

By Carly Finkle

ORIGINALLY POSTED ON THEREPORTER.COM: 01/04/16

Carly Finkle: The Food Bank's resolution: Anti-hunger advocacy

Although the first of January represents clean starts and new beginnings, it also marks the end of the season of giving.

At the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, we couldn't have made it through the holidays without the heart-warming and substantial support that poured in from community members, organizations, and businesses. But our concern for the well-being of our neighbors cannot be restricted to three months out of twelve. Hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition will continue to persist unless our collective demands for change last longer than the holidays.

The USDA recently announced that the number of individuals receiving SNAP, the federally-funded nutrition assistance program, has remained above 45 million for 52 consecutive months. Although our Food Bank's numerous direct distributions help meet the immediate and pressing needs of one in eight residents in Solano and Contra Costa counties, we also need to identify and pursue long-term solutions that go beyond mitigating hunger. We must improve the strength and equity of our food systems, social safety nets, and economies in order to provide consistent support and opportunities to those struggling to put food on the table.

The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano is firmly committed to leading the fight to end hunger. In 2016, our Food Bank resolves to take a more direct role in food system reform by educating the public about the state of hunger in our communities, identifying and pursuing structural changes that can improve food access and self-reliance, and holding our elected representatives accountable to needs of their constituents.

With the addition of a full-time Advocacy Manager, we are actively increasing our support for public policies that sustain our operations, clients, and partner agencies. By focusing our efforts on strengthening and streamlining programs that safeguard the nutrition and health of our community members throughout the entire year, we can ensure that our impact outlasts the winter.

We hope that you will join us in this struggle by lending us your hearts, your ears, and your voices. Resolve to never become complacent with the fact that 15.3 million children in America are unable to consistently access sufficient food.

Resolve to educate yourself on anti-hunger legislation and how you can support it by signing up for our advocacy e-newsletter, Hunger Fighters, at our website www.foodbankccs.org/enews. And finally, resolve to never remain silent in the face of injustice. The barriers to accessing affordable, nutritious, and sufficient foods are substantial, but there is no change without a sustained and unwavering demand.

That is why becoming a leader in anti-hunger advocacy is our New Year's Resolution.

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