



EBCAP Provides Over 280,000 Meals a Year

Story by Lauren Call, Public Relations Intern

East Bay Community Action Program provides **more than 280,000 meals** a year to individuals in the East Bay region of Rhode Island. In a state where 14.4% of households are food insecure, and 4.6% of households experience severe food insecurity, the agency, with its various programs, fills a critical need in our region. These agency-run programs include: Head Start, EBCAP Food Pantries, the East Bay Café Program, the Backpack Program and feeding programs for elementary school children during out of school time hours.

Head Start: This program supplies up to three meals a day to children in Head Start, totaling 122,952 meals a year. Children enrolled in all-day services receive breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. Head Start provides nutritious meals to 410 children every day, including, infants that receive formula.

“This is great for the children because it provides nutritious meals for them and helps their families,” said Bunny Clohecy, Head Start Director of Administration, Health & Nutrition, “It saves families money on their food bill that they can use elsewhere in their budget.”

The Child and Adult Food Program, through the Department of Education, funds the Head Start meal program. The meals are free for all students.

EBCAP Food Pantries: EBCAP operates three food pantries in the East Bay: Tiverton, Newport and East Providence. Together, the three locations distributed 76,320 meals last year. The food is either donated by local businesses or organizations or purchased from the RI Community Food Bank. Individuals eligible for the program include public assistance recipients, the unemployed, or anyone with an emergency food need.

“In addition to providing food, the pantries also act as a link to other EBCAP and community services for clients struggling to meet their basic needs,” said Angela Downing, Director of Social Services.

East Bay Café Program: EBCAP operates ten dining café locations across the East Bay that service individuals who are 60 years of age or older, as well as disabled younger adults. Last year the café sites provided 63,498 meals to east bay residents. “We are happy to operate this program which helps to keep older Americans eating healthy,” said Karen Emmes, Senior Services Nutrition Coordinator, “This program also provides social opportunities for participants to meet and enjoy others.”

Meal sites are open Monday through Friday and offer several meal choices daily. Each meal comes with soup, the main entrée or substitution of a sandwich, vegetables, grain bread, dessert, milk, and coffee or tea.

This program also offers restaurant dining vouchers for a suggested donation of five dollars. Seniors can dine at IHOP Restaurant in Middletown or Newport Creamery in Barrington. Diners can select from a limited menu of nutritionally balanced entrees at both sites. This program is funded by the RI Department of Elderly Affairs.

The Backpack Program: This program is coordinated by the Newport Family & Child Opportunity Zone (NFCOZ) in collaboration with the RI Community Food Bank. Last year the program distributed 4,715 meals to over 100 elementary school children between July 2013 and June 2014. Children are given a backpack filled with two days’ worth of nutritious food for them to eat over the weekend. One backpack includes two breakfasts, two lunch entrees, two dinner entrees, five snacks and six juice boxes.

“With 65% of our student population eligible for free or reduced price lunch, this program is so necessary at the Pell Elementary School,” said Christine Arouth, Director of the Newport Family and Child Opportunity Zone. “Our students receive breakfast, snacks, and lunch while at school, which ensures that they are receiving healthy and nutritious food. The weekends can be so difficult for families, and many of our children do not have enough food on the weekend. The Backpack Program helps to ensure that children have something to eat during this time.”

The Backpack Program is funded by Dunkin Donuts, The Rhode Island Foundation, Singing Out Against Hunger, FEMA, and the McKinney-Vento Grant (awarded to Newport Public Schools).

Feeding elementary students during out of school time hours: Students participating in after school programs, school vacation camps, and the Summer Learning Academy at the Pell Elementary School in Newport have the opportunity to have a meals and snacks at school due to a successful partnership between the Newport Family and Child Opportunity Zone, Newport Public Schools, Chartwells, the RI Department of Education, and the RI Community Food Bank.

The summer meal program is an extension of the federal School Lunch Program. Due to the high rate of low income children, all participants in the twenty-five day summer program are eligible for two free, reimbursable meals daily and are also provided a healthy snack. During 40 weeks of after school programs and two weeks of school vacation camp, at least 600 students will also receive free, reimbursable meals this year through the Feeding America Kids Café program which is funded by the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program through the USDA. “We began utilizing the Kids Café program last spring because it allows us to provide more food and more choices each day for students, including fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains, protein, and dairy. We know that many students went to bed hungry before this program began at Pell,” said Christine Arouth, Director of the NFCOZ. Over 20,300 meals will be served this year to elementary students during out of school time programs.

In addition to the programs run directly by East Bay Community Action Program, the agency has also, for the past 32 years, provided grant writing and reporting support to approximately five to six faith-based groups a year that are part of the Newport County Community Meal Program. This program provides an evening meal for individuals who are nutritionally, economically, or socially at risk. Volunteers prepare and serve the meals at least six nights per week. Susan Schenck, EBCAP VP and Chief Operating Officer said, “EBCAP is pleased to be able to support these faith-based groups that provided over 8,000 meals last year. This long-standing partnership is an excellent example of how our community works together to help local residents.”

Together these nutritional food programs reach all age ranges and areas of the East Bay community that are in need. Providing over 280,000 meals a year is one of the many ways EBCAP assists people to achieve their fullest potential.