



THE VERMONT CAMPAIGN TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER

HUNGER AND NUTRITION E-UPDATE

JANUARY 2010

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SPREAD THE WORD

1. Vermont Earned Income Tax Credit Connects Working Families to More Food Benefits

Working families with children who receive the Vermont Earned Income Tax Credit (VT EITC) are automatically income eligible for 3SquaresVT food benefits. Families earning up to \$48,279 may be eligible (eligibility is based on income, filing status, and number of dependent children), and the maximum credit this tax season is \$5,657. Not only is the tax credit an important economic boost for working families, but the connection to 3SquaresVT helps families stretch their food budgets further with monthly benefits averaging over \$300 for families with children, plus children also become eligible for free school meals as well. In total, these resources add up to thousands of dollars in savings for a family plus more nutritious meals on the table.

Many working families are unaware of EITC, 3SquaresVT, and the links between the two and are missing out on important benefits they are entitled to receive. **Please help spread the word by sharing this [outreach flyer](#) in your community.** Let families know they can call 211 for free tax preparation and help filling out the 3SquaresVT application.

For more information about 3SquaresVT, visit <http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com>.

2. Join VTCECH on Facebook

[Become a fan on Facebook](#) and catch the latest hunger news, get to know our Executive Director, Marissa Parisi — what she's thinking and what we're focused on, and receive healthy low-cost recipes from the Cooking for Life series.

VERMONT NEWS AND OPPORTUNITIES

3. Vermont 3rd in Nation for Breakfast Participation

([Burlington Free Press](#), December 13, 2009; [VPR](#), December 14, 2009)

On an average school day, almost 15,000 low-income Vermont school children eat a free school breakfast, according to the [School Breakfast Scorecard](#) 2009, an annual report issued by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). This is a 15.5% increase over the previous school year – the largest percent increase in the nation – and moves Vermont from 9th to 3rd in the nation for participation. This is likely the result of both increased need and a bill passed in 2008 by the Vermont State Legislature that allows all low-income students to access free school breakfast.

[Click here for more information about School Meals in Vermont.](#)

4. More Vermonters Rely on 3SquaresVT

([WCAX News](#), December 14, 2009)

At the end of October, 82,770 Vermonters were participating in 3SquaresVT (formerly Food Stamps). That is more than 1 in 8 Vermonters and a 55% increase from October 2007, just two years ago. The program, administered through the Department for Children and Families, now brings double the money into Vermont than it did in 2007 - more than 10 million federal dollars are spent in Vermont's grocery stores and farmers' markets each month through 3SquaresVT. Usage has been increasing dramatically across the country as outlined in a recent *New York Times* article, "[The Safety Net: Food Stamp Use Soars and Stigma Fades.](#)" Yet more than 1 in 4 eligible Vermonters (27%) do not participate according to [a recent USDA report](#), meaning that thousands more Vermonters could be getting the help they may need.

For more information on 3SquaresVT, including outreach materials and a pre-screening tool, visit www.vermontfoodhelp.com.

5. Video Link - 3SquaresVT: Can a New Name & Focused Outreach Help Feed One of the Nation's Hungriest States?

([CCTV: Live at 5:25](#) Burlington Livable Community Project, December 15, 2009)

Host Jennifer Wallace-Brodeur interviews VTCECH staff member, Angela Smith-Dieng, Senior Nutrition and Policy Specialist, on solutions to hunger in Vermont and improvements in 3SquaresVT, formerly food stamps.

[Click here](#) to watch the video online and visit www.vermontfoodhelp.com for more information on 3SquaresVT.

6. No Supper for Schoolchildren

([Public Assets Institute](#), December 2009)

A year ago the federal government said it would give Vermont funds to serve supper to children from low-income families at after-school programs. But because the state eliminated a key job in 2009, those kids have been going without supper meals for 12 months.

The new At-Risk Supper Program would join other federal programs, such as the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, which are administered by the state's Child Nutrition Programs. These programs serve nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children in schools, daycares, and after-school programs—an important part of safeguarding the health of children whose families may suffer food insecurity.

Federal money funds the whole program, from its state administrator to food, training, and school-level personnel. Over one-third of Vermont's schools reported that 50 percent or more of their students—more than a third of the state's schoolchildren—are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. But in an effort to reduce its work force, the state cut the position of the person who would administer the supper program in 2009: the Child and Adult Care Food Program Coordinator at the Department of Education.

Recently, the Agency of Administration gave the Department of Education permission to hire for this position. The Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger looks forward to working with the Department of Education to ensure that suppers are being fed to Vermont's children as quickly as possible. **For more information** visit http://www.vtnohunger.org/info/out_of_school.php or contact **Emily Glover**, eglover@vtnohunger.org.

7. Editorial: My Turn: Freedom from hunger as a human right

([Burlington Free Press](#), December 13, 2009)

In response to the recent USDA report and the celebration of International Human Rights Day on December 10th, VTCECH Executive Director, Marissa Parisi, provides an insightful reflection on human rights and food insecurity with the BFP readership. Parisi queries, “Do we [as Vermonters] consider having enough healthy food a right that every Vermonter should be guaranteed?”

[Click here](#) to read the complete editorial.

8. Warm Hearts, Deep Pockets

([Business People Vermont](#), December 2009)

The Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger and the New England Culinary Institute were highlighted as an example of 2009 collaborations in which Vermont business people contribute to education and educational institutions give back to the community:

New England Culinary Institute collaborated with the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger's [Cooking for Life](#) program to provide cooking and nutrition classes to low-income Vermonters. Since 1999, Cooking for Life has provided such education for more than 4,000 participants. Students in NECI's bachelor of culinary arts program organize classes and instruct,

get to see vital community partnerships in action, and receive instruction in the importance of restaurateurs' being actively involved in service to their communities.

NATIONAL NEWS, RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

9. White House Launches Anti-Hunger Volunteer Campaign

([Chronicle of Philanthropy](#), November 24, 2009)

The White House, USDA and the Corporation for National and Community Service have collaborated to launch a new anti-hunger volunteer campaign titled "[United We Serve, Feed a Neighbor.](#)" Through the campaign, Americans are being asked to develop anti-hunger programs in their neighborhoods, volunteer or donate to food banks, prepare and deliver senior citizen meals, and plant shared gardens. Information on the campaign, including nonprofit volunteer opportunities and tool kits for organizing, is available at [Serve.gov](#). The initiative was launched in the wake of USDA's recent report that showed 49 million people - 14.6 percent of Americans - lacked food at some point during 2008. These figures are the highest since the agency started reporting on hunger in 1995. "It was a wakeup call," said Tom Vilsack, agriculture secretary. "It was a sobering report." Vilsack predicts that next year's numbers will "paint an even more unsettling picture."

10. Living on Nothing But Food Stamps

([New York Times](#), January 2, 2010)

About one in 50 Americans now lives in a household with a reported income that consists of nothing but a food-stamp card (*called 3SquaresVT in Vermont*). "It's the one thing I can count on every month — I know the children are going to have food," Ms. Bermudez, 42, said with the forced good cheer she mastered selling rows of new stucco homes. Members of this straitened group range from displaced strivers like Ms. Bermudez to weathered men who sleep in shelters and barter cigarettes. Some draw on savings or sporadic under-the-table jobs. Some move in with relatives. Some get non-cash help, like subsidized apartments. While some go without cash incomes only briefly before securing jobs or aid, others rely on food stamps alone for many months.

The surge in this precarious way of life has been so swift that few policy makers have noticed. But it attests to the growing role of food stamps within the safety net. **One in eight Americans now receives food stamps, including one in four children.**

For more information on 3SquaresVT, visit www.vermontfoodhelp.com.

11. Recession Statistics Show Extent of Struggling American Middle Class

([Huffington Post](#), December 3, 2009)

Wages of the average full-time employee have stayed flat since the 70's, in spite of increased productivity. During the 1960's boom, median family income increased 33 percent (amount adjusted for inflation). However, the increase has been an "almost imperceptible 1.6 percent" during the 2000's boom. For the middle class, expenses rose during the early 2000's. In the 2000's, mortgages cost families twice as much as they did a generation before, and families paid twice as much for health insurance. In order to cope, families were forced to take on added expenses - a second car, child care - so that both parents could work, and all the while higher taxes increased the squeeze. Paying more today for food, clothing, furniture, appliances, and other "flexible" purchases, "today's families have spent all their income, have spent all their

savings, and have gone into debt to pay for college, to cover serious medical problems, and just to stay afloat a little while longer." **Today:**

- **1 in 8 Americans receives SNAP/Food Stamps;**
- **1 in 5 Americans is unemployed or underemployed;**
- **1 in 8 mortgages is in default or foreclosure;**
- **1 in 9 families can't make their minimum credit card payments;**
- **More than 120,000 families file for bankruptcy each month.**

[Click here](#) for an handout on Vermont Hunger Facts and Statistics.

Take part in the “Feed a Neighbor Initiative” by reading the [Fact Sheet](#) and [Toolkit](#) information provided on the [Serve.gov](#) website. Contact the [Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger](#) for more information on initiatives in Vermont.

12. Taking Time to Eat Well

New research finds that SNAP participants spend more time in the kitchen than both higher-income folks and other low-income people. “SNAP participants spent an average of 47 minutes per person per day cooking, serving, and cleaning up after meals – 57 percent more time than higher income individuals and 18 percent more than lower income nonparticipants,” USDA reported in December 2009.

To learn more, visit the USDA link [here](#).

In Vermont, many 3SquaresVT (SNAP) participants take part in [Cooking for Life](#) to learn how to cook easy, healthy meals while stretching their food dollars.

Have you seen us in the news? Please send us your local paper clippings! (Mail to: VTCECH, 180 Flynn Avenue, Burlington, VT 05401—or scan and email to: JHarris@vtnohunger.org.)

If this E-Update was forwarded to you, please consider signing up to receive it directly by emailing JHarris@vtnohunger.org.
To unsubscribe, send an email to JHarris@vtnohunger.org with “H&N Unsubscribe” in the subject line.

[Click here](#) for a printer friendly PDF of this E-Update and [click here](#) for a printer friendly PDF of our Cooking for Life newsletter.

The Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger develops programs and advocates policies to prevent hunger and promote good nutrition for Vermont’s families. We rely on the support of our members, donors, and business partners to implement our programs and initiate action. For more information on how to become a member, visit: www.vtnohunger.org.

VTCECH is now able to accept donations online! Our simple and secure [online donation form](#) allows you to give instantly using your Visa or Mastercard.



Vermont Campaign to
End Childhood Hunger