

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

About One in Seven Metro Area Residents Experiences Food Insecurity; United Way of the Midlands Partners with Other Local Groups to Address Hunger in Our Community

For many people in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area, hunger is a temporary situation that might arise as a result of a busy schedule or a postponed trip to the grocery store. But for many members of our community, not having enough food is a serious and chronic situation, one that impacts their overall health and wellbeing.¹

Food insecurity is the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.

United Way of the Midlands works alongside other local nonprofit and civic groups to address this basic need for residents across the metro area who are considered food insecure. By county, there are many of our neighbors who find themselves in this difficult situation:²

- Douglas County: 75,540
- Sarpy County: 17,950
- Pottawattamie County: 11,400

It is no surprise that poverty is a key factor, of course. When it's time to pay the bills, "food" is a more flexible item than rent or utilities. As transportation is more of a challenge for those in poverty, some food insecurity is attributed to the lack of nearby stores that offer healthy food choices, like fresh fruit and vegetables. Living with hunger can also increase the likelihood of other negative health issues like infection and illness. When people turn to food that is less expensive and often lower in nutritional value, their risk increases for things like diabetes, stroke or heart attack.³

UWM PROGRAM INVESTMENTS & INITIATIVES

Contributions to United Way of the Midlands are carefully invested in strong metro area programs by a team of experienced local volunteers. In the area of food and nutrition, UWM has invested in 12 local programs that impact food security for children, seniors and families.

To get a clear picture of the impact made by local food programs – and make the best use of community resources – United Way and area partners are conducting a mapping project to understand the needs and resources in our community related to hunger and food security. The process will also include focus groups and interviews with providers and local residents. The goal of such work is to understand the community's current response to hunger and collaborate with other local organizations to identify gaps in service, strengthen local efforts and reduce hunger's negative impact on our neighbors.

UWM's 2025 GOAL RELATED TO FOOD SECURITY

United Way's 2025 Goals convey how the organization will invest and measure progress over the next eight years in the areas of school readiness, financial stability and basic needs for area residents who live in poverty or are at risk for it.

Of the two million basic needs services United Way of the Midlands intends to support by 2025, approximately 50,000 services annually will come in the form of healthy food for individuals and families. In 2017 specifically, the organization will provide 48,000 healthy food services to people at risk of hunger.

MORE

TO LEARN MORE: visit www.unitedwaymidlands.org/hunger.

TO VOLUNTEER: Contact Dani Ohlman at United Way at 402-522-7949 or volunteer@uwmidlands.org

¹ Food Insecurity." Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, 2015. (Web)

² "Food Insecure People". (March 6, 2017). Retrieved from <http://map.feedingamerica.org/>.

³ <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/hunger-and-poverty/>

About United Way of the Midlands

Thanks to donors, volunteers and community partners, United Way of the Midlands is not only focused on addressing our community's human needs today; it is focused on what can be, and what should be. It is building on today's strong partnerships to create even more comprehensive human service efforts tomorrow, so our community can solve some of the root causes of poverty. United Way is community-based, community-focused. Thanks to those who share their strength, United Way is COMMUNITY STRONG. We invite you to visit www.UnitedWayMidlands.org for more information.

This is the third in a year-round series of communications to focus on the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area's key challenges *and* our community's work to address them.