 2006. Ogden's policy is a multi-pronged approach to address the dual public health crisis – obesity and food insecurity – that is plaguing the health of our children.

The Ogden Wellness Committee recognized the need to positively and significantly impact the health of its students, the majority of whom come from low-income, minority families. Nearly seventy percent (69.3%) of students in Ogden qualify for free or reduced-price meals, meaning they live at or near the poverty line. Also, half of the children in the district are minorities, making Ogden one of only three districts in the states that are predominantly non-White. The reality is that Ogden's schoolchildren represent vulnerable populations – but they are also the kids who stand to benefit the most from an all-inclusive wellness policy.

Some districts might shy away from such a challenge. Not Ogden.

*"We feel **diversity is a strength**, and it gives us an enrichment that we wouldn't have otherwise. It is very positive and helps **show kids what the world looks like.**"*

Debbie Hefner,
Director of School Food Services, Ogden School District

"We feel diversity is a strength, and it gives us an enrichment that we wouldn't have otherwise," said Debbie Hefner, Ogden's director of School Food Services. "It is very positive and helps show kids what the world looks like."

Thus, the Ogden Wellness Committee has taken strides in its policy to prioritize not only food quality but also food access. It states, "[A]ll children deserve access to adequate, affordable, and nutritious food... the District will make the Child Nutrition Programs accessible to all students, so that no child faces hunger or food insecurity." Additionally, the policy encourages students to participate in sixty minutes of physical activity each day. In accordance, the district's swimming and exercise facilities will be opened for after-school use. The wellness policy also includes plans to coordinate with local medical facilities to print simplified health information for parents in both English and Spanish.

Although the policy was drafted at the district level, its implementation will be locally controlled. Each of Ogden's schools will establish a school wellness council to ensure that the policy is carried out. These councils will have autonomy over the wellness-related activities that they undertake, like health fairs and walk-to-school days, as well as encourage the involvement of more individuals from the community.



As a member of the Ogden Wellness Committee, Utahns Against Hunger has experienced first-hand the winning formula for drafting a thorough wellness policies. The answer lies in the committee's approach: gather together people who care about student wellness; let everyone share their thoughts and opinions; argue respectfully; and compromise when necessary. But, most importantly, never lose sight of the goal to do what is best for our children and their health.

IN THE COMMUNITY



EVEN START PROGRAM

Hilda Galvez, a fifty-something grandmother who looks the part in her apron and curly up-do, greets the class with a ready smile and flourishes a wooden spoon as she starts the day's lesson. As she launches into an enthusiastic speech on the importance of eating three servings of fruit a day, one cannot help but be impressed by the way she maneuvers both her facts and the ingredients in front of her. She is the Latina version of Julia Childs, with an extra pinch of nutritional know-it-all for good measure. Four times a week, Hilda teaches a cooking and nutrition course to approximately thirty adults, mainly Latina women, who are registered with the Utah State Extension Even Start program. In

addition to providing her students with comprehensive handouts on maintaining a proper diet and preparing easy-to-do recipes, Hilda brings in a cooking pot, the necessary ingredients, and her maternal touch to create a nourishing and simple meal that she explains step-by-step. Even after six years, Hilda has not lost her enthusiasm for her job: "During the many years I have been working with this program and low-income people, I have seen miracles happen: people have altered their spending behavior, have learned new, healthy eating habits, and have changed their lives. For me as a teacher, this accomplishment makes me feel wonderful."

The Even Start program has been helping Utahns improve their literacy skills and overall wellbeing for the past thirteen years, making it the oldest adult education program in the state. Its somewhat recent expansion into the realm of cooking and nutrition is a natural progression. After all, its original mission to enrich the lives of the entire family – children through a specialized pre-school curriculum and adults through Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED) and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses – would not be complete without ensuring that everyone is eating well at home. Even Start's dedication to education enables families to concoct their own recipes for success.

*"Our mission is to **break the cycle of illiteracy**. We understand that improved language skills **improve the lives of both parents and children, regardless of socioeconomic or immigrant status.**"*

-Joan Triplett
Literacy and Parent Educator, Even Start Program

OGDEN-WEBER COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP

Drive down Grant Avenue and take special note of the rather non-descript, dome-shaped redbrick building on the corner of 31st Street. Although not much to look at, this building is the bustling home of the Ogden-Weber Community Action Partnership (OWCAP), a community service provider that reaches out to city residents in a variety of forms. The waiting room, a brightly colored space peppered with magazines and comfortable sitting chairs, welcomes clients to take home donated clothing and foodstuffs. The adjoining food pantry provides over 150 food boxes per month (containing enough food for a week), which helps to serve the immediate food needs of Ogden residents. Pass through the glass doors and you will find case managers assisting clients with their personal lives. Whether helping



to fill out food stamp applications or lending a supportive ear to the day-to-day complications of living on a limited income, these friendly employees successfully secure benefits for countless individuals. Additional services, such as parenting classes and basic nutrition sessions, are available on an occasional basis, adding extra life to OWCAP and providing important opportunities for Ogden residents.

As you walk further into the recesses of the building, the warm buzz of children's laughter greets you: Head Start, a federal initiative that focuses on preschool education, is an integral branch of OWCAP. On the second floor, teachers are instructing adults, many whom have children downstairs, in both GED and ESL. Tracy Socwell, OWCAP's Community Service Block Grant Director, notes that the overall atmosphere is one of playful learning combined with sincere concern for nurturing the growth and happiness of Ogden families: "To assist those in need to become self-sufficient' drives us to provide services that empower families and individuals by addressing food security, education, employment, and other basic needs."

MIDTOWN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

Every Friday, the conference room of the Midtown Community Health Center transforms into a festive potluck where business updates and personal news are exchanged over plates of steaming soup, fresh salad, baked potatoes, and delectable desserts. Each staff member recounts his or her current events; memorable visits with patients, initial plans for health fairs, and updates on ongoing fundraising projects are part of the weekly fare. All members of the health team have equal input into the working vision of Midtown: affordable healthcare is essential to creating a healthier Ogden.

Midtown occupies a unique position in Ogden's human and healthcare web, particularly because it focuses on low-income and uninsured individuals. "Our mission is to provide healthcare to people who don't traditionally have access: the uninsured, low-income residents, and people who have cultural or language barriers," states Lisa Nichols, the executive director of Midtown. Twenty percent of Ogden residents do not have health care, and so Midtown provides one of the only available safety nets. Since many of its programs are subsidized by the federal government, Midtown is able to offer an array of

services, including dental, primary, mental health, and preventative care, for a minimal contribution from the patients themselves. Yet the federal dollar does not stretch far enough, leading Midtown to seek additional funds from local or state grants to serve its 13,000 patients. Midtown uses a sliding fee scale model to adjust payment plans to match a patient's monthly income and family size. Another important facet of Midtown's clinical outreach is its open-door policy: Ogden residents, regardless of citizenship status, are able to find and pay for crucial healthcare treatments. In fact, 65% of Midtown's patients are Latino/a.

Midtown's presence in central Ogden, a medically underserved community, has undoubtedly enhanced the health of young and old alike. Because of the inextricable link between diet and health, Midtown is keenly aware of the need for information and education concerning proper nutrition and eating habits. On May 15, 2006, Midtown will be moving to a larger complex at 2240 Adams Avenue, considerably expanding their patient services. A potential partnership with Your Community Connection (YCC), another community service provider located directly across the street, will benefit both parties and the larger Ogden community.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Utahns Against Hunger hopes that the information in this publication, "Making Stone Soup: Community-Driven Efforts to End Hunger in Utah," will both inform and incite Utahns to take an active role in their food system. We respectfully encourage advocates, local and state leaders, community agencies, and residents to consider the following future directions:

Hunger and Food Insecurity

- Increase access to all federal food assistance programs
- Distribute applications for the Food Stamp Program at all emergency food sites
- Develop an online food stamp application that is user-friendly
- Waive the face-to-face interview for the initial food stamp application intake
- Launch Seniors and WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Programs
- Implement Universal School Breakfast in schools in which 40% or more of the students qualify for free or reduced-price meals
- Conduct outreach for federal food and nutrition programs, especially school breakfast and lunch, summer food, and food stamps

Nutrition and Health

- Ensure students' access to healthy foods through school meals and competitive food venues
- Set state nutrition standards for all foods and beverages sold at schools
- Provide an incentive for school districts to purchase local food, especially fresh fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy, and eggs
- Raise awareness of and expand access to nutrition education programs targeted at low-income residents
- Promote health literacy through the development and distribution of simplified health information in multiple languages
- Introduce cooking and nutrition classes into schools and community service agencies
- Disseminate information on diet and diet-related illnesses

RESOURCES

Community Building

- Stress the importance of anti-hunger work as a priority for community service providers
- Encourage local organizations to utilize the community food security framework in addressing hunger and food insecurity
- Emphasize language acquisition programs to improve English skills and opportunities for employment
- Promote education programs that award graduate equivalency degrees (GED) to improve workforce marketability

Community Food Projects

- Increase the number of farmers' markets, community gardens, and community supported agriculture projects
- Extend farmers' markets to yearlong venues for local food
- Develop economic opportunities that positively impact partnerships between local businesses and farmers
- Publicize local events like Share the Harvest and farmers' markets
- Undertake more community food security assessments, especially in rural Utah
- Monitor the implementation of school wellness policies to ensure healthy school food systems
- Create community food security projects like farm-to-school and farm-to-pantry

Action for Healthy Kids,
www.actionforhealthykids.org

First Nations Development Institute, www.firstnations.org

Food Research and Action Center, www.frac.org

Ogden School District, www.ogden.k12.ut.us

Community Food Security Coalition, www.foodsecurity.org

US Census, www.census.gov

USDA Economic Research Service, www.ers.usda.gov (Profile of America Data, Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit)

USDA Food and Nutrition Service, www.fns.usda.gov (Food Stamp Program, School Meals, Local Wellness Policy)

Utah Department of Health, www.health.utah.gov and www.hearthighway.org

Utah Issues, "Poverty in Utah 2002", <http://www.altrue.net/altruesite/files/poverty/datapublications/povertyreport%202002.pdf>

Utah State Office of Education, www.usoe.k12.ut.us

Utahns Against Hunger, "Emergency Food and Federal Nutrition Programs in Utah: Annual Report 2006", (forthcoming through www.uah.org)



NOTES

For more copies of “Making Stone Soup: Community-Driven Efforts to End Hunger in Utah,” contact Utahns Against Hunger.

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Creating the political and public will to end hunger in Utah!