

SNAP Beneficial?

BY DR. MIKE ROSMANN

How much food stamp availability under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has become a main point of contention, if not the most controversial issue, concerning passage of a new Farm Bill by the U.S. Congress. How much of what is being said by politicians and the media is accurate?

Because of implications for both agricultural producers and consumers, let's take a candid look at needs and the health and well-being of food stamp users, as well as how SNAP affects agricultural producers. My aim is not to wade into the political discussion but to concentrate on factual information.

SNAP spending more than doubled from 2007 to 2012. There is little disagreement about this, and that federal support of SNAP last year was about \$78 billion, which is by far the biggest item (80%) of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Historically, applications for food stamps have increased during economic recessions and decreased during economic recoveries, as depicted in an October 16, 2013 report by Michael Tanner of the CATO Institute. The first food stamp program appeared in 1939 during the latter part of the Great Depression and continued until spring 1943.

Thereafter, USDA data (www.DailyJobsUpdate.com) about food stamp usage illustrate a pattern of waxing and waning that fairly closely follows the federal unemployment rate. The current high rate of food stamp usage is declining slowly as unemployment decreases and because of mandated SNAP cuts, such as the recent end of the Bush-Obama Economic Stimulus Program that reduced total SNAP benefits by about \$5B annually.

How widespread is SNAP fraud? Citing USDA data, Andrew Montgomery of Freedom Works (www.freedomworks.org) says 47M Americans utilized food stamps in 2012, which is 1/7th of all U.S. citizens. About half of current SNAP beneficiaries have received benefits for more than five years.

"They are subject to large scale fraud and error," Montgomery says. According to Kevin Concannon, the director of SNAP for the USDA, the amount of consumer SNAP fraud in 2011 was about \$750M.

As best I can determine, and depending on which statistics are cited, food stamp fraud varies from about 4 percent to 1.5 percent each year and has been decreasing lately. Supporters of SNAP suggest food stamp recipients who are unemployed are becoming more desperate and are increasingly relying on declining supplies from food banks operated by churches and other non-profit organizations.

Those who endorse SNAP cutbacks say work requirements for many food stamp claimants are not enforced. Tanner says about 44 percent of able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) are not working their required 20 hours per week.

SNAP proponents claim adequate-paying jobs are not available for most ABAWD persons but recognize reforms could improve the SNAP requirements.

The USDA reports there are three main kinds of fraud: 1) recipients trading food stamps for cash, a practice which is called trafficking, and is conducted mostly by organized crime rings, 2) recipients lying on their applications to obtain food stamps and 3) retailers lying on applications to resume as SNAP vendors after having been disqualified previously because they exceeded the quota of three founded cases of food stamp misuse.

USDA investigators say most fraudulent retailers are small independent vendors who need the income generated from customers who pay for goods with food stamps, rather than larger chain stores, because the chain store retailers do not want to risk losing their permits to accept food stamps over a small number of customers.

In 2012 about 2,100 stores nationwide were sanctioned or disqualified permanently as a result of undercover investigations authorized by the USDA Inspector General. Trafficking and retail fraud involved less than one percent of all SNAP benefits in 2012.

What happens to persons who have insufficient nutrition? USDA statistics indicate that 49 percent of all SNAP beneficiaries are children.

People, especially children, who are hungry seek foods that are high in caloric content, which explains why about six percent more SNAP recipients are obese than the general public. They often lack adequate protein in their diets, because protein sources such as meat and dairy products are more expensive to purchase.

Moreover, they tend to crave immediate glucose satisfaction for hunger urges rather than slower metabolizing proteins. Brain neuron development is slowed when children do not have enough protein and rich fats (not sugars) in their diets.

SNAP cutbacks affect mainly two types of agricultural producers: farmers who produce meat, eggs and dairy products, and farmers who produce fresh vegetables. With fewer food stamps available, consumers rely more on canned goods and processed grains such as pasta, which "go farther" but have lower nutritional value in the long run.

SNAP cutbacks reduce a guaranteed market for agricultural goods. Proponents say reductions of SNAP also hurt merchandizers and the economy in general because every dollar of SNAP benefits produces \$1.70 in economic stimulus as the benefits circulate through the local community.

Express your thoughts about SNAP to your elected leaders.

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Visiting Hours

Prevent Winter Weight Gain

BY ANGIE O'CONNOR

Avera Sacred Heart Hospital Community Wellness Coordinator

Many people tend to gain weight during the winter months. Some people joke that they are eating and sleeping more because they are getting ready to hibernate. But there is not a way to crawl into a warm hiding place and sleep the fat away. Those extra pounds acquired over the winter may stay on year after year, eventually contributing to health problems such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.

People gain weight during the winter months for different reasons. If you have a tendency to gain weight during the winter, it's important for you to figure out what factors contribute to this tendency and then plan accordingly. Simple changes in behavior can often have enormous health benefits.

Make a holiday survival plan. Holidays can mean less time to exercise, more treats, and extra alcohol and

stress. You couldn't find a better recipe for weight gain.

1) Make a plan for staying active. Try to come up with some creative solutions to factors that have made exercise during the holidays difficult - travel, busyness, lack of childcare, etc. Schedule these new solutions into your calendar the same way you schedule your parties, meetings and family gatherings. If you don't schedule it, you may not get it done.

2) Think of ways to reduce holiday stress. Exercise is the best stress-reducer around and stress reduction is one of the best reasons to stay active - no matter what the season may be. Make time for exercise and activities that give the holiday meaning and that provide pleasure and opportunities to be with people you enjoy.

3) Eat defensively. Include occasional small portions of holiday treats that you really love, but balance this by eating more prudently at other meals. Avoid munching and drinking just because "it's there." I know that can be

difficult, but the average person gains approximately seven pounds during the holiday season. Smaller portions of the "good stuff that's not so good for you" and larger portions of the actual "good stuff."

Make friends with winter. Winter can cause a decline in physical activity, as shorter days and inclement weather like we have been experiencing can limit exercise options. Come up with some creative solutions. Check out fitness centers and community recreation programs. Buy some warmer clothes and learn how to dress for cold weather. There are many things you can do in the winter months that are terrific calorie-burners.

And don't forget that exercise can be an effective treatment for mild to moderate depression. People who experience winter depression can try combining exercise and light therapy by exercising outdoors when time and weather permit.

Have a healthy and safe holidays.

Bruegman Wins Sewing Machine



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Pictured is Sharon Bruegman, Bristow, coordinator, and Sherry Ross, Otoe, Nebraska, winner of the Feather Weight Vintage Singer Sewing Machine, donated by Yvonne Hollenbeck and the Outlaw Trail Scenic Byway, for the 'See the Byway the Quiltway' weekend. Sherry and a friend traveled the Outlaw Trail Scenic Byway and stopped in each of the 16 towns hosting a quilt show on the weekend of October 11-13, starting at Bristow and signing up for the drawing at each stop. Sherry's name was drawn at Bristow and put in the pot with the names of the winner drawn from each of the other towns. At the wrap up meeting held at St. James Marketplace, Sherry's name was drawn as the winner of the sewing machine. The ladies enjoyed their travels to the various quilt shows and the lovely fall weather, and Sherry was thrilled to be the winner of the sewing machine.

"We Did It Again"



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Recently Legion Post 12 conducted a drive for playground equipment for young people on the Indian Reservation. This time we went to the White Swan Community Center in Lake Andes, S.D. This is a safe place for young people to grow and learn. Our Post #12 - my wife and I would like to thank everyone who helped us with this worthwhile project.

DIY Christmas Coming To Plainview

PLAINVIEW, Neb. — Delores Ruzicka, a successful entrepreneur from Verdigre and a KBRX (102.9 FM) host that shares her radio program "From My Home to Yours," will be presenting the "Do It Yourself (DIY) Christmas" program at the Plainview Community Building on Wednesday, Nov. 20. Doors open at 6 p.m. and the program will begin at 7 p.m. The event is a fundraiser

for the Northeast Nebraska Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D).

Tickets will be available at the door with limited seating.

Ruzicka has been on TV shows such as "Aleene's Creative Living," as well as "Carol Duvall and Paint, Paint, Paint." She's authored 15 "how-to" craft books, illustrated two children's books and has had hundreds of her original designs published in magazines. Delores is the

owner of Country Creations...& More in Verdigre.

The RC&D Council is a non-profit organization here to serve the needs and interests of the citizens of the area.

For more information about this event or RC&D projects and activities, see www.nenercd.org or call 402-582-4866.

Input Sought On Behavioral Health Needs

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska officials want to know what services are important to Nebraska children and teens when they face serious behavioral health challenges, so they're asking the youth, their families and community providers to complete a survey.

The survey period is open until Nov. 22.

The results of the survey will help the Department of Health and Human Services and system partners, such as advocacy groups, children's agencies, schools, the justice system and the faith community, work with families and youth to develop a strategic plan for a system-of-care approach to providing services for children and youth with serious emotional disturbances and their families.

"We want to strengthen the collaboration of state and local efforts to weave mental health supports and services into seamless systems of care for children and youth with mental health needs and their families," said Scot L. Adams, director of the Division of Behavioral Health at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

The survey includes questions about the accessibility of services, family involvement, and system strengths and weaknesses. It is available at <http://go.unl.edu/nesoc>.

DHHS was awarded \$504,413 from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as a system-of-care expansion planning grant.

"The focus of the funding is the coordination of resources in communities to improve a young person's health and well-being," Adams said.

YHS Band Festival Set

Yankton High School Music Department will host the annual Region I Honor Band on Monday, Nov. 18, at YHS.

A concert will be held at 7 p.m. in the YHS/Summit Activities Center theatre. This concert is free to the public and will also be streamed live via the Internet through the Yankton School District Web Home at www.yhsd.k12.sd.us/.

The bands of the Region Band Festival are selected in October by submitting recorded auditions and are the very best musicians in the Southeastern corner of South Dakota. Sixteen high schools and middle schools are represented this year in this festival. The bands will begin rehearsal early Monday morning and practice throughout the day.

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