

2004 Edition, No.2, Fall

Editorial by Keith Davis

There have been so many exciting things happening in the Food Security movement during the past four months that we had to publish this issue to tell you about them.

Gillian Strong and Gabriel Keresztesi, new members of the FSN office staff, write about their creative street theatre production performed this summer. Denise Bradley, co-chair of the FSN, tells us about the National Assembly on Food Security in Winnipeg which she and Melba Rabinowitz attended. Melba also sends us two reports: the first tells us about growing sprouts as a nutritious and inexpensive food source, a family activity, and a community project. The second report explores the history of the United Church Food Aid Centre and its recent name change. The new name, Bridges of Hope reflects the change in direction and mandate of this important community-based agency and their commitment to food security. Eva Marsh tells us about the Youth Home Smart Program and the contribution this program offers St. John's youth. Also read about the success of the World Food Day Event sponsored by OXFAM and the FSN. You'll also want to read the press release sent to us by The Canadian Association of Food Banks' (CAFB) which provides an overview of HungerCount 2004, a survey of hunger and food bank usage.

If this is the first time you've read our newsmagazine, we invite you to consider joining our network. This is also a reminder to all current members that it is time to renew your membership. Download a membership form from this site today.

Mark this important date in your calendar! January 12, 2005 at 7pm is the date of the next Annual General Meeting of the Food Security Network to be held at Health and Community Services, 20 Cordage Place, St. John's. Bring a friend with you to learn more about our organization and plans for 2005.

With thanks to all the contributors who keep us informed, I am certain that you will enjoy this issue of Food Security News.

(Keith Davis is the Newsmagazine Editor and Co-Chair of the Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador. He can be contacted by email at fsnl@firstcity.net)

World Food Day Event a Success! by Melba Rabinowitz

Around 100 people took part in the World Food Day Event held on Thursday, October 14, 2004 . The Food Security Network and OXFAM sponsored the successful family event held at the Gower Street United Church in St. John's . The evening began with entertainment followed by a pasta dinner, street theatre presentation, and brief presentations on local and global hunger.

In their presentations, representatives from OXFAM and the Food Security Network emphasized that we are all stakeholders when it comes to food security. The right to food is a tool around which citizens can mobilize and governments can be held accountable.

Events such as this one bring together members of service clubs, churches, anti-poverty organizations, and health care agencies with diverse groups of adults and children from the wider community. The long family style tables were a reminder that we are all part of the food security continuum. Literally breaking bread at the same table is an important aspect of creating community awareness and the potential for mobilization.

The tone of the evening was friendly and upbeat with Bev Brown with her fiddle, Mick Newchurch on guitar, and Terry Reilly on piano. The street theatre group gave a performance reinforcing the theme of the evening, "Don't Blame the Poor." Terry Reilly performed an original song, "Mamma, I'm Hungry" written especially to bring attention to the extreme hunger in the world.

The cost of the meal was a donation of \$5.00. Given the generous donations of ingredients from local farmers and businesses, the Food Security Network raised \$400.00.

We are grateful for the generosity of all who attended. The FSN has no sustaining funding to cover core office operations.

Acknowledgments: The event would not have been possible without the many volunteers involved in planning and promoting the event, providing child care, and the street theatre play. Special thanks go to Mick Newchurch, a FSN Board member who coordinated the event.

We are grateful to OXFAM and volunteer, Kelly Bruton for organizing the dinner and the many volunteers who contributed to meal preparation and serving. We also thank the Gower Street United Church for the use of their kitchen facilities and a wonderful, family oriented space.

Finally to the businesses who provided the ingredients for the meal, we offer our sincere thanks: Auntie Crae's, Georgetown Bakery, Food For Thought, Garden Spring Water, Pasta Plus, Liens Family Farm, Organic Farm, Sobey's - Pennywell Road and Sobey's - Ropewalk Lane.

(Melba Rabinowitz is a Board Member with the Food Security Network)

Bridges to Hope (New Name for Community Based Agency Involved in Food Security)
by Melba Rabinowitz

The United Church Food Aid Centre changed its name in 2004 to reflect a new mandate and direction.

Originally, the Center grew out of a basic service offered by the Stella Burry Corporation (Emmanuel House). By 1989, Emmanuel House could no longer handle the volume of traffic and food required and a decision was made to create a stand-alone service. Supported by several Churches in St. John's and Mt. Pearl, the Food Aid Centre opened on the third floor of Cochrane Street United Church later that year.

The Centre was operated by a dedicated team of volunteers who provided about 350 hampers in the first year of operation. As the demand on the Centre grew, it became clear that a paid employee was needed to perform some essential duties. Provisions were made to hire a person on a half-time basis to work with the volunteers. This arrangement continued until 1997. During that year, the Centre provided over 8,000 food hampers serving 12,000 people. This high volume supported the need for a full-time staff person to work with a full complement of volunteers.

Following the departure of the coordinator in 1998, the Board of Directors decided to transform the Food Aid Centre into a Resource Centre that offered a variety of services and programs to help people help themselves. A social worker with program development experience was hired and the process of evolution was begun.

During the intervening five years, the Centre has implemented programs as varied as a toy lending library, a computer recycling program and Home Smart, an 8-session program that helps individuals learn how to purchase and prepare nutritious, low-cost meals on a limited budget. These and many other programs have developed into viable and meaningful resources for individuals who want to learn new skills and make better use of their own personal resources.

The Centre has partnered with several community agencies to share knowledge in ways that have been satisfying and productive. The Centre has developed several temporary and part-time, seasonal initiatives such as the Christmas Hamper program, employment placement, micro-loan, and Internet resource room to serve the needs of a changing clientele.

During 2002-03, the Board of Directors revised the Constitution to better reflect the evolving direction of the Centre and the vision of its stakeholders. Now supported by eight United and one Presbyterian Church, the organization has taken on a more ecumenical approach. The Constitution allows other support groups to become involved at the Centre. The Constitution allows greater transparency in its operation and enables the Centre to exercise greater control over its payroll and accounting practices as a full-fledged charitable organization.

The new name adopted as the new corporate identity is Bridges to Hope Inc. This name reflects the hope through action we and our partners are striving to build. Agencies such as ours and the clients we serve are faced with very harsh economic realities. By building bridges to resources, we create with our clients renewed optimism and hope for the future.

[Melba Rabinowitz is a Board Member with the Food Security Network]

Home Smart Program Open to Youth! **by Eva Marsh**

For several years, Bridges To Hope, formerly the United Church Food Aid Centre, has offered courses for people who want to make the best meals possible for their food dollar. Home Smart helps participants learn how to prepare nutritious, low-cost meals on a limited budget. It involves cooking and eating together as well as shopping trips to explore quality foods for the best dollar values. The informal, hands on approach and the social interaction possible in a Newfoundland kitchen environment are important aspects of the course.

The course coming up was developed especially for teens and young adults up to 21 years old. The program will be relevant for those living on their own who want to learn basic skills for running a household. Especially welcome are young women with children or expecting a baby. Young people may self-refer or be referred by an agency. The group is limited to 6 members.

Home Start is offered on a monthly basis, two ½ day sessions per week for a total of 8 sessions. There is NO CHARGE.

Successful participants receive a Basic Shelf Cookbook, a Basic Shelf starter food hamper, and a gift voucher for food purchases!

The course takes place in the kitchen of the Cochrane Street United Church .

For more information or to reserve a space please contact Eva Marsh @ 722-9225.

Space is Limited

(Eva Marsh is the Program Coordinator at Community Gardens)

The following press release was sent to us for distribution by the Canadian Association of Food Banks:

**Poverty in a Land of Plenty: Towards a Hunger-Free Canada
by Charles Seiden**

Canadian Association of Food Banks survey shows unprecedented increase in food bank use.

Winnipeg, October 15, 2004 – A record number of Canadians are using food banks in Canada, an increase of 8.5 percent since last year, according to a report published today. 841,640 people – exceeding the population of Winnipeg - including 317,242 children, are receiving food from food banks and emergency food programs, despite the Canadian government's re-endorsement of the 1996 Rome Declaration on World Food Security two years ago.

The Canadian Association of Food Banks' (CAFB) survey, HungerCount 2004: Poverty in a Land of Plenty: Towards a Hunger Free Canada, demonstrates the government's failure to provide a social network which enables people in Canada to feed themselves and shows a rise in food bank use across the country.

“With over three quarters of a million people using a food bank in a month,” says Charles Seiden, Executive Director of the CAFB, “we have never seen numbers like this before. The challenge is immense and complex and the issues of poverty and hunger must be placed onto the agendas of governments of all levels to restructure the welfare system and provide an adequate social network before another generation is subjected to poverty and its inherent outcomes.”

The survey reveals that 13.3 percent of food bank users are people with jobs and an astounding 2.72 million meals were served in one month.

“In the light of the staggering number of Canadians unable to provide for their basic needs, the CAFB and its members are more committed than ever to seek realistic and effective social policies in pursuit of social inclusion and the elimination of hunger,” states Marjorie Bencz, CAFB chair.

The CAFB and its members will meet with MP's and party leaders to initiate concrete steps towards eradicating hunger in Canada. The HungerCount report sets out recommendations for government in a seven point plan towards a hunger free Canada and gives an overview of policy priorities with measurable objectives and timelines to monitor national progress on eliminating hunger, food insecurity and poverty.

HungerCount is the only national survey of emergency food programs in Canada, conducted annually since 1997. With a sample of 482 food banks it goes beyond presenting the most current data and calls for strategic solutions to food security for Canadians.

Founded in 1985, the Canadian Association of Food Banks is the national umbrella organization representing voluntary food charities, including over 235 member food banks. CAFB is the voice of food banks in Canada, with members and their respective agencies serving approximately 90% of people accessing emergency food programs nation-wide.

CAFB operates the National Food Sharing System with corporate partnerships that facilitate the distribution and sharing of major food industry donations through voluntary transport to food banks across the country.

While CAFB provides food for people in need on a day-to-day basis, its ultimate goal is to eradicate the causes of hunger, food insecurity and poverty in Canada through public education and advocacy.

For a complete copy of HungerCount 2004, please contact the CAFB or visit the website at www.cafb-acba.ca

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Press Release

A public voice on food security was created at a national gathering in Winnipeg marking World Food Day on October 16, 2004 . Denise Bradley and Melba Rabinowitz of the Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador were among the 180 delegates from across Canada who created a national organization committed to zero hunger, healthy and safe foods, and a sustainable food system.

Several key messages were voiced at the three-day assembly: Hunger is on the rise in Canada . The food system is profoundly dysfunctional when farmers and fishers have to leave their farms and boats to order to have an adequate income. Throughout the presentations which frequently used a town hall meeting format, speakers emphasized the relationship between food and hunger and nutrition, health, environment, culture, human rights, education, and the law. The food security assembly supports community mobilization as a key to sustainable system change.

In a local event marking World Food Day, the Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador joined with OXFAM to sponsor a pasta supper and discuss local and global issues of hunger. The event held at Gower Street Church in St. John's on October 14, attracted over 100 people.

For more information regarding food security issues in our province, e-mail: fsnl@firstcity.net or call: 739-5775.

For more information regarding this press release, contact

Denise Bradley , Co-Chair, Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador at 576-0085

or

Melba Rabinowitz , Board Member at 895-2884

Sprouts -- A Food Accessible to Most!
by Melba Rabinowitz

Involving Children. The important role of children in food gathering and food security has been lost. When I was a preschool child growing up in Tennessee, I fed the chickens, gathered the eggs, picked and shelled beans, and picked pecans from the huge pecan trees. Even as a small child, it was impossible to have the experience of seeing the voluptuous tomatoes, corn and watermelons that grew from such tiny, tiny seeds, without knowing there is an energy greater than ourselves. I imagine the sense of pride and responsibility I felt in being asked to help the same way was experienced by children in Newfoundland who were asked to help with "making fish." Today, fewer children have this opportunity unless their families have a family garden or are involved in a community garden.

Growing sprouts is a simple way to provide children one aspect of this experience. I have a dream that children will learn to make and eat sprouts in preschool, kindergartens, and after-school programs throughout the province. When children are hooked on growing sprouts, we can begin to provide sprout kits for them to take home. Local service groups could be called upon to contribute the small amount of money required to provide sprouting materials for children in their communities.

Why Sprouts? Sprouts are a cheap, nutritious, delicious, and versatile source of foods. When my son was four, he loved sprout sandwiches. At preschool, we made funny face sandwiches, spreading bread or buns with cream cheese, peanut butter or cheese spread, then used raisins, carrot sticks, etc for eyes, nose or eyebrows. Sprouts made wonderful hair and the children gobbled them up. Today, in the family kitchen, we sprinkle sprouts

in salads or soups, knowing they are low in calories, easy to digest, and extremely nutritious.

Nutritious? Yes. Through the miracle of germination, thiamin increases five-fold and niacin content doubles. Vitamin C, E and carotene increase. In fact, the vitamin C content becomes as rich as that in tomatoes. Sprouting breaks down the stored protein into amino acids which is a basic building block for our bodies. In 1940, the United States Army sponsored a full investigation on sprouted seeds, studying their usefulness as food. During World War I, the British Army sprouted beans to ward off scurvy in the trenches. When building the trenches, they calculated the sprouting area needed to feed a battalion.

Easy? Yes. Most people do not try to grow sprouts because they think it is too difficult. In fact, we have very little to do with the process. All we have to do is set up the opportunity for the miracle of growth. The urge to germinate is nature's way of surviving. The key is to soak the beans overnight. Then, place them inside the jar, cover them with cheesecloth. The cheesecloth or a well punctured lid makes it easy to rinse and drain. Rinse them a few times per day. Simply observe. If some seeds are not attempting to sprout after a few days, remove them gently. If they don't sprout at all, the seeds may be too old, try a different set. Sprouts do not have to be kept in the dark as previously thought, but avoid direct sunlight. Your sprouts should be ready to eat in 5 to 7 days.

Most beans found in the bulk buying bins in the supermarket will sprout. Packaged chick peas, beans, and alfalfa seeds can also be used. Health food stores such as Food For Thought in St. John's carry seeds specifically for sprouting. (Do not use seeds sold for gardens. Most are treated with pesticides and are unsafe to eat.)

The Organic Farm provides sunflower, radish, alfalfa and pea sprouts to a small number of high end restaurants. At the August folk festival in St. John's, the Food Security Network made up sprout kits using a jar or yogurt container, cheesecloth, and a rubber band. Four tablespoons of mung beans and directions for growing sprouts were also included. This winter, we hope to introduce a sprout growing program in an after-school program at a local community centre. We invite you to join the sprouting brigade!

Growing In Soil. This year a young woman from Quebec introduced the Organic Farm to growing sunflower sprouts in a few inches of top soil. In 7 to 10 days, the sprouts were 3 to 5 inches high. We cut the sprouts with scissors, put the roots in the compost and used the soil to start over. More recently, we are growing pea sprouts in soil. These are the best yet! They taste like freshly grown peas. All you need for is top soil and an old pan or tray with sides. Soak the seeds or peas 2 or 3 days, rinsing them often, until they start to swell and form a tiny foot. Place about 2 inches of soil on the bottom of the pan and cover the swelling seed with another inch of soil. Spread them 2 or 3 inches apart. Press gently and keep moist by covering the tray with plastic wrap until the growing is under way. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again! Partially formed sprouts have a fresh, crunchy taste when they get soft enough to chew. Some children eat sprouts at this stage like peanuts. Keep several different batches going at a time.

Keep the Movement Going! As you become more confident, add sprouts to your egg salad sandwiches for your church group and give sprouting kits for wedding gifts. Make sprouting kits for your local day care or kindergarten and offer to help the teacher and children set up an activity.

If you need more information, try the Internet or your local library. Or E-mail the FSN office for a copy of the sprouting directions developed for the folk festival. Good Luck and stay in touch. Write the News Magazine and tell us what you are doing to involve children in the important experience of growing their own food.

(Melba Rabinowitz is a Board Member with the Food Security Network and Co-Owner of "Organic Farm" in Portugal Cove, NL)

Street Theatre Group Formed by Gillian Strong & Gabriel Keresztesi

A creative way of presenting food security issues is emerging through a newly formed street theatre group and a script developed by Gillian Strong and Gabe Keresztesi.

Gillian and Gabe are university students who worked for FSN as part of the summer student employment programs. They recruited their friends, FSN members, and audience members to take on the various roles associated with food security. The roles included government officials and policy makers in suits and carrying briefcases, and multi-nationals who control our food supply. These characters were portrayed with empty faces and long arms reaching into the pockets of the poor.

Others represented the roles of community-based and front line people with whom the poor engage on a day-to-day basis in order to sustain their families. Some of the obstacles to food security and well being are unemployment and financial assistance policies, housing regulations, and school fees. There are many more.

The group gave its first performance at the folk festival in August. The second performance took place at World Food Day Event hosted by FSN and OXFAM. The theme of both performances was "Don't Blame the Poor for Being Poor !" To bring the theme to life, the group opted for a juggling act. No matter how well the local juggler could juggle, it was obvious that he was not able to keep all the balls in the air. The balls were housing, telephone, and school fees. There was not enough money left for adequate food.

Because the performance is an active and interactive process, street theatre provides a way to introduce new issues and themes. This forum also provides a tool for young people to incorporate their own experiences and write their own script.

For more information or to get involved, contact Gabe at fsnl@firstcity.net