

Housing Assistance Council

Rural Voices

Agriculture's Under Secretary Kevin Concannon

USDA'S COMMITMENT TO
SECURING AMERICA'S NUTRITION
NEEDS PAGE 4

What Are Food Deserts?

AND HOW ARE THEY
DIFFERENT IN RURAL
AMERICA? PAGE 21

Hunger and Housing In Rural America: Intersecting Challenges and Solutions

VOLUME 18/NUMBER 3:
SPECIAL SUMMER 2013 EDITION

Dear Friends,



At the Housing Assistance Council (HAC)

we know that substandard, crowded and unaffordable housing are major concerns for rural Americans. We also know that housing conditions are often aggravated by other issues like persistent poverty, joblessness, health and hunger. Although rural America provides much of the fertile soil that feeds the United States, more than three million families in rural areas struggle to obtain enough nutritious food.

For the past six months, HAC partnered with the Congressional Hunger Center to host a Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow. This special summer edition of *Rural Voices* features articles that focus on the intersecting challenges of housing and food security in rural America. HAC is also happy to introduce a newly designed *Rural Voices* which has a new look and the same strong commitment to highlighting rural housing, poverty and economic development issues.

We hope this edition of *Rural Voices* will serve to inform our readers as well as to start a conversation about addressing hunger and housing in rural America.

In Community,

Twila Martin-Kekahbah
Board Chair
Housing Assistance Council

Polly Nichol
Board President
Housing Assistance Council

Moises Loza
Executive Director
Housing Assistance Council



The Congressional Hunger Center (CHC)

is a leader in the movement to ensure access to food as a basic human right for all people. We also recognize that the root cause of hunger is poverty. If we, as a country, wish to end poverty (and hunger), then we must ensure that poor people have access to adequate housing, affordable health care and jobs with livable wages along with access to nutritious, affordable and culturally appropriate food.

Government can and should play a major role in providing access to affordable public housing in rural and urban areas. CHC and the Housing Assistance Council share Hubert Humphrey's view that the moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those in the shadows of life, the sick and the disabled. Governmental policies guaranteeing access to affordable housing to poor rural and urban communities would be a significant step in meeting the test of good government.

As an organization that works to make hunger and poverty a priority for policymakers, CHC recognizes the need to fight against the causes of desolation that so many people across the US experience daily. CHC develops leaders who fight hunger and poverty through the Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellowship Program. Fellows participate in a six-month field placement where they see firsthand the needs of people living with food insecurity. The Fellows then return to the Nation's capitol for six additional months in order to work on policy solutions to the social and economic problems that they observed.

This year CHC is proud to work with the Housing Assistance Council to sponsor our 19th class Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow who helped to create this special edition of *Rural Voices* on the intersection of food and housing insecurity in rural America.

Ed Cooney
Executive Director
Congressional Hunger Center

View from Washington

4 Supporting Rural America’s Housing and Nutrition Needs

The USDA offers programs that support rural communities to address their housing and food security needs.

Features

6 Rural Hunger and Housing: Challenges and Opportunities

Rural America faces challenges and opportunities in housing and food security.

9 Building Homes and Feeding the Hungry in Rural Pennsylvania

Community action programs can play an important role in addressing both housing and food security needs in rural America.

12 Farmworker Housing: Implications for Food Security and Food Safety

Although they help feed America, farmworkers often face substandard conditions and food insecurity at their own tables.

16 Hunger & Poverty in the United States

Many rural communities struggle to access enough nutritious food for their families.

18 Growing Food and Housing Security in South Dakota’s Native American Reservations

South Dakota’s Native American community is fighting hunger and substandard housing to protect their children and future leaders.

22 Food and Housing Justice in the Rural Southeast

Southern farmers are forming cooperatives and coalitions to secure food and housing justice while overcoming a history of discriminatory land and farm policies.

24 Developing Leadership to Address Health and Hunger

Rural Voices recently interviewed Starry Krueger of the Rural Development Leadership Network, about a new leadership development program in Mississippi.

26 HAC Facts

The latest news from HAC.

Download this Issue



Scan this QR code to subscribe instantly from your mobile phone.



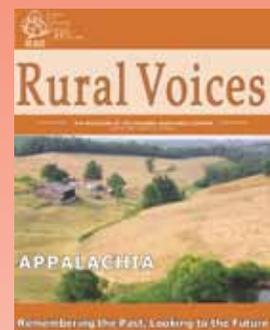
www.ruralhome.org/ruralvoices

NEW LOOK

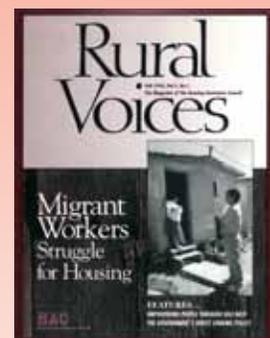


2013

Same commitment to presenting America’s *Rural Voices*



2006



1996

Unless otherwise noted, photos should be credited to the authoring organization. Statements made in Rural Voices are the opinions of the authors of the individual articles, not of the Housing Assistance Council. Material may be reproduced without permission, but Rural Voices should be credited.

EDITORS: Jarymar Arana and Lance George
 DESIGNER: Dan Stern and Jarymar Arana
 ISSN: 1903-8044

Cover Photo: Cheyenne River Youth Project

Supporting Rural America's Housing and Nutrition Needs

by Kevin Concannon

Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services - USDA

The USDA offers programs that support rural communities to address their housing and food security needs.



As the top official in charge of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) nutrition assistance programs, I see every day how our programs help to improve the lives of low-income families in this country, particularly those living in rural America. We know that more than seven million people live in poverty in rural areas, and that those folks face a set of unique, chronic challenges related to access to water and sewer systems, electric utility service, broadband, healthcare, quality education, housing, and safe, affordable food. Economic conditions in very poor areas related to distance, low population density, out migration, and high unemployment compound these challenges and generate limited opportunities for rural residents and can result in chronic conditions that recur generation after generation.

USDA is uniquely positioned to help mitigate and reverse the rural poverty cycle

and to increase opportunities for rural communities. Through our StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity initiative, we are leveraging partnerships in poverty-stricken rural areas to ensure that every community has equal access to USDA programs. Launched in 2010, the StrikeForce initiative began as a pilot project in selected regions in Arkansas, Georgia and Mississippi, and has since expanded to include Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah and Virginia. StrikeForce has shown impressive results thus far, particularly in the areas of expanding access to nutritious food and improving housing facilities in rural areas through the Rural Development and Food and Nutrition Service agencies.

In collaboration with strategic partners, Rural Development loan, grant and technical assistance programs connect rural residents with basic necessities and other resources that will ultimately enable rural Americans to successfully compete in the global economy. Rural Development aims

to increase the percentage of investments that go to the highest poverty areas by 20 percent by 2016.

Rural Development offers funding for single family homes, apartments for low-income individuals and the elderly, and farm labor housing, as well as support for childcare centers, fire and police stations, hospitals, libraries, nursing homes, and schools. Addressing these basic needs helps rural areas to ultimately develop a highly-skilled workforce and attract businesses that provide quality, high-paying jobs for rural residents.

Rural Development's Guaranteed Rural Rental Housing Program (GRRHP) provides very-low and low-income families with affordable housing. Properties financed using GRRHP provide amenities including meeting areas and computer rooms in rural areas where such facilities are often unavailable. The Farm Labor Housing Program (FLH) provides farm workers with safe, family-friendly and affordable housing. Properties financed through FLH provide

amenities such as daycare and play areas, computer rooms and meeting areas.

Housing programs assist low- and moderate-income families in rural areas to achieve successful homeownership through a budget-neutral and unsubsidized guarantee loan program, in which private sector lenders originate and service the loans. USDA's Self Help Housing Program allows families to contribute sweat equity and lower the amount of financing they will need to purchase a home.

These programs help to ensure a more stable family life and provide access to resources that better connect rural children to quality education and a brighter future. Equally important is ensuring access to nutritious, affordable food in rural areas. Research shows that poor nutrition at an early age reduces the likelihood that children will reach their full potential in athletics, music and the arts, and academics, and hurts their chances for success later in life. Through its National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), USDA provides nutritious meals to low-income children for free or at a reduced price during the school day, ensuring that all children have access to the nutrition they need for a brighter future. More than 21 million children receive lunch, and about 13 million receive breakfast, for free or at a reduced price through USDA programs. Data from the Department of Education shows that while less than half of elementary and secondary school students nationwide are eligible for free and reduced-price meals because of low income, in remote rural areas almost 60 percent are eligible.

And when school lets out for the summer, USDA's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides free meals to disadvantaged kids at centralized feeding sites when school breakfast and lunch are no longer available. Last year, USDA's partners served 161 million summer meals, feeding approximately 3.5 million children on a typical summer day. This summer, USDA has set a goal of feeding 5 million more meals to eligible kids across the country through our partnerships with state agencies and local organiza-

tions. To accomplish this goal, USDA has expanded the reach of this program through targeted technical assistance in five targeted states – Arkansas, California, Colorado, Rhode Island and Virginia -- and issued a national call to action for schools, community and faith-based organizations across the country to ensure that children in need have access to the program. To help families find summer feeding sites, we've established a national hotline at 1-866-3-HUNGRY or 1-877-8-HAMBRE (for Spanish speakers).

Operating summer feeding sites in rural areas presents several unique challenges. During the school year, children from rural areas may be bused to school across a large geographic area, and many do not have access to transportation during the summer months. As a result, rural feeding sites may have trouble assembling a large number of children and face issues in recovering costs. To help address this challenge, we offer a higher reimbursement rate for meals served at rural sites, and offers technical assistance to help rural sites increase participation by eligible children. Rural partners can be reimbursed for both the transportation of food to sites, and the transportation of children to feeding sites. We encourage our partners to get creative to reach eligible kids—some have established mobile food trucks to deliver food to kids, while others have worked with local churches and community agencies to provide transportation for kids to feeding sites.

Rural poverty is a complex issue requiring bold solutions, and while we are seeing many successes, there is still work to be done. By emphasizing strategies that facilitate regional and local economic development and public-private partnerships, USDA is a catalyst for spurring investment in community and social infrastructure and for attracting new business, quality jobs, ensuring food security, and improving economic growth and stability in historically underserved areas.

To learn more about USDA's programs that support nutrition and rural development, visit www.USDA.gov.

Kevin Concannon



Kevin W. Concannon was nominated by President Obama and Secretary Vilsack and confirmed by the U.S. Senate in July 2009 to serve as Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services in the United States Department of Agriculture.

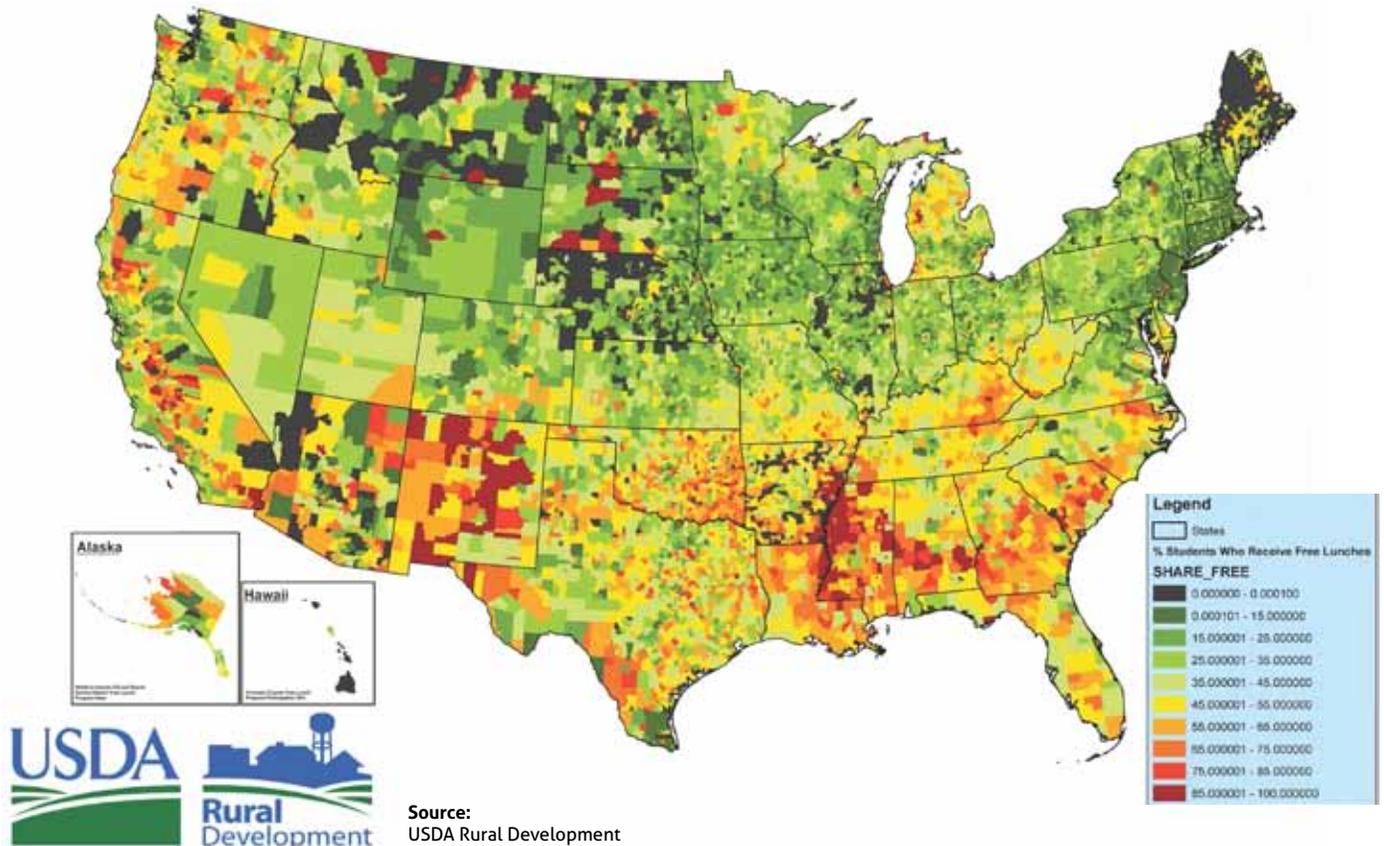
Under Secretary Concannon has had a lengthy and distinguished career in public service. Over the past twenty-five years, he has served as Director of State Health and Human Services departments in Maine, Oregon, and Iowa. He has championed expanded services, improved access, alternatives to institutions, consumer choices, affordable health care, diversity in workplace and programs, and modernization of public information technology systems.

He has received a number of awards, including the Lifetime Human Services Award from the American Public Human Services Association in 2007, 2012 Catholic Charities USA Keep the Dream Alive Award, and the 2012 National WIC Association Leadership award.

Rural Hunger and Housing: Challenges and Opportunities

Rural America faces challenges and opportunities in housing and food security.

Percent of Students Enrolled in Free Lunch Programs



by Lorette Picciano



Meeting food needs often goes together with meeting housing needs.

Rudy Arredondo, Rural Coalition Board member, long-time rural activist and President of National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association, said “sustainable rural communities must meet all the needs of those who live and work there. We must assure that all families have their basic needs for adequate food, housing, employment, education, health care, and transportation met.” Reaching the goal of sustainability in rural areas grows more challenging every year in the face of political realignments, declining resources and growing power imbalances.

The Rural Coalition (RC), founded in 1978, has been dedicated to promoting just and sustainable development in rural areas

for 35 years. Our coalition remains more essential than ever in the current farm bill and appropriations battles, as we work to protect both food and agriculture programs, as well as housing and rural development programs for rural communities that need all these investments at once.

SUSTAINABILITY IN THE FACE OF POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

At press time in the summer of 2013, the US House of Representatives has approved a revised Farm Bill package stripped of its nutrition title, reviving a proposal first raised during the Reagan administration. The proposal is aimed once again at splitting an enduring rural-urban coalition essential to the future of rural communities

who want to assure their populations have both quality housing and access to nutritious food.

Food, agriculture, and rural development have been linked together in our national policy since the middle of the previous century. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known for many years as Food Stamps, represents some 80 percent of all the spending in the Farm Bill. This program, developed over the course of several decades, was piloted in 1939. The use of food coupons in retail establishments gradually replaced programs enacted in the 1930s, which distributed surplus commodities from programs designed to support prices for farmers under the New Deal, and then used these commodities to feed hungry families. In the past decade, benefits have been provided electronically rather than as coupons, increasing efficiency and reducing the stigma of the program. In the 2008 Farm Bill, at the behest of the House Agriculture Nutrition Subcommittee chair, Representative Joe Baca, the program was changed from Food Stamps to SNAP.

Federal nutrition and food programs are more important than ever for rural areas. The USDA Economic Research Service recently reported that “the latest U.S. Census Bureau figures show that 15.1 percent of rural Americans are living in poverty – a rate higher than the national average, which stands at 13.2 percent.” Rural poverty, other studies show, is especially severe in the rural south, and for African American, American Indian and Latino children.

The nutrition title in the Farm Bill passed in May by the House Agriculture Committee, would cut over \$20 billion from the SNAP program with devastating impacts for rural communities and children across the nation. Passage of the Farm Bill with that nutrition title fell apart on the House floor following adoption of an amendment

that would have allowed states to impose work requirements on SNAP recipients and keep any savings. Another amendment contained in the just-passed version of the Farm Bill requires that all discretionary programs, including many long-standing rural development programs, expire at the end of every farm bill.

The nutrition title, however, also has some new local food programs important to rural communities, providing opportunities to build not only a sustainable food system, but also to strengthen community itself. These programs also link to other programs of the Farm Bill that support the equitable engagement of all our nation’s diverse and new entry producers and Indian Tribes in agriculture. Funding for many of these programs has ended for Fiscal Year 2013 and will only start again with passage of a full farm bill that continues these investments. At the same time, preserving funding for rural housing programs through the appropriations process remains a greater challenge than ever.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

As we endeavor to assure all our communities have housing and food, we only need to look to the past to realize that it is our very communities and members that have led efforts to initiate the investments in housing and food systems, and now it is up to us to protect these investments into the future.

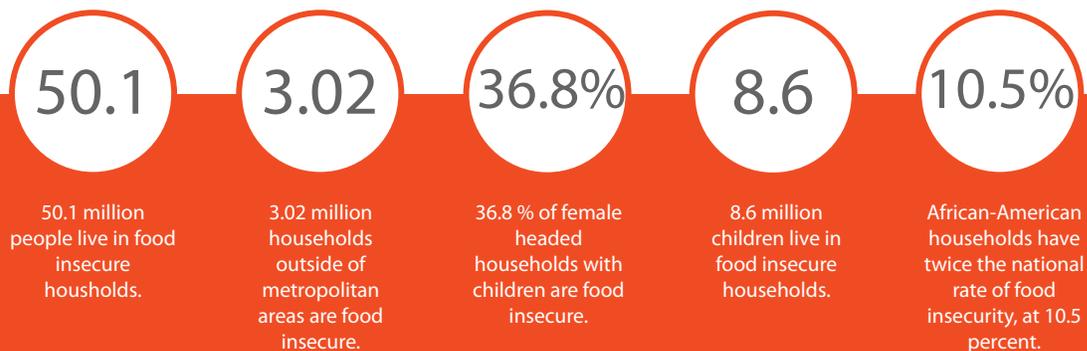
The Rural Coalition, with its some 60 diverse members representing American Indian, African American, Asian-American, and Latino small-scale farmers, farmworkers, rural and tribal communities, has led efforts to achieve civil and human rights in agriculture and to keep diverse farmers on the land. With our members and allies, we helped to secure 30 sections of new policy in the 2008 Farm Bill and worked through Congress, the Courts and the Administration on the resolution of dis-

crimination claims by African American, Native American, Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers, with the Hispanic and Women’s claims process closing just this past May.

RC promotes the right of rural organizations to equity through democratic participation to shape the policies that affect them. Building on this founding commitment, RC is also a member of La Via Campesina, an international farmers organization that advances food sovereignty, defined by La Via Campesina as “the fundamental right of all peoples, nations and states to control food and agricultural systems and policies, ensuring every one has adequate, affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food. This requires the right to define and control our methods of production, transformation, distribution both at the local and international levels.” Our work to protect land, water and seeds and to prevent violence against women are all fundamental to a sustainable food system based on small-scale agriculture. In practice, this means nurturing the community as the center of community development.

In Fellsmere, Florida, the farmworker community decided after the damage wrought by three hurricanes, they needed to step up into leadership. Two farmworkers were elected to city council, along with two women entrepreneurs. Together, they began two community farms with water provided by the community. Now farmworker leaders, led by the Farmworker Association of Florida (FWAF), they are pursuing community leadership and forming community gardens in Pierson, Homestead, Apopka and other locations. RC has added a staff member there to reach out to an emerging sector of small-scale farmers and support their efforts to access USDA services.

Quick Facts



Women leaders from RC and FWF are members of the newly formed Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, representing farmworker women and their families. Now communities in El Paso, TX, southern New Mexico, rural Texas, and across the nation are creating new gardens and community farms that feed people and nurture family cooperation and a new political strength. Fundamental to their work is a focus on building relationships with their elected representatives at every level. In many cases, these elected representatives have become the strongest supporters of the policy agenda our organizations together pursue.

ADDRESSING HUNGER AND HOUSING NEEDS

Meeting food needs often goes together with meeting housing needs. In Massachusetts, Flats Mentor Farm has worked to assist more than seventy immigrant farm families now producing and selling in more than forty Boston-area farmers markets. In 2013, the number of families served grew to 130. Through farming and marketing with improved access to USDA services, the families now have the income to secure housing, contributing to the economic strength of their community.

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives, working throughout the southeast, and Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation in Arkansas have worked to train farmers and build cooperatives and markets, and at the same time, to build important housing developments in their rural communities. In Fresno, CA, National Hmong American Farmers, Inc., is helping Hmong farmers to increase family income and housing access by selling in a new community farmers market and to the school district. The Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project has helped to organize and unite African American and American Indian producers in their state in response to five years of devastating droughts and testing new ideas such as how USDA could fund solar water pumps to secure water for cattle. In New Mexico, the Taos County Economic Development Corporation operates a center that sustains more than 40 agriculture related value-added businesses, and assist ranchers to butcher and market their meat. The New Mexico Acequia Association and Northern New Mexico Stockmen's Association as well as the historic Land Grants work together to protect traditional water systems and access to ranching on forested lands which form the economic base for these traditional communities who face growing income disparity as

wealthy people migrate to Taos and compete with them for land and housing. The groups in New Mexico have also worked together at the state and national level in strong support for equity in agriculture, and their elected representatives became leaders in drafting and leading on critical amendments and programs that advance the work of all of our communities.

In the future, it is important to grow new links at the field level with leaders of the rural affordable housing movement as we work together to protect past investments and to enhance food systems and affordable housing as the basis of sustainable rural communities across the nation.

Lorette Picciano is the Executive Director of Rural Coalition. To learn more about Rural Coalition, please www.ruralco.org.

¹ Roth, Dennis, Food Stamps : 1932 –1977: From Provisional and Pilot Programs to Permanent Policy, USDA Economic Research Service, Washington, DC, <http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/foodstamps.htm>

² See more at http://www.spotlightonpoverty.org/rural_poverty.aspx#sthash.tiQK3iOV.dpuf

³ <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/our-conferences-main-menu-28/6-jakarta-2013/resolutions-and-declarations/1428-the-jakarta-call>



Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural at the 2012 Winter Forum. Rural Coalition will be hosting the 2013 Forum on December 5-6 in Washington, DC.

Building Homes & Feeding the Hungry in Rural Pennsylvania

Community action programs can play an important role in addressing both housing and food security needs in rural America.

by Kate Thompson

For many families across rural America, the issues of food and housing insecurity are all too real. Far too often, these families suffer without adequate, safe housing and proper nutrition. With the recent economic crisis and continued nationwide workforce reduction, more and more rural families are struggling to make ends meet. Since 1966, Fayette County Community Action Agency, Inc. (FCCAA) has worked to respond to the needs of the challenged Fayette County community. FCCAA has developed a comprehensive array of supportive service programs, designed to help individuals and families at any stage in life take the initial steps toward self-sufficiency. Recognizing that in order to make a positive impact on a rural community services must be comprehensive and limited resources must be coordinated, FCCAA became part of Rural LISC's 'Sustainable Communities' initiative. Several of the goals of the Sustainable Communities initiative aim to provide safe, affordable housing and promote healthy lifestyles.

HOUSING

Securing and maintaining appropriate housing is an important step in achieving self-sufficiency. FCCAA offers comprehensive and innovative housing solutions intended to serve the County's most vulnerable populations. These programs are designed to both prevent and react to crises, depending on individual need.

Homeownership

FCCAA has developed housing solutions designed to ensure that the goal of homeownership is attainable for people at any



income level. In partnership with PIRHL Developers of Cleveland, Ohio, FCCAA developed Uniontown Family Homes, a 30-unit scattered-site housing development, located throughout the City of Uniontown. Residents of these homes benefit from energy-efficient appliances and a lease-to-purchase payment model, offered under the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency's (PHFA) Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) Program. This unique model ensures that homeownership remains an attainable goal for all families, regardless of income.

To further assist potential homebuyers, FCCAA also provides first-time homebuyers'



Jerry A. Harris, a Uniontown Family Home resident with his granddaughters



In Fayette County, PA, nearly 23% of the population qualifies for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).



Kitchen facilities at the Republic Food Enterprise Center

education to those seeking to purchase their first home. FCCAA's HUD-Certified Housing Counselors work with clients to educate them on the process of purchasing and maintaining a home to ensure that they are fully prepared to become successful homeowners. Through an affiliate corporation, Threshold Housing Development, Inc., FCCAA connects clients to USDA's Mutual Self-Help Program, through which clients can contribute physically to the construction of their home, in return for a reduced purchase price. This project has developed hundreds of homes in the small towns and rural communities scattered throughout Fayette County.

Supportive Housing

Individuals facing a homelessness situation who have mental health diagnoses or are exiting the legal system often face circumstances that make finding and maintaining housing especially difficult. FCCAA has developed a variety of housing solutions, including emergency and transitional shelters and multiple supportive housing developments, designed to provide residents

with permanent housing, while offering the supportive services needed to help them remain housing secure. For families seeking emergency assistance with their housing expenses, FCCAA offers the Rental Assistance Program, which provides payment for rent, security deposits, or utilities to individuals and/or families to prevent and/or end homelessness by maintaining or obtaining their own residence. FCCAA also operates a Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program, which offers individualized housing solutions for those who are currently facing eviction or homelessness.

Affordable Senior Housing

Over the years, FCCAA has worked to ensure that Fayette's elderly residents are able to live in comfortable, modern housing, located within close proximity to all necessary amenities. FCCAA has developed Meadow Heights Apartments, a 60-unit apartment building that allows elderly Fayette County residents to age in place, while taking advantage of nearby available service programs and Maple

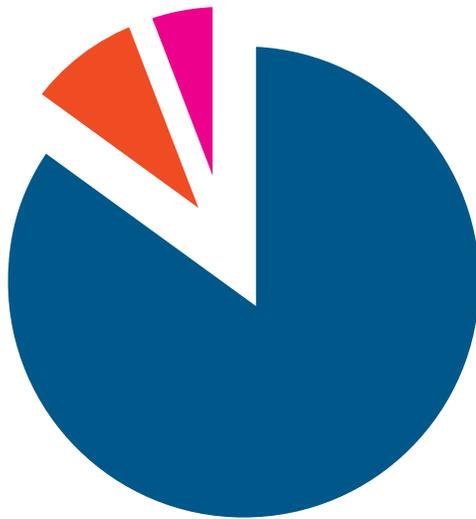
Garden Apartments, a 36-unit apartment complex located within walking distance from downtown Uniontown.

These affordable housing options, developed with the support of the PHFA's LIHTC program and private investment, offer elderly residents the opportunity to live in low-maintenance, high-quality, service-enriched environments located within walking distance to several amenities, including FCCAA's "Campus of Services" which includes a Senior Center, the County's Food Bank, and services such as legal assistance, medical and dental services, and a variety of education and nutrition programs.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

In addition to struggling to find and maintain adequate housing, Fayette County residents suffer from numerous negative nutrition-related health problems. Many

Food Insecurity in the United States, 2011



5.7%

Very Low Food Security
Normal eating patterns disturbed because of insufficient money or other resources for food

9.2%

Low Food Security
Require assistance through food pantries or federal programs to obtain enough food to avoid disrupting diets

85.1%

Food Secure
Households have access to food that meets the nutrition needs of all household members.

Source:
USDA Economic Research Service calculations of data from the December 2011 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

face food insecurity and lack the education needed to appropriately prepare fresh, healthy foods.

Food Assistance and Education

FCCAA recognizes that providing emergency and supplemental food will only result in cyclical need. To halt this cycle, FCCAA has developed a full line of food and nutrition-related programs designed to address food insecurity and provide the education necessary to eliminate dependence and support healthy lifestyles. To meet Fayette County residents' immediate food insecurity needs, FCCAA developed a countywide Food Bank, which currently serves as Fayette County's designated warehouse for collection, storage, and distribution of food for those in need. This network of food assistance programs provides nourishment to 10,000 Fayette County residents each year. FCCAA is also responsive to the needs of the County's elderly and shut-in residents and offers a home-delivered meal program.

FCCAA has also developed multiple programs to supplement families' diets and improve the overall health of the County. These programs range from operating the Women, Infants, Children (WIC) program, which provides mothers and their children with vouchers for nutritious foods; to operating the County's Commodity Sup-

plemental Food Program, which provides people aged 60 and over with healthy and nutritious foods on a monthly basis. In Fayette County, nearly 23 percent of the population qualifies for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). To ensure that eligible families are able to access this program, FCCAA operates a SNAP Outreach program, which assists families in applying for SNAP benefits.

Providing emergency and supplemental foods to those in need is not enough. FCCAA also works to educate the community on nutrition and food preparation through programs like the Nutrition Education Program, which works in conjunction with the Food Bank and to ensure that clients obtain the knowledge necessary to maximize the benefit they receive from the food provided. The nutrition education provided by FCCAA is tailored to meet the individual needs of each client and is designed to support healthier environments and lifestyles across the County.

A Sustainable Food System

To create jobs and encourage healthy and local food consumption, FCCAA has developed the Republic Food Enterprise Center (RFEC), a regional 'food hub' that responds to the nutritional needs of the southwestern Pennsylvania. The RFEC stimulates agricultural production, creates value-

added products, distributes locally grown produce and products, and develops retail outlets within food deserts throughout the region. In 2012, FCCAA's RFEC project was awarded a US Department of Health and Human Services Community and Economic Development grant that is part of the First Lady's Healthy Food Financing Initiative. This initiative supports projects like the RFEC that increase access to healthy, affordable food in communities that currently lack these options. The RFEC project is expected to create 40 jobs for local residents, while stimulating the local agricultural economy.

MEETING THE NEED

Social programs and services continue to make a substantial difference in the lives of our neighbors, but rural communities across America struggle to secure the funding needed to operate them. Unfortunately, rural communities receive little attention from national foundations and businesses, which often focus on funding large urban areas. Rural communities face unique challenges and need increased attention and support in order to thrive and become sustainable. At FCCAA, the principles behind the Sustainable Communities initiative have guided the implementation of a variety of housing and nutrition programs and services designed to help individuals and families at every stage in life. While FCCAA has made a great deal of progress, Fayette County remains among the most challenged counties in Pennsylvania.

Kate Thompson is Senior Resource Consultant of Fayette County Community Action Agency (FCCAA). To learn more about FCCAA, visit www.fccaa.org.



Uniontown Family Homes

Farmworker Housing: Implications for Food Security and Food Safety

by Sara A. Quandt and
Thomas A. Arcury

Although they help feed America, farmworkers often face substandard conditions and food insecurity at their own tables.

Farmworkers put food on the American table and serve as a key component of the agricultural industry. However, their participation in feeding others is no guarantee of their own ability to feed themselves and their families adequately, that is, to maintain food security and food safety. While low wages and insufficient money to buy food are significant obstacles to food security among farmworkers, the condition of the housing they occupy plays a role that is often overlooked, particularly for food safety.

WHO ARE FARMWORKERS?

At least 1 million workers in the US cultivate and harvest field and orchard crops, as well as such agricultural products as Christmas trees and tobacco.¹ Although accurate numbers to characterize this population are difficult to obtain, the US Department of Labor has conducted the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) since 1988.² The most recent NAWS shows that most farmworkers today are Hispanic; 72 percent are foreign-born,

most from Mexico or Central America. About 42 percent of these farmworkers migrate to work. Some of these migrant workers follow the crops, moving from place to place as work becomes available. Traditionally, “migrant streams” have existed in the West, Midwest, and East, with workers harvesting crops in southern California, Texas, and Florida in the winter and moving north as far as Washington State, the Great Lakes area, New England, and even Canada in the summer months. Other workers migrate from point to point, leaving their winter home for a single summer destination. Migrant workers include guest workers on special non-immigrant visas (H-2A), as well as those who work directly for a grower or through a crew leader and may or may not have immigration documents or US citizenship.

FARMWORKER HOUSING

For migrant workers, housing and work are closely linked: employers, whether growers or crew leaders, provide housing, often referred to as “camps”, or workers seek housing on their own in the surrounding community. In either case, the housing provided is regulated by the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act.³ This act requires that the housing meet safety and health standards and that it be inspected prior to seasonal occupancy. The act is interpreted, implemented and enforced at the state level, with some states specifying more stringent regulations than others. In general, the regulations cover structure of the housing, lighting and wiring, water supply, kitchen equipment, sanitation, and pests. For kitchens, regulations often deal with the number of stove burners that must be provided (e.g., 1 per 5 workers in



The abysmal conditions of farmworker housing noted 50 years ago remain...

North Carolina and 2 per 5 workers in New York), the amount of refrigerator space per worker, water testing for contamination, and refrigeration temperatures. Regulations applicable to the total dwelling also apply to cooking and eating areas, including those requiring intact walls, windows, and flooring and provision of safe wiring.

Despite regulations designed to ensure housing for farmworkers that is safe and sufficient for their needs, farmworker housing has, historically, been of poor quality and overcrowded. Documentaries from Edward R. Murrow’s 1960 *Harvest of Shame* to the 2010 *Harvest of Dignity* show the appalling conditions in which most farmworkers live.⁴ The Housing Assistance Council provides the only national data documenting the housing conditions faced by farmworkers.⁵ This is supplemented by data from state and regional studies from across the country. California Rural Legal Assistance has produced a review of the literature on farmworker housing and its association with health.⁶



A stove top in unsanitary condition

All photos used in this article are copyright Wake Forest School of Medicine, 2010. Credit NIH grant R01ES012358



01



02



03



04



05



06

Farmworker Housing Conditions

01 As a safety measure against rodent infestation, food is stored on a shelf hanging from the ceiling

02 Stained and defective cabinets and drawers in a farmworker kitchen

03 An old, dirty refrigerator in poor working condition

04 Many farmworkers store cooked and uncooked food in this overcrowded commercial cooler

05 This damaged sink in is set on a decaying wood counter top

06 An overcrowded, unsanitary kitchen in poor repair

Existing research on the quality of farmworker housing shows that much of this housing is in poor repair, often with holes in walls, floors, and windows that promote mold and mildew as well as pest infestations. Sleeping, cooking, and bathing facilities are unsanitary and hard to clean, with fewer beds, toilets, showers, and cooking appliances than are needed for the number of workers present. Conditions have been shown to deteriorate over the growing season as larger numbers of workers squeeze into the available housing.

FOOD SECURITY, FOOD SAFETY AND HOUSING

Food security research among farmworkers in different places throughout the US indicates that many more farmworkers are food insecure than is the case in the general population. At least 50 percent of farmworker households typically report low food security, compared to less than 20 percent in national population surveys. While food security is often considered an economic indicator (i.e., households lack food due to inadequate money to purchase it), the housing conditions farmworkers experience bring additional challenges for both farmworkers and their families getting sufficient, nutritious food to eat.

The placement of farmworker camps often limits access to food. Agricultural work is largely rural, with farms and farmworker housing often located at significant distance from population centers with grocery stores. Many farmworkers, particularly those on H-2A guest worker visas, arrive at farmworker camps with no knowledge of the local area and no transportation to travel to grocery stores. Workers who are undocumented often lack a driver's license and are reluctant to travel away from the camps. Even if willing to travel to grocery stores, workers usually work long hours with few days off, so they have little time to shop for food. Some workers can grow gardens or keep animals, but others lack the facilities or migrate too often to make this a practical option.

Aspects of farmworker housing related to cooking and eating can have immediate and significant consequences for health, safety, and work capacity. Food-borne illnesses affect an estimated 48 million

Americans and result in considerable health care expense and lost work time. Food contamination during storage or preparation, lack of appropriate kitchen facilities, and under-cooking all increase the risk for such illnesses. Recently published data from farmworker housing in eastern North Carolina highlights the problem for farmworkers. Among 182 camps inspected by researchers, coliform contamination was found in the drinking water in 62 (34 percent). Other studies have found substantial levels of infectious diarrheal disease among farmworkers and have implicated tap water in housing, which may be contaminated due to overloaded and malfunctioning sewerage systems. In over a third of the North Carolina kitchens, food preparation areas were judged to be unsanitary. Almost half of the kitchens had evidence of cockroach infestation and over a quarter, evidence of rodent infestation. A few had no hot water, no refrigerator, or no stove. Two-thirds of the camps had at least one refrigerator where the temperature exceeded 45° F. At such temperatures, bacteria in food can double in number in 20 minutes. Housing regulations in North Carolina require just 0.75 cubic feet of refrigerator storage per resident, so large numbers of workers may be opening, closing, and adding warm leftover food to a refrigerator. Combined with hot summer temperatures, these conditions make it difficult for refrigerators to cool food properly. Overall, kitchen conditions were worse later in the summer, as the number of camp residents increased. They were also worse in camps that did not house H-2A workers. This may reflect the greater emphasis given by state inspectors to camps of growers hiring H-2A workers.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Farmworker housing is generally located in rural locations that may be quite isolated from surrounding towns and community resources. The abysmal conditions of farmworker housing noted 50 years ago remain, despite federal and state regulations designed to guarantee workers housing that is adequate and safe. Combined, the location and condition of farmworker housing can contribute to problems with having enough food to eat and to being able to prepare and consume nutritious food without contamination.

While current research points to the overwhelming problems with farmworker housing, it is important to realize that not all farmworkers live in substandard housing. Some growers maintain safe, clean housing facilities. In some cases this is new housing built especially for these workers, but in other cases, older housing has been maintained in safe and livable condition. In addition, livable communities have been designed and built for farmworkers in Florida and elsewhere. Continued efforts to provide appropriate housing for farmworkers are important for both worker quality of life and worker health.

Sara A. Quandt is a Professor of Public Health Science and Thomas A. Arcury is a Professor of Family and Community Medicine at the Wake Forest School of Medicine. For more information about farmworker housing conditions, visit www.wakehealth.edu.

¹ "Profile of Hired Farmworkers, A 2008 Update," accessed July 16, 2013, http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1564&context=key_workplace.

² "The National Agricultural Workers Survey," accessed July 16, 2013, <http://www.doleta.gov/agworker/naws.cfm>.

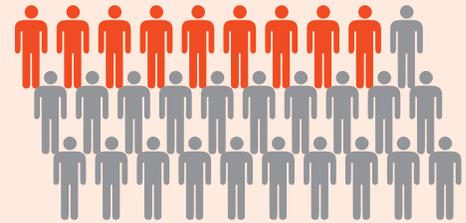
³ "The Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protect Act," accessed July 16, 2013, <http://www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-msawpa.htm>.

⁴ "Harvest of Dignity," accessed July 16, 2013, <http://pic.tv/harvest/>.

⁵ "Housing Assistance Council: Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Housing," accessed July 16, 2013, <http://www.ruralhome.org/information-and-publications/information-sheets/demographics-high-need-areas-and-special-popultrn/85-migrant-and-seasonal-farmworker-housing>.

⁶ "(Un)safe at Home: The Health Consequences of Sub-standard Farm Labor Housing," accessed July 16, 2013, <http://www.crla.org/unsafe-home-health-consequences-sub-standard-farm-labor-housing>

Addressing Child Hunger in Rural New Mexico



CHILD HUNGER IN NM

With nearly one in three (30.6%) children living in food insecure households, New Mexico has the highest rate of child food insecurity. Source: Share Our Strength.

In response to New Mexico’s high child food insecurity rate and the challenge of geographic isolation, one border colonia community began a summer meals program.

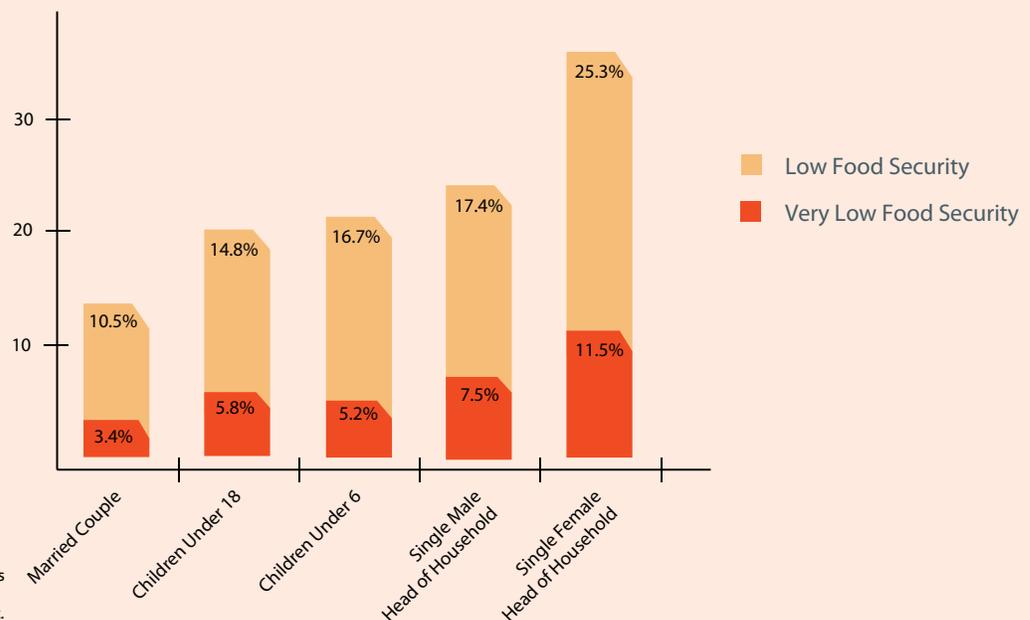
Rural communities who experience food insecurity during the year are more likely to experience hunger in summer. Rural food insecure children are especially vulnerable, often skipping meals on weekends and during summers when they do not have access to food usually provided during the school year. In response, summer meal programs act as a safety net, especially for vulnerable children. Share Our Strength’s *No Kid Hungry Campaign* seeks to close the gap in access of healthy food for low income children through initiatives including alternative school breakfast programs and summer meal programs. The New Mexico

No Kid Hungry Campaign was created to address the high rates of food insecurity among New Mexico Children and Youth. A major challenge during the summer meals program was bringing summer meals to the colonia community. Many sites in southern New Mexico discontinued their summer meal program due to low participation rates. Share our Strength recruited help from a local church youth group and other community members who carried out door-to-door outreach. To attract youth to the summer feeding sites, the program offered sports and recreation activities with donations from civic organizations such as the Lions Club and the Catholic Church.

The end result was a successful five-day-a-week summer feeding program that had an average of 70 youth participants. Daniel Valverde, who worked on the campaign said of the program: “For the summer meals program in rural New Mexico to be successful, it required an organization’s investment in community, to have them make it their own.”

To learn more about Share Our Strength’s *No Kid Hungry Campaign*, visit www.nokidhungry.org.

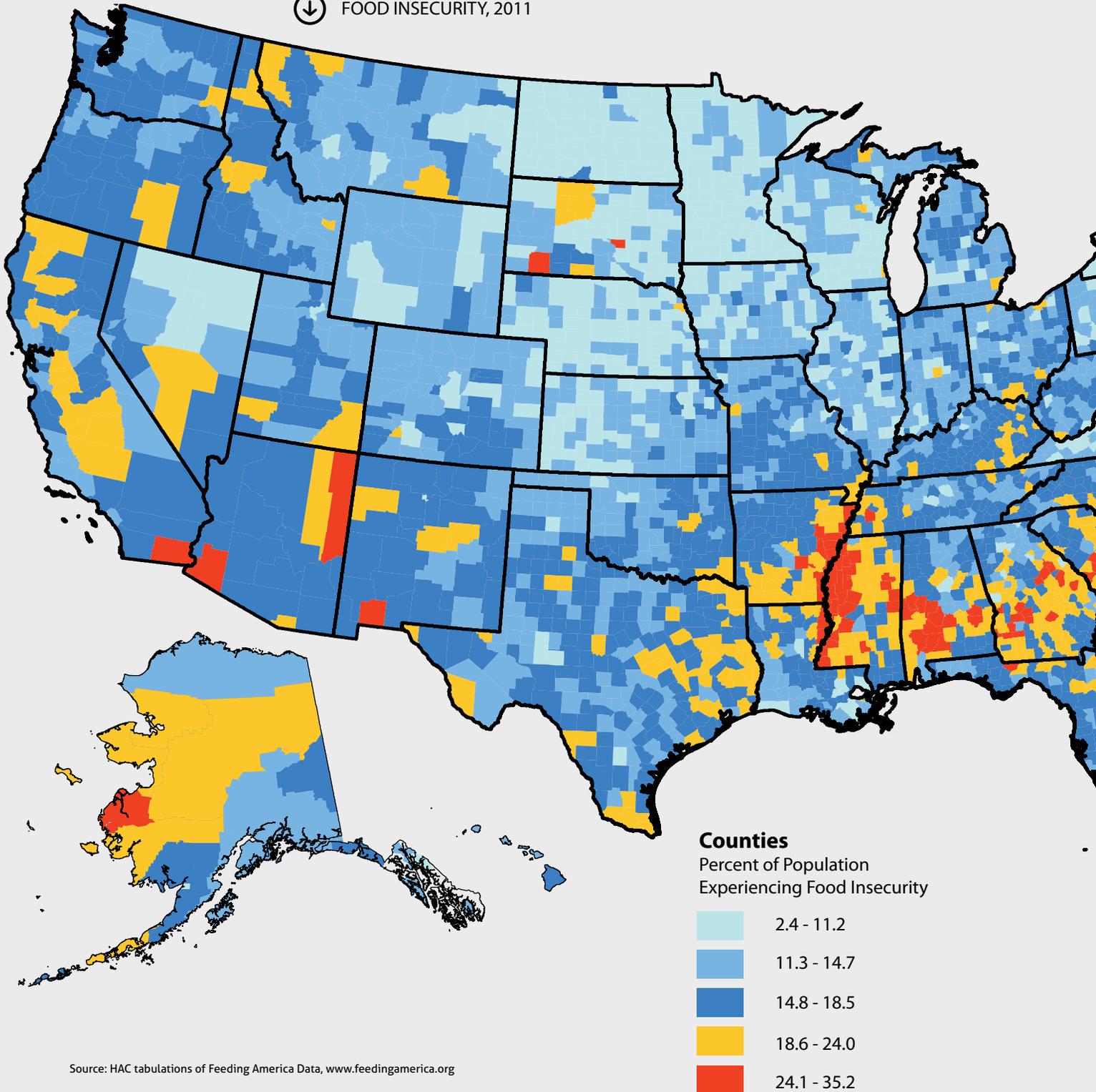
FOOD SECURITY FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN BY FAMILY COMPOSITION



Source: USDA Economic Research Service calculations of data from the December 2011 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

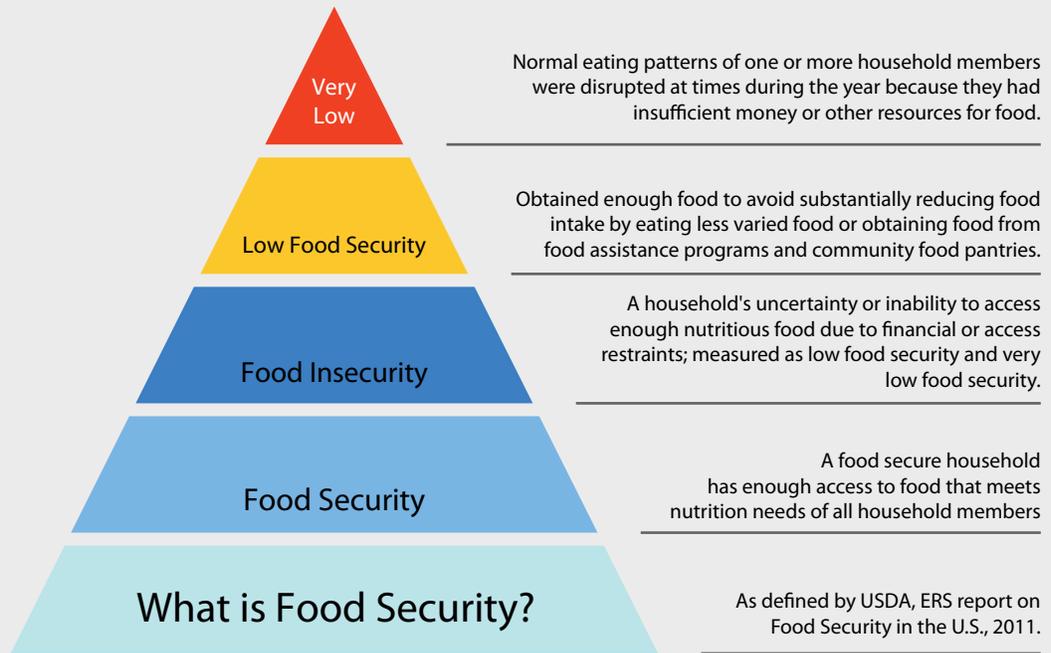
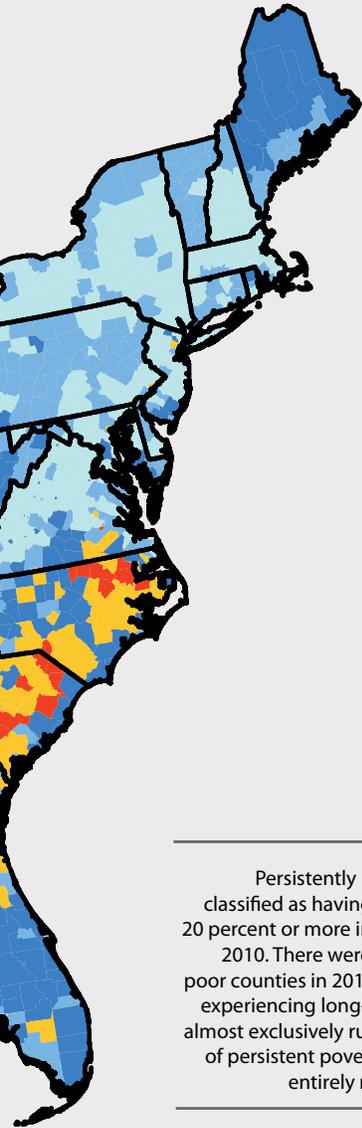
Hunger & Poverty in

↓ FOOD INSECURITY, 2011

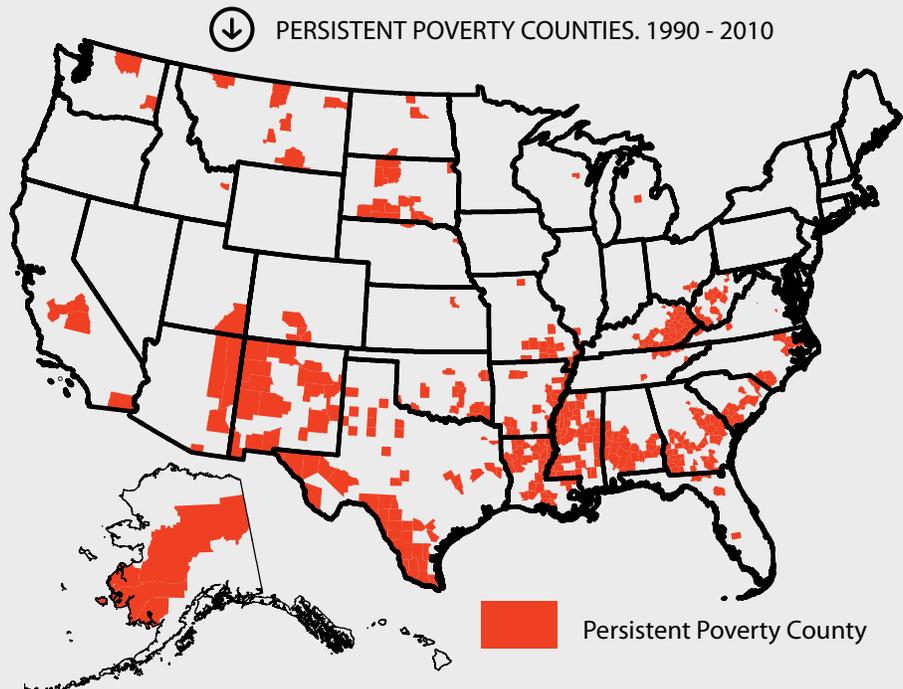


Source: HAC tabulations of Feeding America Data, www.feedingamerica.org

the United States



Persistently poor counties are classified as having poverty rates of 20 percent or more in 1990, 2000, and 2010. There were 429 persistently poor counties in 2010. These counties experiencing long-term poverty are almost exclusively rural, as 86 percent of persistent poverty counties have entirely rural populations.



Growing

Food and Housing Security in South Dakota's Native American Reservations

by Lauren Haas Finkelstein

South Dakota's Native American community is fighting hunger and substandard housing to protect their children and future leaders.



A door being installed on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation
Photo: Cheyenne River Youth Project

The Oglala Lakota Nation (also known as the Oglala Sioux Tribe) and the Cheyenne River Lakota Nation (also known as the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe) continue to live on Indian Reservations located on some of their former homelands in south western and north central South Dakota. Both the Pine Ridge, home of the Oglalas, and the Cheyenne River Sioux Indian Reservations are large (8th and 4th largest nationally), rural, and are located within the top ten poorest counties based on per capita income in the United States.

Running Strong for American Indian Youth is a national nonprofit organization cofounded over 25 years ago by Olympic Champion and Oglala Lakota, Billy Mills. While we work with American Indian and Alaska Native communities throughout the



Too many native children know what it is like to go hungry.

estimated Pine Ridge needs 4,000 new homes to meet current housing needs. Cheyenne River’s need is similar. In fact, the National American Indian Housing Council estimates that 250,000 new units are needed to meet housing needs in Indian Country.

This current crisis manifests itself in chronic overcrowding, homelessness, families moving from place to place, and homes lacking basic necessities like running water or in serious disrepair. It is not unheard of for two or three families to share a home. Housing insecurity impacts children’s mental and physical health, educational opportunities and food security. Housing insecurity is like the pebble in the pond, its negative effects rippling out to impact Native children’s wellness.

TIP! WASTE UN ZANIPI: WELLNESS THROUGH A GOOD HOME

High material costs, distant locations, large family size and infrastructure costs all add up to housing costs that many reservation residents find untenable. Bad credit, despite working, land trust issues and difficulty in finding private financing limit mortgage options make securing good housing challenging. Yet there are solutions within the housing inventory that are available. Running Strong funds small scale home repairs to help families improve their home life. Recent projects included



Children harvest fresh vegetables in the *Winyan Toka Win* (Leading Lady) children’s garden. Photo: Cheyenne River Youth Project

United States, much of our work has a focus on the Northern Plains, through long-term development in partnership with local leaders on the ground. We benefit from the partnership and assistance of great local groups like Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) Partnership for Housing, *Tipi Waste Un Zanipi*, Cheyenne River Youth Project, Slim Buttes Agricultural Development Program and *Can Wigmunke*. Running Strong for American Indian Youth is a founding member of the Native Ways Federation, a group of national Native nonprofits dedicated to

increase and share resources while meeting high standards to improve the quality of philanthropy in Indian Country. Our focus is on Native children, and developing the tools that they, their families, and communities need to build a generation of safe, happy and healthy kids.

NATIVE CHILDREN NEED HOUSING SECURITY

How do you raise a healthy child? At Running Strong, we look at the whole child from their school experience to nutrition to family services to finding safe places to live, learn, and have fun. Housing shortages in Indian Country have been well documented and Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River are no exception. In recent testimony before the US Senate on Indian Affairs, OST Housing Authority Director Paul Iron Cloud

a new door for a family that was forced to enter their home through a window, installation of a new water heater, windows and furnace, and installation of skirting on a mobile home. Running Strong has also built ramps and entrance modifications or lowered the rise of steps to help elders go outside and want to implement more cost effective fixes (like plastic over windows) to make homes more energy efficient

NATIVE CHILDREN NEED FOOD SECURITY

In an overcrowded home, constantly underfoot or moving from place to place, families cannot cook healthy food easily. Rather than take up the kitchen, they microwave a quick meal and retreat to eat it in their one shared room. Access to fresh food is compromised by long distances to the grocery store, cost and availability. A mother reminded me that even a meal like peanut butter and jelly becomes unattainable with high gas prices or lack of transportation. Too many Native children know what it is like to go hungry.

A LOCAL APPROACH TO ENDING CHILDHOOD HUNGER

To keep children from going hungry on the weekends or over school breaks when they don't have access to a free school lunch and breakfast, we started a backpack food program at Takini School. School teachers, volunteers and honor students pack bags of food for their classmates to take home so that they don't go hungry.

Despite prevailing ideas that the Lakota rely only on the buffalo for food, strong



Young gardeners at work on Pine Ridge
Photo: Can Wigmunke

agricultural traditions remain. One community volunteer tells of her grandparents, who lived to be 107 and 104 years old, maintaining a three acre garden and practicing aquaculture in their creek bottom. To improve the quality of food consumed and increase access to healthy, fresh food, Running Strong supports organic community, family and school gardens on Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River. Most children love to garden and are more easily coaxed to eat a fresh fruit or vegetable that they

have grown. Farmers' Markets, like the one supported by the Cheyenne River Youth Project's two acre *Winyan Toka Win* (Leading Lady) children's garden or *Can Wigmunke* (Rainbow Tree)'s demonstration and school garden contribute to the local economy while increasing access to fresh food. Trainings, canning workshops or Q&A sessions on Slim Buttes Agricultural Development Program's weekly gardening show on KILL radio help gardeners steward their plants to harvest.

At Running Strong, we believe that housing and food security are intimately connected. Thanks to strong community-led efforts, we can make a difference one child, one family, one Nation at a time.

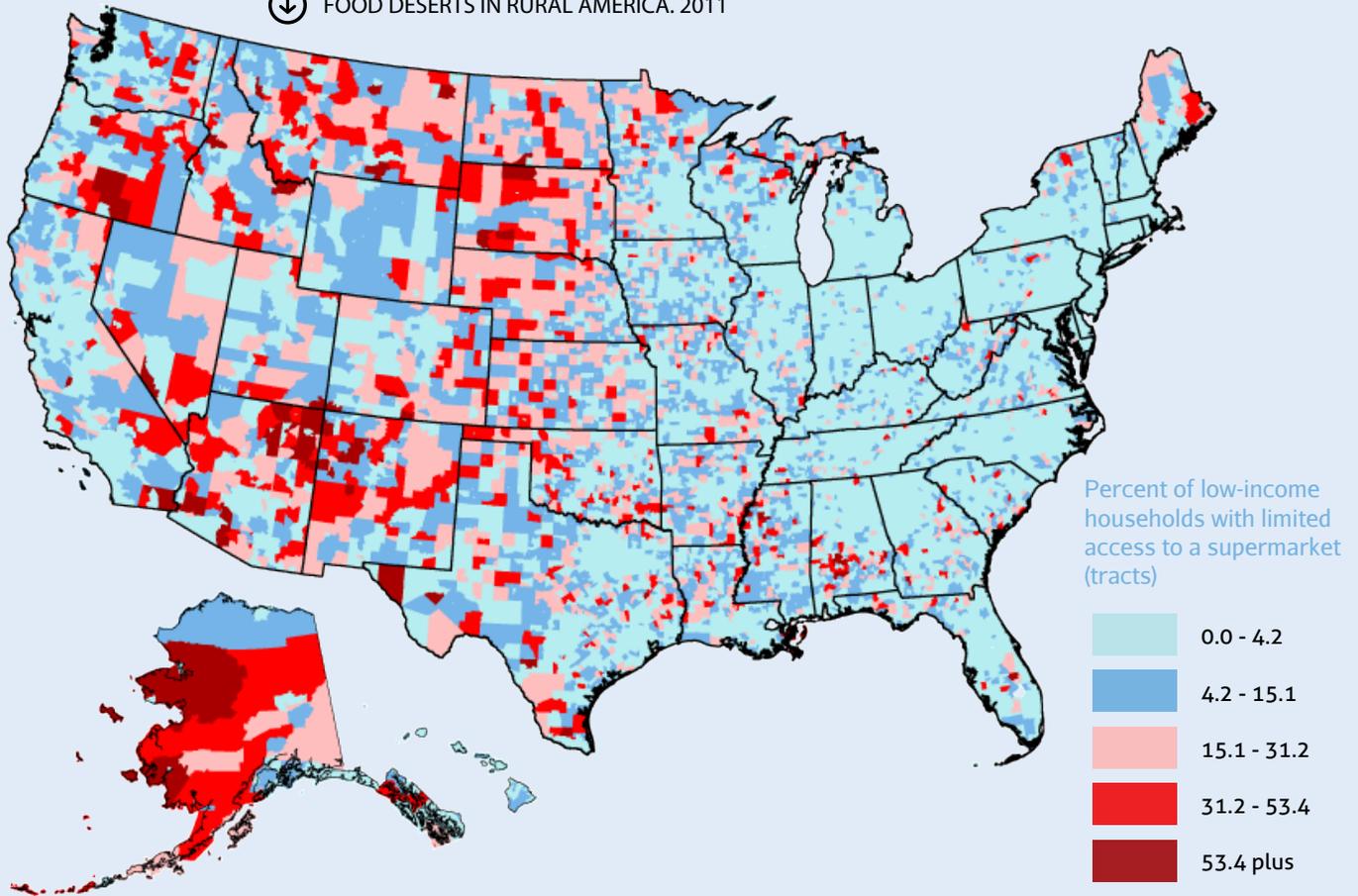
Lauren Haas Finkelstein is executive director of Running Strong for American Indian Youth. To learn more about Running Strong, visit www.indianyouth.org.

1 in 5 Households with Children are Food Insecure



Source:
USDA Economic Research Service calculations of data from the December 2011 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

↓ FOOD DESERTS IN RURAL AMERICA. 2011



What are Rural Food Deserts?

Facing the unique challenge of geographic isolation and poverty, many low-income rural communities have difficulty accessing supermarkets that provide nutritious food.

Rural communities face unique challenges when it comes to securing enough nutritious food for their families. Communities that are geographically isolated often have to travel a substantial distance to reach a grocery store. For low-income rural communities that do not have access to a vehicle or to public transportation, this task is especially difficult, putting them in positions of low or very-low food security.

A food desert describes the conditions in which a “low-access community” lives in. In a rural context, the USDA defines a low access community as one in which 33 percent of the census tract’s population (or at least 500 residents) lives more than ten miles from a grocery store. For urban settings, the community must live more than one mile away from a grocery store.

Source: Economic Research Service (ERS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
 For more information about low access communities, visit the USDA’s Food Access Research Atlas, at www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas.aspx.

Food Justice In the Rural Southeast

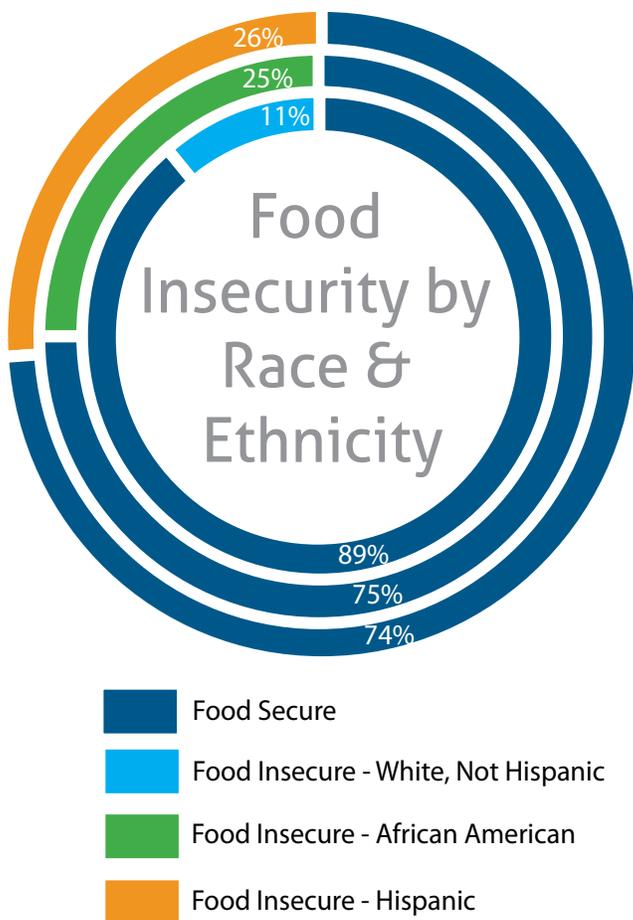
Southern farmers are forming cooperatives and coalitions to secure food and housing justice while overcoming a history of discriminatory land and farm policies.

by John Zippert

In 1920, Black people owned and farmed over 15 million acres in the South; by 1960, this had declined to 100,000 Black farmers owning less than six million acres; by 1980, there were only 57,000 Black farmers owning less than four million acres. According to the 2007 Agricultural Census, there are less than 25,000 Black farm families remaining with a little less than three million acres. A major program priority of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (also known as the Federation) is to preserve the land base of African-American family farmers in the South and help them use it in a productive, collaborative and sustainable manner.

The Federation is a non-profit, service, resource and advocacy association, involving 20,000 low income rural families, organized into more than 75 cooperatives, credit unions and community based economic development groups across the Southern Black Belt. The Black Belt is made of persistently poor rural counties with a predominately African American population within southeast states including Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia, and South Carolina. Since its founding in 1967, the Federation has over 45 years of experience working directly and innovatively with rural poor people and families, who are trying to end the cycle of poverty in which they find themselves.

There are six major themes of the Federation’s mission, work and accomplishments over the past five decades. The Federation has woven these themes together to create a strong community based movement of organizations steeped in struggle, tested by time, experienced in fighting exploitation, with a knowledge of the tactics, tools and techniques needed to help people build their own prosperity and progress.



Source: USDA Economic Research Service calculations of data from the December 2011 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.



One of our greatest accomplishments has been in helping to teach groups of people in co-ops how to make decisions about their collective well-being and lift up the communities where they live.

THE FEDERATION SEEKS TO:

- Develop cooperatives and credit unions as a means for people to enhance the quality of their lives and improve their communities;
- Save, protect and expand the landholdings of Black family farmers and other disadvantaged farmers in the South;
- Develop a unique and effective Rural Training and Research Center, at Epes, Alabama, to provide information, skills and awareness, in a cultural context to help our members and constituents to build strong rural communities;
- Promote and develop safe, sanitary and affordable housing opportunities for our members in rural communities;
- Develop, advocate and support public policies to benefit our membership of Black and other family farmers; and the low-income rural communities where they live;
- And develop sustainable and financial self-supporting cooperative business development, including an endowment fund to support our ongoing work that cannot be fully funded by membership fees, grants and contracts.

SUPPORTING SOUTHERN FARMERS: COLLECTIVE SOLUTIONS TO POVERTY

Cooperatives, including credit unions, offer a unique approach to help people overcome hopelessness and develop their own self-directed, self-generated and collective solutions to poverty. Our membership includes 10,000 Black farm families, who own over half a million acres of land and work through thirty-five agricultural cooperatives to purchase supplies, provide technical assistance and market their crops together. Our membership also includes 12,000 small savers, in 15 community development credit unions that have over \$20 million in assets and have made over \$60 million in loans since their inception. We also work with handicraft producers, fishermen, consumers, people who need affordable housing and other rural residents interested in developing self-help cooperative solutions to their problems.

Over the years, the Federation has provided services, learning and leadership experiences, saved family estates, reduced costs, increased revenues and enhanced stability for members (through producer, marketing, consumer and credit cooperatives), taught techniques and skills all of incalculable worth. A beginning estimate of the additional monetary impact of the Federation, for the past forty five years is over \$400 million.

GROWING LEADERSHIP

Beyond these direct and tangible impacts are the intangible benefits of the Federation's work in terms of the leadership growth of people, the changes in peoples behavior that make collective decision making more effective, and a greater appreciation of sharing by people as a means of working together economically in communities. One of our greatest accomplishments has been in helping to teach groups of people in co-ops how to make decisions about their collective well-being and lift up the communities where they live.

The people organizing the cooperative are the initiators and drivers of this process. The Federation provides community organizing and technical advice to the prospective community groups but the decisions and progressive steps are up to the group. The Federation works with local people selected by the group to develop the board of directors, management and leadership of the cooperative, credit union or community development organization. The Federation continues to interact and work with these leaders over time as the cooperative business is implemented and grows.

SEEKING JUSTICE FOR BLACK, HISPANIC, NATIVE AMERICAN AND WOMEN FARMERS

In recent years, the Federation has played a major role in seeking justice for Black, Hispanic, Native American and women farmers and ranchers through class action lawsuits against the U. S. Department of Agriculture for decades of discriminatory treatment in the provision of farm loans, commodity price supports, conservation programs, and other programs. The Pigford I lawsuit generated over \$1 billion dollars in damage payments, forgiven loans and other benefits for over 15,000 Black farmers and their heirs. This was the single largest successful discrimination settlement against the U. S. government. A second section of the Pigford case, which could generate an additional \$1.25 billion in payments is pending.

THE INTERSECTION OF FOOD AND HOUSING INSECURITY AMONG RURAL SOUTHERN FARMERS

Some of the landowners we work with are themselves recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Incomes are so low from subsistence farming that a fifth of the farmers we have worked with over the years have qualified to receive SNAP benefits. Our work is to help increase incomes and help rural people to live better and fuller lives in a self-supporting cooperative context. Similarly, in many communities our members live in substandard and dilapidated housing conditions. We have worked with them to provide the training and technical assistance to help them take advantage of USDA Rural Development single family, multi-family and self-help housing alternatives to improve their living conditions. Over forty years, we have helped 300 families to secure single family loans and 200 families to secure multi-family and self-help housing solutions.

John Zippert is director of program operations at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund. To learn more about the Federation, visit www.federationsoutherncoop.com.

Developing Leadership to Address Health & Hunger

“Too Poor to be Sick”

At a 2006 hearing on health issues in the Alabama Blackbelt cosponsored by The Rural Development Leadership Network (RDLN), the Southwest Alabama Association of Rural and Minority Women, and Federation Of Childcare Centers Of Alabama, Inc., three RDLN Leaders testified about their challenges with the healthcare system as they dealt with complications of diabetes and being overweight. As one of them, Yvonne Hampton, said, “We are too poor to be sick.” Moderator Sophia Bracy-Harris’ husband died of complications from obesity and diabetes within the coming year. Billie Jean Young, RDLN’s founding chairwoman, coordinated the event alongside her son who provided logistical support. Sadly, he has also since died, affected by heart failure, obesity and kidney failure.

– Starry Krueger, President, Rural Development Leadership Network.

Rural Voices recently interviewed Starry Krueger of the Rural Development Leadership Network, about a new leadership development program in Mississippi.

Inadequate housing and food insecurity are part of the persistent poverty conditions in the Mississippi Delta region. Farming in the Delta has historically produced crops for export, like cotton, sugar, rice and soybeans, rather than nutritious fruits and vegetables for local families’ consumption. Because nutritious food is often expensive and unavailable, low-income families often opt for cheaper, higher calorie, nutrient poor food that lead to compromised health. According to a 2007 report by Children Health Data, Mississippi has the highest rate of obesity among children at 44.4 percent. RDLN is working to develop leadership in Mississippi to address the region’s greatest health and hunger issues.

RV: *What is the Rural Development Leadership Network?*

Krueger: The Rural Development Leadership Network (RDLN) was established in 1983 to build a network of diverse rural community leaders equipped with the tools necessary to meet the challenges that confront low-income rural communities. The RDLN fellowship program provides a hands-on, skills building training that fosters the implementation of a community development project while the Leader earns a Master’s degree. RDLN fellows

share their knowledge and skills in a network community, take courses in economic development and non-profit management, and pursue independent study related to their work in the field. RDLN Fellows work on a variety of issues affecting rural communities including housing, hunger and health.

RV: *What does RDLN do to address housing and food security issues in Rural America?*

Krueger: We see rural community development as a comprehensive process, whose success involves the health of all systems. Poverty is a circumstance of deprivation, characterized by lack of money and often inadequate food and unsatisfactory housing. RDLN strengthens the capacity of local people to address their own challenges. RDLN Leaders have, for example, assisted farmers in generating income, diversifying crops, expanding markets, forming cooperatives, and adding value. Others have worked to strengthen leadership and equity among farmworkers. RDLN Leaders work with community members to inspire hope and motivation, create opportunities, launch new initiatives and enterprises, and identify, acquire and manage resources. RDLN provides a challenge, a credential, a format, an environment and a network to help make this happen.

RV: *What is the Mississippi Food and Health Fellowship?*

Krueger: The Mississippi Food and Health Fellowship, supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is a focused effort to strengthen community capacity by investing in local leaders involved in hunger-related work, including farming. One objective is to increase community awareness of health risks related to obesity and diabetes, as well as awareness of healthy behaviors that can prevent or help reverse those conditions, especially through diet and exercise.

The Mississippi Fellows will spearhead field projects like getting locally grown food into local schools, involving young



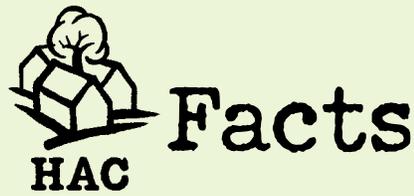
RDLN supports leaders like fisherwoman Scherri Greene Nez Perce (right).

people in farming, and community education and media outreach about diet and exercise. The Fellows will be developing their Project plans and projected outcomes during their enrollment. We expect that the outcomes will include four Fellows earning master's degrees, about a hundred youth and adults involved in project activities, and thousands reached through community awareness and media outreach.

Starry Krueger is president of the Rural Leadership Development Network (RLDN). To learn more about RLDN, visit www.ruraldevelopment.org.



Poverty is a circumstance of deprivation, characterized by lack of money and often inadequate food and unsatisfactory housing.



HAC Hosts Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow

Through participation in a field and policy site and extensive training, Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellows learn an anti-racist approach to fighting hunger and poverty by working with community and national based organizations. While at her placement with the Housing Assistance Council from March - July, 2013, Jarymar managed the summer edition of *Rural Voices*, co-authored a report on health and housing partnerships within the U.S./Mexico border colonias, and provided research assistance. Originally from Brownsville, Texas, Jarymar received her Bachelor of Science in environmental science and policy from St. Edward's University in 2011.

For more information on the Emerson National Hunger Fellows, visit <http://www.hungercenter.org/fellowships/emerson/>

Jarymar Arana, Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow, served as the editor for this special edition of *Rural Voices*



COMING SOON! The New and Improved Rural Data Portal

HAC's RURAL DATA PORTAL is a simple, easy to use, on-line resource that provides essential information on the social, economic, and housing characteristics of communities in the United States.

We recently updated the RURAL DATA PORTAL to include the most recent data and information

for your community including the 2010 Census and American Community Survey. The data portal is targeted toward rural communities, but a wide range of information is presented for suburban and urban areas as well.

To access a Beta version of the RURAL DATA PORTAL, visit: www.ruraldataportal.org.



Upcoming Training in Iowa

Join HAC and LeadingAge in Council Bluffs, IA for *Housing Seniors and Veterans in Rural America: Preservation, Development and Services* on August 28-29. Congressman Tom Latham (R-IA) will provide the keynote address on August 28. Made possible with generous support from The Atlantic Philanthropies and The Home Depot Foundation, this symposium will provide intensive training and information on housing for vulnerable populations in rural America.

This conference will feature program overviews, funding resources, case studies and models presented by federal and state administrators, nonprofit developers, policy experts and others.

For more information, visit <https://www.regonline.com/SeniorCouncilBluffs>.

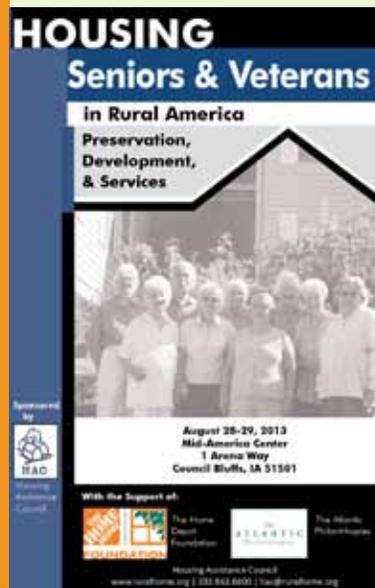


Photo: Esther Stewart Buford Foundation

Home Repair Funds Available from USDA

As of August, 2013 USDA had over \$14 million available for Section 504 loans - more than half of the program's appropriation. Loan funds not obligated by September 30 will be lost.

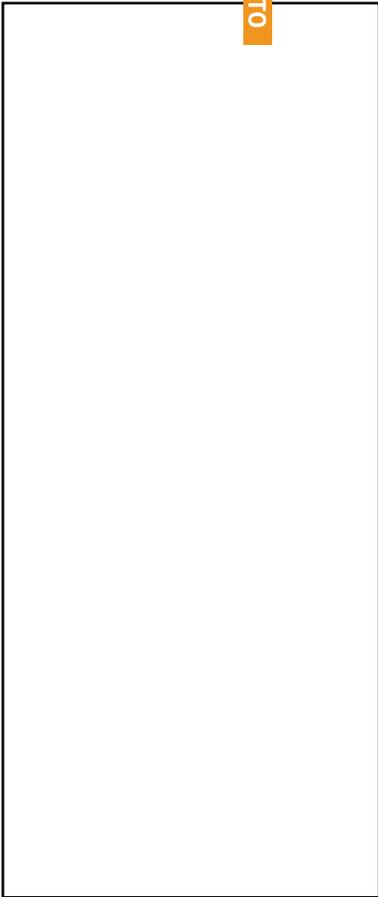
The Section 504 Very Low-Income Housing Repair program provides loans and grants to very low-income homeowners to repair, improve, or modernize their dwellings or to remove health and safety hazards

Contact your local USDA RD office and work with them to help eligible very low-income homeowners get their homes repaired! Find your local RD office at <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=us&agency=rd>.



HOUSING ASSISTANCE COUNCIL
 1025 VERMONT AVENUE, NW
 SUITE 606
 WASHINGTON, DC 20005

DELIVER TO



Subscribe to *Rural Voices*



Scan this QR code to subscribe instantly from your mobile phone.



www.ruralhome.org/ruralvoices

About HAC

The Housing Assistance Council (HAC) is a national nonprofit corporation founded in 1971 and dedicated to increasing the availability of decent housing for low-income people in rural areas. HAC strives to accomplish its goals through providing loans, technical assistance, training, research and information to local producers of affordable rural housing. HAC maintains a revolving fund providing vital loans at below-market interest rates to rural housing developers. Developers can use these funds for site acquisition, development, rehabilitation or new construction of rural, low-, and very low-income housing. HAC has a highly qualified staff of housing specialists who provide valuable training and technical assistance, and research and information associates who provide program and policy analysis and evaluation plus research and information services to nonprofit, public, and for-profit organizations. HAC is an equal opportunity lender.

National

1025 Vermont Avenue, NW
 Suite 606
 Washington, DC 20005
 202-842-8600
 202-347-3441 FAX
hac@ruralhome.org

Midwest

10100 North Ambassador Drive
 Suite 310
 Kansas City, MO 64153
 816-880-0400
 816-880-0500 FAX
midwest@ruralhome.org

Southeast

600 West Peachtree Street, NW
 Suite 1500
 Atlanta, GA 30308
 404-892-4824
 404-892-1204 FAX
southeast@ruralhome.org

West

717 K Street, Suite 404
 Sacramento, CA 95814
 916-706-1836
 916-706-1849 FAX
western@ruralhome.org

Southwest

7510 Montgomery NE
 Suite 205
 Albuquerque, NM 87109
 505-883-1003
 505-883-1005 FAX
southwest@ruralhome.org

Connect

www.ruralhome.org
twitter.com/RuralHome
facebook.com/HousingAssistanceCouncil
linkedin.com/company/housing-assistance-council