

Community Food

A Resource Publication for New York's Emergency Food Programs

Taqwa Community Farm: An Oasis of Green in NYC

Issue 11, Dec. 2004

A vacant lot in 1993, Taqwa Community Farm was started by five neighbors who wanted to rid the community of a dumping ground and a center for drug activity. The group began clearing the lot and planted a garden. Now over 90 people are involved in cultivating their garden beds and growing food to feed themselves, their families and the community. In addition to the plots for individual families, Taqwa also maintains garden plots that are designed to grow food for donation to neighbors through the "Grow and Give" program. Taqwa also initiated a farm stand and currently trains youth to grow, harvest, and sell food at the stand.

Since its inception, Taqwa has served as a true community center offering green open-space, a safe haven, a site for social gatherings, as well as a wealth of food, educational opportunities and inspiration to the adults, seniors, and youth of the South Bronx neighborhood. For these citizens, Taqwa Community Farm is an oasis of green in the middle of the south Bronx that represents a life-style and peace with which residents are familiar. Many community members grew up on a farm or with a small garden in their yard or with family members who had gardens. Food produced and sold at Taqwa includes ingredients found in cultural dishes, and are grown with methods that are comparable to practices learned from families and various cultures. Activities and events at the garden are often focused around cultural traditions and economic sensitivity.



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Model Community Supported Agriculture Booklet Now Available

Sometimes the freshest, healthiest food is also some of the most expensive. It costs a lot of money to ship a case of lettuce all the way from California to New York, keeping it cold the whole way! That's why Hunger Action Network went looking for ways to get fresh produce more affordably. It turns out that there's no need to settle for nearly-spoiled veggies to find a bargain; if you know where to look, the freshest possible food can be purchased at discount prices right from a local farm.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a model that links consumers directly with farmers in a mutually beneficial partnership--farmers benefit from a

guaranteed customer base, and consumers benefit from the freshest possible food, at good prices. Hunger Action Network has just released a new booklet highlighting farmers in NY that are working to make their vegetables and fruits more affordable and accessible to low-income people through CSA.

The **Model CSA Project in NY State** booklet highlights nine farms throughout the state that have taken creative approaches to CSA. Here are a few details:

The **Chelsea CSA** in New York City makes fresh vegetables available to about 75 households in their
Continued on page 10...

HUNGER ACTION NETWORK OF NEW YORK STATE

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Dear Friends:

Welcome to the 11th edition of Community Food News! Thanksgiving came quickly and other holidays are fast approaching, and we, along with 44 other organizations across the state, organized events to solicit donations for food pantries and soup kitchens and raise awareness about hunger. We know this is one of the busiest times of the year for you and we are working to draw attention to all the work that you do to end hunger. Thanks to all of you who were able to participate in the Thanksgiving Action this year!

This newsletter edition includes information on many resources we have been developing in the last several months, including an Emergency Food Program funding guide, an Innovative Food Projects resource manual, and a model Community Supported Agriculture booklet. Order forms for the manuals are included.

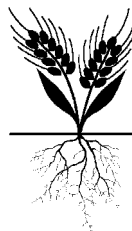
We are also gearing up for several upcoming Community Food Organizing meetings designed to bring various groups together to identify community food needs and foster innovative food projects development.

We have also included important updates about the Food Stamp Program, which will affect many senior citizens in our state. Outreach flyers for your guests are included for copying and distribution. A handout on broccoli with an easy recipe is provided as well, and please feel free to duplicate this for others.

Again, thanks for the invaluable work that you do! Together, we can end hunger!

In Hope,

Susannah Pasquantonio & Sheila McCarthy, *Community Food Coordinators*



*Getting to the
Root of the
Problem*

Community Food News is brought to you by the Community Food and Nutrition Program of the Hunger Action Network of NYS. Hunger Action Network is a statewide membership organization of direct food providers, low-income New Yorkers, religious groups, anti-hunger advocates, and concerned citizens whose goal is to end hunger and address its roots causes, including poverty, in New York State.

Hunger Action Launches a New Federal Nutrition Program Resource Center on our Website!

The Federal Nutrition Programs are government funded food programs designed to improve the nutrition, well-being, and food security of low-income Americans. This includes the Food Stamp Program, National School Lunch Program, and the Summer Food Service Program, to name a few. We have created a federal nutrition program resource center on our website to help provide valuable information on the programs for you and your clients.

Although these programs have the potential to help end hunger, they remain greatly underutilized in our state. For instance, approximately 44% of New Yorkers who are eligible for Food Stamp benefits are not receiving them. Many do not realize that they are eligible while others simply are not aware of the program's availability or are deterred by other barriers.

In order to increase participation in Federal Nutrition Programs, Hunger Action has published detailed information on our website, including a description of the programs, regulations, resource levels, application procedures, and eligibility requirements. The site also includes downloadable outreach flyers and brochures for each program. The site highlights the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, the Food Stamp Program, School Meals, the Summer Food Service Program and the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). Please do not hesitate to access these resources under the Federal Nutrition Program section of our website at www.hungeractionnys.org.

NEED INFORMATION ABOUT FOOD PROGRAM RESOURCES?

Order Hunger Action's free resource guide today.

EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAM FUNDING RESOURCE GUIDE

The guide includes information on the various sources of local, state, and federal funding for EFPs, including the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP), the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and the local food bank. The guide describes the resource, the application deadline, and the grant contact. In addition to including information on government funding, the guide also includes information on private foundations for each region. Lastly, the guide includes a section on website resources which details how to find more sources of funding, information on grant-writing, fundraising techniques and workshops, and how to connect with funders. Each guide is approximately 5-7 pages in length and is available for each region of New York State, including New York City, Long Island, Westchester, Finger Lakes, Western NY, Southern Tier, Northeastern NY, and Central NY.

____ Please send us the Food Program Funding Resource Guide.

Organization: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____

County: _____ Phone: _____

Fax: _____ Email: _____

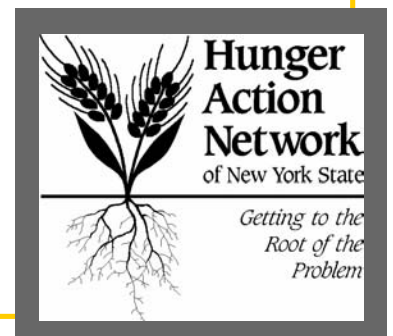
Please complete this form and return it to Hunger Action. If you are in New York City, Long Island, or Westchester, please mail or fax this form to our NYC office at the address listed below. If you are in any other region of New York State, please send this form to our Albany office.

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Funded in part by a grant from the NYS Community Action Assoc. & DHHS



Taqwa Community Farm

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Program Description: The Taqwa Community Farm's Youth Program recruits local Bronx youth to learn about food production and marketing by working in a community garden and managing a youth run farm stand. The youth gain a sense of personal and professional responsibility and entrepreneurial skills.

Young people from the local neighborhood are interviewed and hired for the summer. During the early part of the season, the youth participate in garden care and maintenance, planting and upkeep of the hydroponics system, and market training and outreach. The young people work 6 hours a week in June and 10 hours a week during the market season. In 2004, seven young people are working with the program with two supervisors.

The program partners with Just Food (www.justfood.org) to receive market training for the youth and workshops about growing practices and food security. During this training, the youth members participate in various roles to help them prepare for the market season: approaching customers, customer service, dealing with difficult customers, how to work effectively as a group, sales, making proper change and accepting Farmers' Market Nutrition Program coupons. Youth members also distribute flyers to local stores and residents announcing the Taqwa Farm-stand start date in early July.

In the market season, the youth are also responsible for managing the weekly farm stand. Market season is an exciting time of year for the garden, the community and the youth program. On their first market day, youth members observe and participate in market sales and weighing produce. They also arrive at the garden at 8:30 am ready to work. Youth participants share responsibilities and have the opportunity to work at different posts: record-keeping, weighing, talking with customers, and market set-up and breakdown. During the week, youth participants continue to learn about food production through garden maintenance. On Wednesdays, youth participants evaluate the market from the week before and make suggestions about how to do things differently the following week.

Because the community garden does not produce enough food for the stand, the program also receives weekly drop offs from an upstate farmer.

Low-Income Involvement in the Organization of the Program: Highbridge, the neighborhood served by both the community garden and the farm stand, is one of the lower income neighborhoods in New York City, bordering on the South Bronx with almost 40% of the population living below the poverty level. The youth in the program are from the local community. Also, the farm stand serves the local community and provides fresh, healthy food at an affordable price. The availability of this produce to the people who need it the most is enhanced by the ability of the farm stand to accept Farmers' Market Nutrition Program coupons. Before this market, the coupon recipients had no farm stand in the area to use the coupons.

For more information, contact Bobby Watson c/o Taqwa Community Farm at 917-353-3326 or Rebecca Ferguson c/o Green Guerrillas at 212-594-2155.

Want to learn about more projects like Taqwa?

Fill out the order form on the next page to receive a free copy of Hunger Action's innovative food project manual, "Growing a Healthy NY: Innovative Food Projects that End Hunger and Strengthen Communities."

Growing a Healthy New York: Innovative Food Projects that End Hunger and Strengthen Communities.

Manual Order Form

The Hunger Action Network of NYS and the Statewide Emergency Network for Social and Economic Security (SENSES) have developed a manual titled "Growing a Healthy New York: Innovative Food Projects that End Hunger and Strengthen Communities." This manual features programs that promote economic development, provide job training to youth while increasing the amount of fresh food available in communities, increase participation in federal nutrition programs, and unite people with local farmers. The manual details 25 different programs from across New York State, including how community leaders and organizations started the programs and how they currently operate. Growing a Healthy NY provides many great ideas about projects that can be duplicated in your own community and it also connects you to information resources to get you started. This manual is perfect for community based groups, faith groups, food programs, and community leaders who are working to end hunger and support their community.



Canticle Farm produce, Allegany, NY.

Please fill out this form to receive a free copy of the manual. You can also download it on our website.

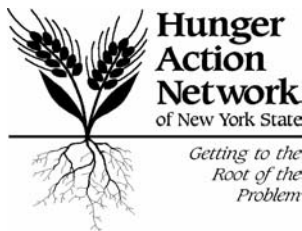
Please send us the Growing a Healthy New York Manual.

Organization: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____ County: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Please complete this form and return it to Hunger Action Network by fax or mail:
275 State Street, 4th Floor, Albany, NY 12210 • Fax (518) 434-7390



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Help SSI Recipients Get Food Stamps!

The New York State Nutrition Improvement Program (NYSNIP) is a federally approved demonstration project designed to automatically enroll all SSI recipients who live alone into the Food Stamp Program. NYSNIP will use information transmitted to the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTADA) from the Social Security Administration (SSA) via the State Data Exchange (SDX) to automatically create food stamp cases for *all* single SSI recipients who live alone in New York State.

As of June 16, 2004, the OTADA of New York State began to implement Phase II of NYSNIP, in which they started to *automatically enroll all single, live-alone SSI recipients not currently receiving food stamps into the Food Stamp Program*. Phase II will be completed in December of 2004, so that *all* single SSI recipients in NYS who live alone will be enrolled in the Food Stamp Program. Approximately 50,000 new food stamp cases will be opened in New York City and approximately 37,000 new food stamp cases will be opened in the upstate region. This will affect many counties significantly. For instance, in Westchester County alone, an estimated 3,363 new food stamp cases will be opened! To find out how many seniors in your county will be have a new food stamp case, contact Hunger Action.

The process of opening food stamp cases during Phase II of NYSNIP is a completely automated one. The case openings are based solely on information about SSI recipients provided by SSA. The recipients for whom the cases are being opened have not filed applications. As such, all recipients will be informed that they indeed have a food stamp case via notification through the mail. Unfortunately, in most cases, this notice will be received unexpectedly. Undoubtedly, many clients may overlook the notification that informs them that they have a food stamp case. Others may be very wary about the program.

As advocates, it is important that we inform all seniors who are on SSI and who live alone about NYSNIP and notifications through the mail. It may also be necessary to encourage people who may be apprehensive to use their EBT card. This is particularly important since many project participants whose food stamp cases have been opened as a result of this automatic process **must redeem some of the food stamp benefits within three months of the date the case opened or else their food stamp case will be closed!** Feel free to copy the enclosed flyer (see p.7) and distribute it to your guests to spread the word about this important program.

If you know a single, live-alone SSI recipient who may be apprehensive about their new food stamp case, help is available through brochures, local DSS workers and Nutrition Outreach and Education Program coordinators. NOEP providers are available to assist with all food stamp related matters and they are located in most NYS counties. For more information about NYSNIP or a list of NOEP providers near you, go to www.hungernys.org or call the Nutrition Consortium of NYS at 518-436-8757, ext. 12.

Info from this article was obtained from Tom Hederman, NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

Do Your Holiday Shopping On-line and up to 15% Benefits Hunger Action!

GreaterGood.com, Inc. makes it free and easy to support good causes through everyday Internet use. Internet users can shop at over 100 leading online merchants – including Barnes & Noble.com, Dellhomesystems, Gateway, PETsMART.com, Office Depot, Brookstone, priceline, ebay, Lands' End, Dell, Office Max, and more -- and up to 15% of each purchase automatically goes to Hunger Action Network at no extra cost to you.



Go to this link to be taken to Hunger Action's shopping page--and THANKS for your support. <http://www.greatergood.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/GreaterGood.woa/wa/shoppingVillage?svid=hannys>

GOOD NEWS FOR SSI RECIPIENTS WHO LIVE ALONE!

There is a *special new food stamp program* that will help you pay for food!

Because you live by yourself and receive SSI, **you will get food stamps each month** through the “New York State Nutrition Improvement Project” (or “NYSNIP”).

NYSNIP will not change your monthly SSI benefit check! You can use the plastic card you use for Medicaid to get food stamps.



Your food stamp benefits start at either \$16 or \$20 every month. However, *you may be able to get much more – as much as \$141 every month.*

Questions? Call your local Office for the Aging or the Nutrition Consortium of NYS at 518-436-8757, ext. 20 to find an advocate near you.

Enhanced Medical Deduction for Holders of Medicare Prescription Benefit Drug Discount Cards!

Beginning October 1, 2004, holders of a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card are entitled to an *additional* \$73 per month in countable medical expenses. The \$73 amount is “over and above” any reported out-of-pocket expenses. This enhanced deduction will increase the food stamp allotment for many food stamp recipients!

The \$73 deduction is given only to *Medicare drug cardholders who do not also receive Medicaid*, because Medicaid recipients are not eligible for the Medicare drug card.

In New York City: OTDA has informed us that the HRA’s computer system is able to identify which households are eligible for the enhanced deduction. OTDA and HRA plan to run a mass re-budgeting of all cases in December 2004 during which the additional \$73 deduction will automatically be factored in.

Upstate and on Long Island: Unfortunately, OTDA’s upstate computer system apparently cannot identify which individuals are eligible for the enhanced deduction. **So -- current FS recipients outside of New York City who have a Medicare drug discount card will have to submit proof of the card to their local DSS Office in order to get the enhanced deduction of \$73.** (These individuals are not *obligated* to report that they have a Medicare drug card, but they won’t get the benefit of the additional \$73 deduction unless they report it.).

What difference will the additional \$73 deduction have on benefit levels? For thousands of Medicare and Food Stamp recipients in NYS who receive less than the maximum food stamp allotment, their benefits could increase as little as \$9 or as much as \$25 per month!

Also: ***the \$73 deduction is not granted indefinitely.*** Households will get the deduction from anywhere to 3 to 24 months, depending on (1) when they obtain their Medicare drug card and (2) when they provide verification to their LDSS. Current FS recipients who provide proof of their Medicare drug card by December 2004 should receive the \$73 deduction for 24 months. We will have to wait for further instructions from USDA and OTDA as to what will happen in 2006, when additional changes are occurring within the Medicare prescription drug program.

The Consortium and SENSES have developed the outreach flyer on the following page to inform food stamp households outside of NYC about this enhanced medical deduction. *Please feel free to copy this flyer and distribute it to your guests who you think may receive Medicare.* If you have any questions about the enhanced deduction for Medicare Drug Discount cardholders, please call Cathy Roberts at the Nutrition Consortium of NYS at (518) 436-8757, ext. 12, or e-mail her at hungerfs@aol.com.



Article by Cathy Roberts of the Nutrition Consortium of NYS

***If you get Food Stamps and have
the new Medicare Drug Discount Card...***

***you may get more in Food Stamps --
but only if you contact your local
food stamp office.***

Contact your food stamp office today!
If you wait, you may miss out on more food stamp benefits.

***You can use this flyer to send the needed
information to the food stamp office:***

Your Name (please print): _____

Address: _____

Food Stamp Case number or Social Security number: _____

Make sure you also:

- 1. Attach a *copy of the front and back* of your Medicare approved drug discount card; AND**
- 2. Tell the food stamp office when you enrolled in the drug discount card program (send a copy of the approval notice or write a note telling when you enrolled).**

**For the address and phone number of your local
food stamp office, call 1-800-342-3009.**

This is an equal opportunity program. Prepared by a joint project of SENSES and the Nutrition Consortium of NYS. Funding in whole or in part provided by the NYS DOH/NYS OTDA/USDA FNS; the NYS DOS/CFNP – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Model CSA Booklet Now Available

...continued from page 1

Manhattan neighborhood every week. 17 of those households were low-income in 2004. Those veggies are kept affordable because the CSA uses two strategies: a **sliding scale fee** for a full season's worth of vegetables, in which higher-income members pay a bit more to offset lower prices for lower-income members, and a **revolving loan fund** that makes it possible for families that can't afford to pay all at once to pay for their veggies over the course of the year.

Solidarity Food Network in Chemung County, NY has dedicated its entire CSA operation to serving low-income community members by keeping the costs of its produce as low as possible. They grow vegetables that are less labor-intensive; work to cut fertilizer and pesticide costs on the farm through natural management; and seek to make investments in equipment that pay off in the long run, such as cold frames that allow vegetables to grow into the winter. Using these methods, the CSA has had great luck retaining members from year to year.

Other farms included in the booklet are Canticle Farm CSA (Cattaraugus County), East NY CSA (Brooklyn), Genesee Valley Organic CSA (Rochester Area), Northside Food Network CSA (Ithaca area), Phillis Bridge Farm Project (Ulster County), Poughkeepsie Farm Project (Dutchess County) and Wake Robin Farm CSA (Onondaga County).

If you'd like to get a copy of the booklet, or to learn more about CSA, contact Benjamin at Hunger Action at 212-741-8192 x5# or bshute@hungeractionnys.org.



Get Involved in the Community Food Security Movement to Help End Hunger!

Community Food Security (CFS), also referred to as community food justice, is a different way to end hunger. The goal of food security is not just to get food to people who need it, but also to examine where the food is coming from, if it is healthy, how it is grown, and how easily people can access that food. Food security is defined as all people in a community having access to an adequate supply of healthy, culturally appropriate, affordable food from non-emergency, local sources at all times.

By addressing hunger primarily through the emergency food system and federal nutrition programs, we focus on treating the *symptom* of an insufficient food system. In contrast, the CFS movement addresses the root causes of hunger and strives to make a more democratic food system that gives communities greater control in choosing how their food is produced, distributed, and accessed.

New York has the potential to restructure the food system so that it meets the needs of all New Yorkers. Many groups and community residents involved in creating food security across the state are developing innovative food projects and localized food systems that actually increase access to affordable, locally grown food for *everyone*, regardless of income. For instance, community gardens are sprouting up in vacant lots, more farmers are selling their produce through payment plan options to lower income residents, and an increasing number of farmers' markets are accepting Food Stamps. These types of projects can continue to expand, but we must work together.

Therefore, Hunger Action, the NY Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, and many others are holding CFS Meetings across the state to help facilitate the development of community food projects, coalitions, and councils that increase access to affordable, fresh food.

We are currently looking for cosponsors for future meetings in the Finger Lakes, New York City and the Southern Tier. If you are interested, please contact Susannah at 212-741-8192, ext. 3# or Sheila at 518-434-7371, ext. 2#.

Collard Greens

What are Collard Greens?

Collard Greens belong to the leafy green family- this family includes Kale, Swiss Chard, Mustard and Dandelion Greens. Collards have a mild flavor, somewhere between the taste of Cabbage and Kale. There are many ways and reasons to enjoy Collard Greens.

Nutritional Facts:

- ⌘ Collard's dark green color tells you that it is high in Vitamin A and Vitamin C.
- ⌘ Collards have many benefits such as being a good source for calcium and fiber.
- ⌘ 1 cup raw or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked equals 1 serving

Selecting Collards:

- ⌘ Choose smaller leaves for a more tender and mild flavor.
- ⌘ Look for a fresh green color and moist, unwilted leaves.

Storage:

- ⌘ Wrap unwashed greens in a damp paper towel and plastic bag, refrigerate for up to 5 days.

Ways of Preparation:

- ⌘ Before cooking, wash thoroughly. A good way to thoroughly clean Collard Greens or other leafy green vegetables is to fill your sink with water and swish around, cleaning out all the grit.
- ⌘ Boil, steam or microwave (cook just until bright green and wilted).
- ⌘ Add to soups, stuffings, and stews. Season collards with olive oil, lemon, salt and pepper.

Easy Greens

Serves: 4- 6

Ingredients:

- 2 bunches of fresh collard greens
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced thin
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- salt and pepper
- lemon wedges (optional)



Directions:

- (1) Trim and chop fresh collard greens. Wash and leave slightly wet.
- (2) In a large saucepan with a lid, cook garlic in oil over medium- low heat until golden brown.
- (3) Remove garlic with a spoon; set aside.
- (4) Add collards to pan, raise heat to medium- high, sprinkle with salt, and cover.
- (5) Remove lid to stir every minute or so until cooked through, about 10-15 minutes.
- (6) Season with pepper and lemon juice if desired. Toss in reserved garlic and serve hot.

ENJOY!

Community Food News

Hunger Action is on the Move: Please Note our Change of Address

Hunger Action has recently moved its Albany office. Please update your records so that we continue to receive your important information. The new Albany address is 275 State Street, 4th Floor, Albany, NY 12210. Please feel free to stop by and say hello at any time.

Hunger Action Network of New York State Membership Coupon

Yes, I want to help end the root causes of hunger by becoming a member:

\$30 Individual

\$5 (low/fixed income)

\$40 small organization

\$75 medium org.

\$150 large org.

Please send me information about volunteer opportunities _____

Name _____ Organization _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Phone (day) _____ Evening _____ Fax _____ E-mail _____

Please return to the Hunger Action Network of NYS, 275 State Street., 4th Floor, Albany, NY 12210

Hunger Action Network
OF NEW YORK STATE

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