

Strengthen Our Economy: Access Food Resources This Winter

As we face economic uncertainty in 2009, Vermonters can play a part in stimulating our local economy by participating in nutrition programs which generate economic activity. Federal programs such as 3SquaresVT (formerly Food Stamps) and the School Breakfast Program bring federal dollars into our state and support local supermarkets, food producers, and create jobs. We can all strengthen our local economy this winter by learning more about the programs and ensuring that our neighbors are receiving the support they need to stay well fed.

Apply for the 3Squares Program. New changes make more people eligible for this important nutrition program, which provides an average monthly benefit of \$232 to participating households. Benefits are distributed on a debit card and seniors can have benefits deposited as cash into their bank accounts. Visit www.vermontfoodhelp.com to see if you are eligible, or call the Department of Children and Families at 1-800-287-0589. Even if you have previously applied, new changes may make you eligible. Spread the word about this important program by distributing flyers and resources which can be found at www.vtnohunger.org/toolkit.

Take advantage of free or reduced price school meals. Families can apply at any time in the school year and all breakfasts served to low-income kids are free. The application and your child's status is confidential. A family of four with two children can save over \$150/month by taking advantage of this important resource. Contact your local school for an application or download one from the web at www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf

Visit your local food shelf or community meal program. Individuals and families can go to their local food shelves or community meal programs to receive emergency food assistance. Call toll free 2-1-1 for information on locations and hours in your community. Volunteer at your local food or make a donation to support their work.

By taking action now, we can make a difference in our state. 3SquaresVT alone brought \$60 million in purchasing power to Vermont last year. By spreading the word about these programs, we can make sure that neighbors, family, and friends are nourished, and and boost our local economy. For more information and resources for your community visit: www.vtnohunger.org/toolkit

Please share this information with your neighbors via school newsletters, congregation bulletins, town offices, local libraries, senior centers, doctor's offices and food shelves.