

Fresh and Healthful Options: Connections to Fresh Food for Your Customers

This section is an all-new addition to our 2012 Edition of this manual. Both the need and the opportunity for fresh foods in the emergency food system has been clear to Washington Food Coalition in recent years. In 2011 and 2012, in partnership with WSDA and Rotary First Harvest, Washington Food Coalition hosted the Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits as a launching point for efforts to meet this need.

Summary from the Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits:

1 in 6 people in Washington struggle with hunger. Meanwhile, our state boasts 39,500 farms and ranches, with excess local food going to waste daily. More than a hunger problem, we have a connection and distribution problem. The Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits were designed to help remedy this problem.

Using funds from the WSDA Specialty Crop Block Grant, WSDA Food Assistance Programs has partnered with Washington Food Coalition and Rotary First Harvest to host four Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits across Washington to bring the emergency food community together with local specialty crop farmers and their commodity commissions. The summits helped these groups learn how their businesses intersect and potential options for growth.



Over the years, Washington food producers have worked with many hunger relief organizations to help combat hunger in our State. The Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits were designed to bring together these organizations to share ideas and insights about ways that farmers, processors, packers and hunger relief organizations can more effectively work together to alleviate hunger in our communities. Food banks, meal programs and other groups across the state are working to increase the amount of Washington-produced foods that are available, and they need meaningful connections with producers to identify opportunities that are both effective and sustainable. This innovation and collaboration is critical as the number of families facing hunger continues to grow in Washington due to the current recession.

Each of the Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits provided many unique insights and opportunities to see growth in these connections. We found that the opportunities to increase relations between local growers and local emergency food programs in mutually beneficial ways were seemingly endless.

At the Harvest Against Hunger (HAH) Wenatchee Area Summit in September, the issues of storage and transportation were highlighted as barriers to collaborate on and overcome somehow. The HAH Yakima Area Summit in January offered insightful discussion into the opportunity of one-to-one connections between small-scale farmers and local food programs. At the HAH Olympia Area Summit in February, ideas were shared on how emergency food programs can reach out and market themselves to local growers. Later in February, at the HAH Seattle Area Summit, discussions arose about educating youth on how to grow food, as well as ideas on how to make small-scale farming more economically viable.

It was also evident that certain issues and ideas continued to arise at each HAH Summit, no matter where in the state it was held. The utilization of Food Hub (food-hub.org) to locate and connect with food sources had a large amount of interest. The development of materials and tools addressing liability as well as methods of donations to provide to growers was discussed widely. Understanding individual growers and the best way to tap into their production line is another discussion that was brought up statewide. In addition, the opportunity for emergency food programs to position themselves as a paying customer whenever it is possible was an idea that provided opportunity for long-term sustainability in these relationships. These ideas, along with many others, were clearly applicable in all areas of the state.

While this series of Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits proved to be incredibly useful and exciting, they most definitely provided more of a launching point than a finish line. The journey to connecting local growers with local emergency food programs is far from over. There is much work to be done to take the ideas from the Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits and turn them into practical, sustainable systems. The opportunities for the richness that could result from a food system that utilizes these ideas, however, is truly inspiring.

Keeping it Fresh: Farmers Market Vouchers

University District Food Bank - Seattle



University District Food Bank (UDFB) is lucky to have the well-established University District Farmers Market as a neighbor. The two organizations have developed a program which allows the food bank to distribute farmers market vouchers to customers. Customers are offered three \$2 vouchers (for a total of \$6) once a month from May through October. The vouchers can be redeemed at any vendor for fruit, vegetables, honey, fish or other foods. Vendors use the vouchers toward their stall fees, and the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance – organizers of the market – requests reimbursement from UDFB once a month. The program ensures that people who use UDFB have greater access to fresh, high quality and nutritious foods. “This is a way for us to make sure that folks are getting produce that is most relevant to their needs – produce that means something to them,” says Executive Director Joe Gruber. “It’s also a way for us to give back to the market and the vendors that support us with donations.”

UDFB sets a budget for voucher reimbursement each year, and monitors the rate of reimbursements throughout the year to stay on target. One of the tricky things about budgeting is that only about one third of vouchers issued are actually redeemed. Also, some customers may save up vouchers for several months before shopping. UDFB’s program has grown to \$8,500 in reimbursements per year, and about half the funds come from grants and targeted donations by organizations that love the program. Donations from Puget Consumers Coop (PCC) and the Kiwanis Club helped start the program years ago.

What it Takes: A program like this requires a strong commitment from the partnering farmers market. Talk to your local market’s organizers to find out if they are interested and able to support a program. The Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance makes sure that its vendors are comfortable participating. Farmers and market organizers have to trust that they will be reimbursed quickly, and outreach will need to be done initially to establish that trust and willingness to accept vouchers. Also, make sure the people coming to your food bank want to participate. UDFB’s customers find the University District Farmers Market accessible, but other food banks have tried to replicate the program with lesser results, perhaps because their customers aren’t able to travel to the market easily on market day or because the voucher amount offered isn’t significant enough to warrant the trip. UDFB does make an effort to create a voucher that is hard to counterfeit (dark colored paper, changes color each season, and a special stamp on the back), although they haven’t had any trouble in this area. Design and printing of the vouchers is a minimal cost. Consider how you will market the program to customers, especially if they speak multiple languages.

Getting Real: “Eat Real Food” Campaign

Meals Partnership Coalition - Seattle



Meals Partnership Coalition (MPC) is a long-standing coalition of meal programs in the Seattle area. The coalition has evolved over the years from a network that provided a forum for support and information sharing among meal program staff, to advocating in the public policy arena. One of MPC’s most important programs is the “Eat Real Food” campaign which encourages donors and programs to donate and utilize local, fresh, whole foods. The campaign educates donors about the value of healthful foods and the dangers of irradiated, genetically modified, and other less natural and fresh food. Donors are then asked to buy local and “buy from the top of the bin rather than the bottom.” The campaign also encourages meal program providers to do such things as improve their standards by using whole grains, replacing yogurt with sour cream to reduce fat, and checking existing shelf items for adverse chemical ingredients.

What it Takes: In order to launch a similar campaign in your area, it helps to garner support from the whole community. Collaboration and relationship building in the non-profit, public and private sectors is necessary to make changes happen. MPC Chair Krista Grimm comments, “When you can get public and private agencies to come to the table, that’s when great things happen.”

“V” — for Vegetable, for Victory

Bellingham Food Bank - Bellingham



Bellingham Food Bank's (BFB) "Victory Garden Food Drive" encourages home gardeners to bring extra produce to the food bank. The home garden donation program helps BFB serve hungry people by significantly increasing the availability of fresh produce for customers. BFB raises awareness of the program and promotes local food security through distribution of simple brochures and promotional materials to local gardening businesses and community groups. In 2005, BFB received over 20,000 pounds of food donated by Whatcom County home gardeners. The Victory Garden program has substantially increased the amount of fresh produce donated to families during summer and fall months. "We didn't decide to do it so much as it was done to us," comments Mike Cohen, Executive Director. "We were receiving a lot of produce from gardens, and treated it like regular donations. Then the editor of The Bellingham Business Journal got interested, and he decided to give it a shape, a name and sponsorship. It's a wonderful way to get fresh produce in and to involve another segment of the community in our work."

What it Takes: Cohen stresses the importance of convenience for donors, and recommends that the receiving agency be open for donation drop-offs at least five days a week. You need people power to manage and sort donations, and the ability to distribute produce while still fresh. Once you have the logistics handled, it is important to conduct outreach to educate the community about the need for fresh produce. Remember that this message is counter to the usual one of "donate your non-perishables," so you'll be shifting messages and changing expectations. Garden shops, local events and farmers markets are good avenues to reach home gardeners, and local press and radio coverage will help as well.

Bringing it Together: Lettuce Link

Lettuce Link, Solid Ground - Seattle



The primary goal of Solid Ground's Lettuce Link (LL) program is to connect people with limited incomes to fresh, organic, locally grown produce. A secondary benefit of the program is that it engages people in understanding and fighting hunger. They do this in many ways.

One way is by encouraging and supporting urban P-Patch – Seattle's community gardens – gardeners to grow extra and glean from their own garden plots to share with food banks. Last year, through the efforts of P-Patch gardeners 28,000 lbs. of fresh produce was distributed to over 30 participating emergency food providers. To do this, LL meets with gardeners each year, contacting them regularly through the growing season, and solicits participation from emergency food providers. Emergency food provider participation rests in part on proximity to the garden and availability to receive donations. Depending on P-Patch location, gardeners will either work collectively or individually with emergency food providers. LL also provides the seeds, plant starts, and logistic support to help gardeners get started, which helps ensure programs receive desired items. "Ideally, we plant the seed with the gardeners, and then they develop the relationship with the food bank, shelter, or meal program. In some gardens, all I do is provide seeds, others need more support," says Michelle B. Benetua, Program Manager.

Additionally, LL has developed a number of other innovative projects which increase public awareness about hunger and promote food security. Through the community fruit tree harvest project, volunteers glean fruit from neighborhood trees, which would otherwise go to waste, and donate to emergency food providers. LL encourages self-sufficiency by showing people how to grow their own vegetables, and by visiting local food banks multiple times with free seeds, gardening information and plant starts. These services are especially utilized by recent immigrants.

At Marra Farm, 4-acres of preserved historic farmland, LL has established a 3/4 acre Giving Garden where volunteers and elementary school children learn about sustainable agriculture by raising organic vegetables for the neighborhood food bank, Providence Regina House. Since the neighborhood has a large Latino population, the Giving Garden grows tomatoes, peppers,

cilantro, and tomatillos, in addition to other crops that grow well in Seattle. A major benefit of all of LL's projects is that they involve different parts of the community in hunger issues; engaging people who enjoy fresh, local food and want to share.

What it Takes: The main requirement to get a program like Lettuce Link started in your community is to identify an existing organization or individual to connect with different parts of the community. Participating in gardening events and service clubs is a great way to start.

Linking with Growers

Hunger-Free Thurston County - Olympia



Hunger-Free Thurston County is a focused coalition consisting of two local growers, Thurston County Food Bank, and the Gleaner's Coalition. The growers are Garden Raised Bounty (GRuB), a program that works with at-risk youth and promotes farming and gardening, and Left Food Organics, a program that employs people with disabilities in working a small farm. Both are well-connected with other local growers, including farmers, home gardeners and special projects such as the Kiwanis Food Bank Garden. The coalition was initiated by GRuB in conjunction with a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant-funded project, and designed to outlast the grant period. A major benefit of Hunger Free Thurston County is that GRuB hosts a growers meeting each winter that brings growers together and provides a forum for TCFB to say, "Please don't grow zucchini, we can use corn, winter produce, and other items." At the growers' meeting, everyone is encouraged to fill out a one-page commitment form that states how much they plan to grow of what plants for donation to TCFB. This helps TCFB know what to expect and make sure they don't receive too much of the same thing.

What it Takes: Hunger-Free Thurston County is a small, strategic coalition between growers, gleaners and emergency food providers. Be clear regarding the strategic goal of your coalition, allow the goal to dictate membership, and stay focused.

Giving Gardens

Marysville Community Food Bank - Marysville



We have a wonderful partnership with a local nursery, Sunnyside Nursery. The nursery has tied its years of doing business to an award offered to Giving Gardens donors. The nursery has been in business for 64 years. This year donors of garden grown fruits and veggies who donate 64 or more pounds to the Food Bank will receive a \$25 gift certificate for Sunnyside Nursery for 2013.

We have made wonderful connections with local high school horticulture programs as well as other nurseries who donate plant starts to the Food Bank. We offer these starts to customers to kick-start their own gardens.

Other clubs and groups have gotten involved in supporting the Giving Gardens program. The local Kiwanis are now tending a couple of pea patch plots to grow produce for us. We have a men's bible study group that helps maintain six plots that our Volunteer Coordinator (and Giving Gardens lead) manages, and we have Scouts troops and a school group that have gardens raising produce for us. And, we have a local business in town whose employees have tilled up a large section of their property and are raising veggies for the program.

All this benefits our customers in providing them fresh, locally grown food options.

Farmer's Market Gleaning

Broadway Farmers Market & Community Lunch Meal Program - Seattle



In 2010, Jewish Family Service (JFS) and Community Lunch, a Capitol Hill meal program, began a partnership to glean from the Broadway Farmers Market on Sunday evenings. The gleaning effort is part of an overall goal of increasing customer's access to healthy foods including fresh fruits and vegetables. A partnership between JFS and Community Lunch was necessary because gleaning happens on a Sunday afternoon and it is staff and volunteer intensive, sharing the responsibility made gleaning feasible for both organizations. JFS has one staff member, currently an AmeriCorps*VISTA, who is responsible for organizing the volunteers for gleaning and being at JFS Sunday afternoons to receive the produce and ensure it is stored properly. The 2011 gleaning season brought 5,000 lbs of fresh produce into the food bank.

What it Takes: Successfully creating and maintaining a Farmers' Market Gleaning program has multiple steps and details. To maximize the impact of the partnership we have found the following steps helpful:

- 1) Identify a Farmers Market that is not yet partnered with a gleaning organization and make contact with them to gauge their interest in gleaning
- 2) Recruit dependable volunteers well in advance of gleaning days – and then recruit subs in case volunteers need to miss a gleaning day.
- 3) Get your materials ready! This includes everything from Farmer's Market Vendor Recruitment materials to volunteer procedures.
- 4) Plan your logistics. Who will go? What time? How will food get transported back to the food bank?
- 5) Nutrition! Some gleaned foods will likely be unfamiliar to food bank customers. Be prepared to provide recipes and information about what you have gleaned.
- 6) Communicate actively. With vendors, the farmers market organizer, and your volunteers
- 7) Documentation. To report poundage and for vendor and volunteer thank you letters.

Gleaning is more complicated than it may appear at first glance. As part of an AmeriCorps Vista project JFS compiled a gleaning guide to help other organizations successfully glean from Farmers Markets, including samples of forms and documentation. The Glean Guide can be accessed on our website at: http://www.jfsseattle.org/uploads/pdf/JFS_MarketGleaning_Final.pdf

Healthy Food Gift Certificates

White Center Food Bank - Seattle



Access to healthy, fresh foods in neighborhoods that are low-income is a well-documented issue. In meetings with the White Center Community Development Association (CDA) during early 2010, we determined that by working together we could improve access to produce for our clients while also assisting in the economic development of our community by creating the Healthy Food Gift Certificate Program. This program fulfills our mission completely as it a) minimizes hunger by providing greater access to healthy foods; b) nourishes an entire community – in collaborating with local markets and the CDA to put the program together a wide range of our community benefits economically while our clients are being nourished; c) the program nurtures self-reliance as it teaches clients where to find produce that is affordable, close-to-home while emphasizing that produce is an important part of regular nutrition; and d) our rich cultural diversity is embraced – by partnering with local, immigrant owned markets our clients can find produce that is familiar to them which their families want as part of their regular diets. Our clients are the fourth element of the project – prior to launching the Healthy Food Gift Certificate Program we met with client groups to ascertain their needs as to produce, determine their current access and barriers to obtaining produce.

Each WCFB household receives one \$5 Healthy Food Gift Certificate per month. A May 2012 purchase at one of our markets showed that \$5 would purchase 8.5 pounds of produce while \$5 at a mainline store purchased only 2.5 pounds. With each gift certificate redemption client households also receives a one or two pound produce gift from the market and any additional cash purchases are also tracked. Currently, our redemption rate is 76% - clients may use the gift certificates upon receipt or they may save them for larger purchases for holidays or special meals. This percentage equates to 85,000 pounds of produce provided in 2011. The Healthy Food Gift Certificate Program uniquely pairs hunger relief and economic development. Nearly \$60,000 per year is invested in our local business community through gift certificate redemption and additional purchases by food bank clients at our three partner markets. By partnering with the White Center Community Development Association (which handles all administrative costs) the program is financially a sound fit for both agencies. All around, the Healthy Food Gift Certificate Program is a unique partnership that is highly replicable in other communities.

Gleaning Resource Guides by Rotary First Harvest



Rotary First Harvest (RFH) is leading an effort to connect food banks, growers and volunteers around Washington State to fight food insecurity.

In 2011, RFH positioned 10 Americorps*VISTA in hunger relief agencies around Washington to bolster these efforts and either create or support programs that brought local surplus produce into these agencies. Each VISTA then documented their projects, progress, and lessons into a report at the end of their year-long term. These reports are so full of helpful insight, lessons learned, and best practices that we've included them in their entirety in this manual.

The reports can be accessed through an easy-to-use interactive online guide with downloadable sample files at www.rfhresourceguide.org

Gleaning Resource Guide #1: Pierce County Gleaning Project

At Emergency Food Network

By Americorps*VISTA Ellen Mickle

History

Jesuit Volunteer started the Pierce County Gleaning Project (PCGP) in 2010 at St. Leo's Food Connection, (St. Leo's), a large food bank located in downtown Tacoma. In the past, Washington State University (WSU) Extension had run a gleaning program in Pierce County, but that ended in the early 2000s, making the PCGP the first organized gleaning effort in Pierce County in years. In late fall of 2010, the PCGP grew with the placement of an AmeriCorps*VISTA gleaning coordinator at Emergency Food Network (EFN), a food bank distributor in Lakewood, WA. EFN has been part of the local community since 1982, supplying up to 80 percent of the food given out by the 67 food banks in Pierce County, and is working toward the goal of supplying its partner food banks with 60 percent fresh produce. With access to the resources of EFN and St. Leo's, the PCGP has quickly grown to help meet the needs of its county, in which 147,000 individuals visit food banks or hot meal sites every month.

In its first year, the Pierce County Gleaning Project was focused on an urban fruit tree harvest and gleaning the downtown farmers market. The PCGP expanded in its second year to include a larger fruit tree harvest in Tacoma, gleaning from farms as well as farmers markets, and a Plant a Row for the Hungry campaign for county gardeners. As the Jesuit Volunteer gleaning position at St. Leo's is no longer available, the PCGP is currently run by the AmeriCorps*VISTA Gleaning Coordinator and PCGP volunteers. Through its expanded focus and numerous community outreach events, the PCGP is becoming an important part of its community emergency food system.

Volunteer Relations

Volunteer outreach and retention have been the most challenging aspects of the PCGP. However, by employing the strategies discussed below, the PCGP has cultivated a dedicated volunteer base needed to expand its impact.

...► **Volunteer Recruitment**

The coordinator conducted general outreach by hanging posters, posting on volunteer websites, and getting stories in newsletters for like-minded groups. Additionally, the coordinator worked with volunteer centers at local universities and community colleges to post PCGP volunteer listings. The coordinator also tabled regularly at farmers markets

and made announcements at meetings for local organizations focused on community service and agriculture, such as Rotary clubs, neighborhood councils, local food policy councils, and fruit growers' associations. Also, the coordinator worked with the Jesuit Volunteer in Spring of 2011 to host numerous community engagement events, including starting a monthly gleaning discussion group at a local independent book store, hosting fruit tree care demonstrations, a food justice panel discussion at a local university, a cooking demo at the St. Leo's Food Connection, and even a film showing in partnership with the local food co-op.

→ **Volunteer Intake and Training (see photo here)**

As a result of these efforts, over 170 individuals have signed up to volunteer, and over 70 individuals have volunteered at least once. Volunteer intake consists of filling out an application online or on paper if in-person. Two fruit tree harvest training sessions were offered at public libraries in July 2011 to cover safety and technique (see training fact sheet here). Topics covered: how orchard ladders are designed for being on the grass and must not be used on hard surfaces, such as driveways, and how to pick an apple without damaging the fruiting spur. Volunteers who started later were trained onsite. Farm gleaning volunteers were trained at a local farm, which grows for food banks, before going to a farm to glean. Harvest training for the crop at hand occurred on-site at the farms being gleaned.

→ **Volunteer Retention**

To encourage volunteer retention, the coordinator regularly thanked volunteers by first name in Facebook posts, sent a mid-season thank you email, and hosted an end of season volunteer appreciation gathering.

→ **Volunteer Relations – Lessons Learned**

The coordinator found that making individual connections with folks who champion the PCGP was essential to building a core of repeat volunteers, and even resulted in building a relationship with a group of volunteers from a local rescue mission. The PCGP's decision to have a "low barrier of entry" for volunteers, including a one page application and subsequent RSVP-as-available model, guaranteed flexibility for volunteers, but also meant there were many one-time volunteers. The coordinator also learned it's not only important to ensure comfort of the volunteers by providing snacks, beverages, and access to bathrooms, but that every new volunteer benefits from a field orientation. Such an orientation included a brief rundown of the program's history, what impact they make volunteering for the PCGP, and a tour of the property if it is a farm, orchard, or garden. This tour was not appropriate or necessary for backyard fruit tree harvests.

Donor Relations

For the PCGP, donors include residential fruit tree owners, farmers, and gardeners for the Plant a Row for the Hungry campaign, each with somewhat different protocol for outreach and retention.

→ **Fruit Tree Donor Relations**

"Registering" fruit tree owners has been interesting because most fruit tree owners the gleaning coordinator connected with were equipped to harvest their own fruit and uninterested in gleaning. To work around this, the PCGP produced postcard-style flyers designed for folks to share with their neighbors who have fruit trees that could benefit from gleaning. In conjunction with other outreach efforts, this has resulted in about a 100 percent increase in the number of fruit tree registrations. Tree owners can register online, on paper or just by calling their tree into the designated call-in number at the St. Leo's office to set up a harvest.

Registered fruit tree owners are tracked in a spreadsheet. To retain fruit tree donors, the PCGP coordinator made reminder emails or calls twice a year; once before the harvest season and once mid-way through to those who hadn't been harvested yet. To show appreciation, the coordinator thanked fruit tree owners in person or left a thank you note with the total pounds picked and where it was delivered.

→ **Farm Donor Relations**

The greatest challenge when approaching farm donors is assuring the farmer they will not be held liable if an accident occurs, or if there is an illness from consuming the gleaned produce. Our assurance is that liability for accidents is not an issue because all volunteers sign a liability waiver. No donor can be held accountable for illnesses that result from consuming donated goods, as specified in the Good Samaritan Law (see overview from Skagit County's Harvest for Hope here).

→ It's recommended to start with a few farm donors in the first year to build trust with the farmers. The best method to find farmers is through a personal connection or introduction. The PCGP was fortunate to have that connection and introduction through two individuals; the farmer at the EFN's Mother Earth food bank farm, and a WSU extension agent. The Mother Earth farmer helped PCGP connect with smaller scale, organic growers by inviting the coordinator

to speak at a spring meeting for Pierce Tilth, an organization of organic and sustainable farmers. WSU extension agents essentially work with their local farmers to apply agricultural knowledge gained from research at the University but also help community members connect with local farmers. The WSU agent informed the coordinator of certain larger scale farmers who may be interested in gleaning. The agent had the preliminary conversation with those farmers before inviting the coordinator to call them and follow up. As a result, the PCGP has built relationships with three local small-scale organic farmers and one large-scale commercial green bean farmer.

When building relationships with farm donors, it is helpful to remember that there are different ways to glean farms. The PCGP gleans farms in three different ways:

1. **Field Gleaning** – small scale farms, including Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) and other farms equipped for outsiders coming onto the farm.
2. **Cull Gleaning** – small to large scale farms, a great way to get leftover market produce from a smaller farm's cooler, and to engage the larger-scale farmer by dropping off boxes for them to fill with non-market grade produce during the harvest.
3. **Farmers Market Gleaning** – great way to capture any excess produce, milk or bread from vendors at farmers markets featuring produce (and not predominantly crafts or prepared foods).

To retain farm donors, it is important to be consistent, bring trained volunteers, and take as little time out of the farmers' day as possible. The PCGP coordinator called the farmers once a week in the height of season to stay on their radar, and showed appreciation with verbal thanks, a donation receipt upon pickup, and an end of season thank you card including how many pounds they donated that year.

→ **Plant-a-Row Gardener Donor Relations**

To connect gardeners with their nearest food banks, the PCGP promoted a Plant a Row for the Hungry campaign – which consisted of giving out free seeds, plant starts, and information on where to donate, based on a survey of the 67 county food banks. The gleaning coordinator wrote letters to local seed producers for donations and distributed over 500 seed packets at all the Pierce County Library branches in the spring of 2011. Donated seeds that needed an early start were grown into 12,000 plants in greenhouses at local schools, farms, and a biosolids treatment plant – which cleans the city's sewage waste and produces a home gardening fertilizer from the solid waste. The plant starts were initially distributed at the Community Gardening Summit in spring of 2011. To get a snapshot of the overall impact gardeners make on alleviating hunger, the gleaning coordinator began working with key food banks to track garden donations on a monthly basis.

The most important part of developing relations with gardeners as donors, is providing a list of where you can donate small amounts of produce. Many gardeners simply don't know that they can walk into a food bank with their produce for donation, so surveying your area food banks to find which food banks are interested is highly recommended.

Visibility

To get the word out about its broad, new project the PCGP used various “out of the box” approaches to reach a wide audience.

→ **Community Engagement Events (see photo here)**

Book club, pruning demo, cooking demo, panel discussion, film showing – you name it, there's a good chance we did it in spring of 2011. In addition to getting the word out to potential volunteers and donors, the greatest benefit from these events was connecting with community partners. Community members were recruited to provide the backbone of every event, by sharing their skills of pruning, cooking, and discussing their experiences with issues related to food waste and hunger. As a newcomer in a temporary position, the PCGP coordinator found it important to utilize the community's “capital” in terms of connections and expertise to build a strong foundation for a community-based project.

Finding those community partners takes a little research. For instance, when seeking individuals to lead fruit tree pruning demos, the PCGP coordinator first contacted the Master Gardener Program coordinator for Pierce County, who was able to contact individuals she knew who might be interested in leading the demos. As a result of these efforts, the PCGP has a strong network of community partners to continue these outreach efforts for the PCGP into the future.

→ **Local Media**

Issuing a press release to the local media outlets is often not enough to get into local papers. It helps to have a professional connection at the paper and a particular event on which to focus. In 2011, the local newspaper covered an orchard glean by the PCGP, partly due to promotion by the marketing director at the non-profit who oversees the orchard (see article here). Furthermore, there is the option of sending a letter to the editor in response to an article

about your organization, or a related issue they ran a story on (see letter response to afore-mentioned article here). TV spots at local stations are another way to get the word out. The PCGP coordinator had a segment with a local county-funded station (view here). Nurturing an organizational connection, like the one EFN has with Pierce County TV helped make this story happen.

To get into like-minded groups' newsletters, often the coordinator need only email the editor of the newsletter with a press release and brief description of why gleaning is relevant to that organization. This was the case with our articles in the Pierce County Conservation District and the Pierce County Solid Waste newsletter (view PCCD newsletter here). Many newsletters go out to hundreds of homes with folks who are interested in the very issues you work on, and are a fantastic way to publicize your work.

Farmers Market Gleaning

In its first year, the PCGP gleaning coordinator tabled and gleaned a weekly farmers market in downtown Tacoma. It was a great way to outreach to local farmers and resulted in 7,300 lbs of gleaned produce, milk and bread for St. Leo's. In its second year, with its expanded focus, the PCGP found it necessary to connect each market with a food bank or hot meal site and encourage the organization to perform the weekly pickup. The downtown farmers market continued to be gleaned by a St. Leo's volunteer, while the two other markets were gleaned by volunteers from nearby food bank and a soup kitchen. There are three general steps to gleaning farmers markets.

1. **Drop off crates:** Before the market starts, and about 15 minutes before the area is closed off to vehicles, a food bank volunteer brings about a dozen milk crates and distributes them to the vendors with produce who might donate. Bread vendors tend to use their own sacks for bagging donations.
2. **Pick up crates:** (see photo here) At the end of the market, once the area is open to vehicles again, the volunteer can drive the van down the street, collecting crates from the vendors. When collecting crates, the volunteer asks the vendor if they're all done filling the crate, because many donations aren't determined until after the market closes. The volunteer thanks the vendors, and makes sure to collect as many crates as were distributed. Having a dolly to cart the crates from the vendors to the van helps.
3. **Wrapping Up:** Donations are tracked by volunteers for all markets in Google spreadsheet document created by the PCGP.

Suggestion: try to have one consistent volunteer from each site perform the farmers market gleaning, but provide the food bank with a document outlining the process, in case a different volunteer has to help. Also, designate one "emergency contact" (in this case, the PCGP gleaning coordinator) for the farmers market staff to call in the event that a crate is left behind or the food bank is unable to glean that day. Finally, plastic crates are better than cardboard in terms of sturdiness and telling them apart from the vendors' boxes!

Backyard Fruit Tree Gleaning

Drawing inspiration from Seattle gleaning groups such as Lettuce Link's Community Fruit Tree Harvest and City Fruit, the PCGP coordinator organized a fruit harvest in five neighborhoods in Tacoma, based on neighborhood council boundaries. While the second year of harvesting fruit trees has reaped more than eight times its first year harvest total, it has not been without challenges. The PCGP gleaning coordinator has learned a lot about organizing a fruit harvest, following the 4 general steps outlined in Solid Ground's fruit harvest handbook Gather It!: Planning, Laying the Groundwork, Harvesting, and Wrapping Up.

Planning

- Determine the scope of the fruit tree harvest. PCGP focused on fruit tree harvests in Tacoma, but did arrange harvests in Puyallup (a nearby city) and elsewhere when time permitted.
- With respect to goals, the PCGP decided to focus on community engagement more than harvesting sheer pounds of fruit.
- Types of fruit harvested included apples, pears, plums and cherries. Cherries and other highly perishable, hard-to-get fruits are not highly recommended. Many food banks are happy to get wormy or scabby "cooking apples," but ask food banks ahead of time and try to sort them from good apples. Apples that fall on the ground cannot be donated (due to the risk of salmonella contamination from animal droppings), but are great for volunteers to take home!

Laying the Groundwork

- ...> Community fruit tree harvests essentially connect trees with people, so a large part of organizing the harvest is recruiting volunteers and fruit tree owners.
- ...> When volunteers sign up in person or online they indicate their interests (farm vs. fruit), whether or not they'd like to be a neighborhood coordinator, and which neighborhoods they are interested in gleaning. That way they'll receive updates only regarding harvests they may be able to assist.
- ...> Prospective coordinators were casually interviewed by phone before harvest season and met with the PCGP coordinator and the Jesuit Volunteer to learn how the harvest works and receive tools (handbook, 1-2 picking bags and 1 fruit picker).
- ...> Other volunteers were encouraged to attend one of two harvest training sessions at public libraries in July, to learn about the project structure, harvesting techniques, and safety.
- ...> Fruit tree registration in person or online is helpful for planning, but to make a harvest happen, the fruit tree owners call in to the St. Leo's office when the fruit's ripe. From there, the St. Leo's office staff shared information about the fruit tree owners with the gleaning coordinator, who passed the information along to the neighborhood coordinator to set up a harvest.

Harvesting

- ...> Collect call-in information from your intake center. The PCGP chose St. Leo's as the call-in center because there is someone answering phones at the St. Leo's office during regular business hours, while the coordinator is away from her desk too often during harvest season to connect with donor calls.
- ...> Call the fruit tree owner back to determine a time to check the quality of the tree ahead of harvest, if time permits, and to schedule a harvest.
- ...> Email the neighborhood volunteers with the prospective harvest time.
- ...> Once enough volunteers have responded, the harvest is set and the coordinator or neighborhood coordinator drives the tools to the site, oversees the harvest, and donates to the nearest food bank, based on the list of Where to Donate. Helpful tools to bring include:
 - ◆ Orchard ladder – if you buy one, buy a 10 ft. ladder. A tall ladder usually works better even on short trees.
 - ◆ Fruit pickers
 - ◆ Picking bags or backpacks
 - ◆ Boxes – milk crates work well.
 - ◆ Box labels – It helps to make labels that say “Good,” “Cooking,” and “Ground” to binder-clip on your crates as you harvest to keep these types separate.
 - ◆ First aid kit
 - ◆ Water bottles
 - ◆ Eye protection

Wrapping Up:

- ...> Thank the donor by leaving thank you notes for the tree owners
- ...> Record harvest totals and volunteer hours in a shared Google doc. Google docs is a great tool for collaboratively tracking harvest data, but is new to a lot of folks – it is recommended to provide a step-by-step on how to use any Google-based spreadsheet you create. See our tutorial [here](#).
- ...> Throw an end-of-season party to thank all involved!

Plant Start Distribution

The PCGP gleaning coordinator worked with the Pierce County community garden coordinator to distribute plant starts in support of the Plant a Row for the Hungry (PAR) campaign.

Seed Donations

- ...> Towards the end of the growing season (October in Pacific NW), start visiting local stores and writing letters to seed companies asking for donations of last year's seed. It helps to include your Employer Identification Number (EIN) in your letter to prove your organization's non-profit status and to allow the donor to deduct donations from their taxes.
- ...> Repack the seeds into smaller packets with your program's info on it.

Seed Distribution

- Determine your target growers, and then find a natural partner to help you distribute seeds to reach those individuals. The PCGP targeted practiced gardeners, which are a diverse group of people.
- Because the EFN executive director has a connection with the leadership of the county library system, and because it covers the whole county geographically, the PCGP opted to distribute its repackaged seeds at the 17 branches of the county library system in the spring. To do this, the gleaning coordinator brought 17 beautified coffee cans full of seed packets and PCGP brochures for distribution.

Grow Starts (see photo here)

- For seeds that need to be started early in the spring and transplanted, such as broccoli, onions, and tomatoes, the PCGP coordinator sought partners with greenhouses to start those seeds so they could be distributed at springtime events.
- Partners included two high schools, three farms, and Tacoma's biosolids treatment plant. The PCGP gleaning coordinator and Jesuit Volunteer organized volunteers to seed the plants in mid-late February at the high schools and the biosolids plant, while the farms graciously planted extra trays of the plants they normally grow.
- Seeding entails filling seed starting trays with moist planting soil mix, putting 1+ seeds on each cell of the seed starting tray, lightly watering the seeds in, and leaving the tray in a greenhouse to germinate. Volunteers at each site were responsible for watering and caring for the plants until maturity in late April.

Distribute Starts

- To maximize publicity, find a big event to distribute the bulk of your plants at. Most PCGP starts went out at the Community Garden Summit organized by the community garden coordinator in late April. At the end of the half-day Summit, attended by the mayor and consisting of gardening workshops, gardeners were invited to take plants and encouraged to grow them for their nearest food bank.
- To promote this idea, the PCGP coordinator and Jesuit Volunteer handed out lists of Where to Donate to gardeners on their way out. While nearly 150 gardeners took plants home, there were several trays of veggie starts left at the end of the day.

Wrapping Up

- Distribute remaining plants. Leftover plants were kept at one of the high schools until they could be planted in community garden food bank plots on a volunteer day scheduled during national AmeriCorps week. The few remaining trays were distributed to customers at St. Leo's.
- Recordkeeping for such a decentralized project is difficult. Depending on the community, tracking can be done by the gardener or the food bank, and the records can be kept in the form of donation receipts or in a log. Second Harvest in Spokane has great success tracking every single garden donation with its receipts, and Lettuce Link in Seattle works with the organized "P-Patch" gardeners, who track the donations in a log at each garden. The PCGP has started tracking monthly garden donations in logs at two food bank organizations, who cover a wide geographic area of the county and distribute 33% of the food given out by Pierce County's 67 food banks.

Gleaning Resource Guide #2: Seattle Community Farm

At Lettuce Link

By Americorps*VISTA Mariah Pepper

History

The Seattle Community Farm launched in 2011. The farm is run by Lettuce Link, a program of Solid Ground, which has been running an urban farm in the South Park neighborhood of Seattle since 1998. In 2009, Lettuce Link received money through the USDA's Community Food Project (CFP) grant to start a new urban farm. After a lengthy search for space, a partnership was started between Lettuce Link and the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA). SHA manages low-income and mixed-income housing developments throughout Seattle. A piece of land in the Rainier Vista re-development that was unused for years is now the Seattle Community Farm. Rainier Vista is in the Rainier Valley neighborhood in Southeast Seattle. The Farm got started with money from

the CFP grant, a Parks and Green Spaces Levy from the City of Seattle, and many other donations. Numerous groups have donated funds, materials, and labor to help establish the farm's infrastructure. Rainier Vista is a mixed-income housing development, and includes families speaking 56 different languages, so the farm is particularly focused on community involvement and how to equitably offer programs and services.



Overview

The Seattle Community Farm (SCF) has many goals in the community: getting fresh produce to those who struggle to afford it, educating children and adults about growing and cooking their own food, and connecting people across cultural and linguistic barriers to garden together. The farm is maintained by volunteers and a few Lettuce Link staff members. Some of these volunteers are low-income residents who have signed up for a Work Trade, a program which allows them to volunteer in exchange for vegetables. This program is highly informal, and anyone who has trouble affording produce can participate. The farm's remaining produce goes to the Rainier Valley Food Bank.

Besides recruiting volunteers, we engage people and groups in the community through various activities and events at the farm. We host field trips for schools and local youth groups throughout the growing season, and during the summer we run an educational gardening program in partnership with the Rainier Valley Boys and Girls Club. We also host groups from local organizations during work parties, such as the day treatment program for mentally ill adults from Asian Counseling and Referral Service.

We also get involved with other events and groups in the community, such as potlucks, cooking classes, and parties at the farm during the summer. Residents of the neighborhood enjoy walking through the farm and looking at all the beautiful plants. The neighborhood is incredibly diverse, our goal is to offer many kinds of activities so everyone can feel comfortable participating.

Outreach

One of the goals of the Seattle Community Farm is to engage the community in growing and sharing food. Therefore, we only do outreach in the immediate neighborhood around the farm, rather than engaging with large groups from anywhere in the city. The immediate neighborhood currently consists of about twelve blocks of residences, with roughly 180 families, and the surrounding area is significantly larger. Because that neighborhood is so diverse, we have tried to do outreach in many ways so as to reach as many people as possible.

Translation and Interpretation

In a neighborhood where there are immigrants and refugees who speak 56 different languages, it's important to reach people in their own languages. Following are a few of the lessons we've learned this year and recommended tips for using translation and interpretation services to do outreach:

- "Translation" refers to written materials, and "interpretation" refers to spoken interactions.
- Figure out which languages are most widely spoken, and offer services in those languages.
- Note that many people who speak regional dialects or less-widely spoken languages also speak a more common language.
- For example, many Ethiopian people speak Tigrinya in the home, but also understand Amharic, which is used for official business in Ethiopia.
- Translations of text or flyers are useful, although some immigrants may lack high levels of literacy in their native language.
- Translated materials are also good to give to interpreters so they have a reference in both languages.
- When making flyers in multiple languages, think critically about the size and placement of the translations.

- Putting the translations in smaller type makes sense logistically, but make sure the text is readable and eye-catching.
- Interpreters, especially those who live in the community, are great resources for reaching people in that cultural group. They are also good people to ask about what is polite in their culture.
- Interpreters already exist in both cultures in some ways, so they are often very good at explaining cultural norms that may be incomprehensible to you.
- Always allot more time for events when using interpreters. The same activity takes roughly 40% longer when going through interpretation.
- If people will be asking questions through interpreters, allot enough time to interpret both the questions and answers to other language groups (who didn't ask the question).

Community Infrastructure

Every community has certain groups, organizations, or faith communities that attract a lot of people and hold public influence. Connecting with these groups to build and maintain good relationships is critical. In our context, we make sure to establish relationships with groups that serve all the major cultural groups in the neighborhood (i.e. East African immigrants and refugees, SE Asian immigrants and refugees, low income renters, and middle class and wealthy homeowners).

Following are some good strategies and things to keep in mind when connecting with existing community groups.

- Someone probably has a list of all the groups of a particular type. For example, a non-profit or social service agency likely keeps a list of additional services offered in the community.
- Make sure not to assume that this list is comprehensive until you've done some investigating yourself. You never know when one group may have a grudge against another and won't give out their information.
- Visiting groups is a great way to network. You may not get any volunteers directly from these visits, but they help with visibility of the project, and relationship building.
- Visiting groups may mean participating in the activity they do, or giving a presentation on the project.
- Get to know well-respected community members. This is good "cultural capitol" as they will know who else you should connect with.
- "Cultural capitol" refers to the kind of status you hold in a community, and it's a good thing to think about when doing outreach. If you are well respected, and well connected, in the community, people will be more likely to participate in the programs you offer.
- Elders often have high status in groups organized around cultural affinity. They may be your initial contact to establish relationships within a cultural group.
- Be prepared for groups organized around a culture or religion different from your own to do things differently than you might expect. Engaging in their customs is a great way to show people you're trying to connect with them as people - a good way to start a relationship.
- This doesn't mean you have to adopt their culture, but figuring out which pieces are important to respect and uphold is useful.
- For example, most Somali immigrants are Muslims, and many of them place a high value women's modesty. As a non-Muslim woman, I am not expected to follow the same standards, but I try not to wear clothing (for example, tank tops) that is far outside their cultural norm.
- Make it a point to attend events in the community, even if opportunities to present the project or distribute flyers are limited. Talking to people in a more social context is often a better way to recruit volunteers and supporters.

Volunteer Appreciation

Everyone likes to be appreciated for the work they're doing. Thanking volunteers also allows you to make a pitch for their continued involvement with the project. We sent thank you cards to our volunteers at the end of the summer with a reminder that the growing season continues through the fall. Thank-you cards are a good way to acknowledge volunteers individually and to show your appreciation for their hard work. Find something personal to say to each of them.

We also hold a Harvest Celebration and other volunteer potlucks. It's nice to get people together just to socialize, not work. Being a farm, cooking and eating together are natural ways of doing that.

Donor Relations

Because we are a community farm and not a traditional gleaning project, we don't work with donors in the same close way as other gleaning projects. However, we do have several donors of money, skills, and materials with whom it's important for us to keep up good relations. Following are some ways to solicit donations and maintain good relationships with your donors.

- Donors such as garden supply stores or seed companies are obvious, but others require more creativity to figure out how they fit in. For example, a design-build firm that focuses on architecture projects helped us create tables for a community space where we can hold potlucks at the farm.
- Personal relationships really are the best way to get business done. Talking with potential donors about more than just your task can leave a good impression and make them more likely to donate.
- Make sure to place a dollar value on any in-kind donations you get (this is important for reporting purposes). This goes for labor as well as goods.
- Invite current, past, and future donors to come experience the project first-hand. We invite people to work on the farm as well as attend other events such as potlucks.
- Sometimes corporate groups want to hold a volunteer day doing hands-on work. While they're at your site, ask for monetary donations. Your ask will have more impact once they know first-hand what you do.

Visibility

Especially for new projects, getting your name and what you do out to the public is vital. Outreach and soliciting donations will be much easier if people have already heard of you. Here are some ways that we have found work well to inform the community about what we do:

- Create a flyer template with a logo or design that stays consistent. People will begin to recognize the lay-out of the flyer before they even read the words.
- When attending community events, take every opportunity to introduce yourself and your project.
- If people don't know who you are, prepare a 30-second explanation that you can use in any context.
- Find out what websites potential volunteers, donors and/or supporters use frequently, and find a way to post your information on them.
- In Seattle, each neighborhood has a blog where people can post events. We use this to make sure people know what's going on at the Farm.
- Do be careful not to rely too heavily on social media and other digital media, as not everyone has ready access to a computer and/or feels comfortable getting their information that way.
- Get your events and information about your project into the local newspaper. Either write an article or opinion piece for them, or invite a reporter to attend your event.
- There are newspapers and newsletters of various sizes, and they all may be useful.
- For example, the Seattle Community Farm wrote articles for the newsletter that goes out just to the neighborhood residents, and we also invited reporters from Seattle TV news stations to our Grand Opening.
- Highlight your partnerships, and ask your partners to do the same. Put their name and logo on your website, flyers, or other printed materials. If people know and respect an organization you're partnering with, they are more likely to pay attention to what you're doing as well.

Food Bank Gardening

Growing vegetables for a food bank is different than growing vegetables for anyone else, especially in regards to variety and quantity. Here is how we think about growing for the food bank:

- Figure out what kind of vegetables the food bank customers want.
- You can do a survey, a community meeting, or just ask the food bank staff what customers tend to select first.
- Be sensitive to the cultures of the people that frequent the food bank. As much as possible, grow things that the

majority of customers recognize and know how to cook.

- Quantity does matter to a food bank. Donating small amounts of several different vegetables is less useful than 20 pounds of one type.
- Variety is important, though, so try to grow vegetables food banks can't get through other sources of food.
- Time your harvests with the food bank's distribution schedule. Keep in mind that they'll need time to weigh, bag and set up the produce before distribution.
- Make sure you have a mode of transportation – don't leave it up to chance whether a volunteer with a car shows up that day.
- You should be responsible for recording the pounds you donate. The food bank is likely too busy to have that kind of capacity for record-keeping.
- We send the food bank a poundage report at the end of every month listing how much we donated. This saves them the work of weighing the produce, but they can still use the numbers for reporting.

Education

This season we hosted a garden class at the farm, with an instructor from another organization. That class was for adults, and we also run an education program for kids. That program has two components; the summer program, run in partnership with the local Boys and Girls Club, and field trips. During our first year, we hosted one class from the Boys and Girls Club for an hour and a half-long session every week throughout the 8-week summer program. Field trips to the farm typically last an hour or two (depending on age), where they participate in garden and nutrition-related activities. While the program's components differ in scale, they are based on the same theories and visions, so the following thoughts apply to both.

- Consider the group's cultural and language backgrounds.
- If you're cooking food, cook a dish that most people will recognize and be excited to eat.
- There are lots of great children's books that feature food from various cultures. Find one that the kids can relate to in your group.
- If there are multiple cultures represented, look for a children's book in which the characters learn about each other's food, such as *The Ugly Vegetables* or *The Sandwich Swap*.
- If there are non-English speaking kids in the group, be sure to accommodate their communication needs.
- If they're coming from a school or other program, they likely have teachers or leaders who can interpret for them.
- Many garden tasks, such as harvesting, can be done with gestures and only a few words. With a non-English speaking group, focus on physical activities that will work for everyone.
- Plan activities in which kids get to share about their family's cooking traditions. If you can, incorporate the vegetables they talk about into a subsequent lesson.
- Base the curriculum on the goals of the program.
- For field trips, ask the leader ahead of time if the group has specific topics or educational goals you might address.
- For a longer program, decide on a focus and incorporate something related to that focus in each lesson.
- For example, your goal might be to give children an understanding of what plants need to grow. Each lesson can focus on one thing, such as water or soil, which is necessary for plant life.
- Tailor the garden work to the age of the kids. Be sure to consider what kind of previous garden experience the group has had.
- Note that around middle school age, some kids are able to do delicate tasks such as thinning, while others don't have that focus and are more suited to larger tasks, such as raking or digging.
- You can ask the group's leaders to split the kids up according to what kind of task they will succeed at.
- Kids often don't quite understand where their limbs end and the rest of the world begins. Make sure to emphasize rules regarding where to walk and what they can touch before doing anything in the garden.
- Kids are a great way to reach their entire family. Inviting youth groups to the farm can be an effective outreach tool.

Partnerships

Because the Seattle Community Farm is so focused on community engagement, we look at partnerships with neighborhood organizations and groups as essential to our work. We have found three types of partnerships that are worth exploring:

Similar Goals and Programming

- If there are organizations doing something similar, why bother competing? Collaboration can allow you to support one another, exchange ideas, and possibly co-sponsor events or classes.
- This reduces the chances of volunteer recruitment becoming a competition. You may even find it useful to recruit volunteers together.
- Our example: The Seattle Community Farm works with a loose coalition of food and anti-hunger organizations in the area. Sometimes we co-sponsor events or gather to brainstorm ideas.
- One example is the garden classes for adults we sponsored during the summer of 2011. Another organization provided an instructor for the classes, while we did the outreach and provided the venue. We split the costs of translation and interpretation between our two organizations.
- If you're grant funded, make sure all the grant requirements are still being met and that other organizations are not taking over your responsibilities.

Physical Proximity

- Organizations that are in close physical proximity make natural partners because you probably already interact frequently.
- Your physical proximity may also mean you're serving the same customers or recruiting from the same group of volunteers, and a partnership can enhance everyone's experience with both organizations.
- Our example: The Seattle Community Farm has formed an unofficial partnership with Habitat for Humanity because they're building a house next to the farm. We might not otherwise have had access to them, but it has been incredibly helpful.
- Habitat's AmeriCorps team built a tool shed for us as part of their annual service project.
- Some projects on the farm, such as building our fence, could count for Habitat residents' sweat equity time.

Serving or Working with the Same People

- Organizations that provide services or opportunities for the same group of people, even if those services are very different from what you offer, can make good partners.
- If the organizations have a relationship it will be easier for people who are served by both of them.
- Our example: The Seattle Community Farm works with Neighborhood House, which provides case management, runs a Head Start pre-school in the neighborhood, and provides space for local cultural organizations and youth groups to promote each other's programs and do outreach together.

Gleaning Resource Guide #3: Plant A Row for the Hungry

At Second Harvest Tri-Cities

By Americorps*VISTA Nathan Finch

Plant a Row for the Hungry (PAR) was launched in 1995 as a public service program of the Garden Writers Association. Garden writers encouraged their readers/listeners to plant an extra row of produce each year and donate their surplus to local food banks, soup kitchens and service organizations to help feed America's hungry. In 2002, the Garden Writers Association Foundation was established as an independent nonprofit to administer and expand Plant a Row. PAR provides focus, direction and support to volunteer committees that promote herb, vegetable and community gardening at the local level as well as coordinating with the local food collection systems and tracking the volume of donations being donated to food pantries.

The Plant a Row program was introduced in the Tri-Cities in 2010 as part of the Harvest Against Hunger produce recovery effort. The program has been embraced by the community in many ways. Some of which have broadened the reach from its original conception. Now, not only are individuals planting extra vegetables in their backyard gardens, but schools, churches, neighborhoods and city parks are also getting involved. Using plants and seeds donated from within the community, these gardeners are able to grow extra vegetables to donate to the food bank nearest them, or to Second Harvest, making use of their distribution system. In the first year, this simple grassroots solution saw donations of fresh fruits and vegetables exceeding 25,000 pounds. With further program development and education, the PAR program could double the pounds donated and expand the growing/donation season becoming a year-round source for fresh produce.

Volunteer/Donor Relations



Unlike typical gleaning programs, PAR participants fill both gleaner and donor roles. As with gleaning from commercial operations, PAR has its own liability considerations, though much simplified. The same laws that protect commercial donors apply to individual donors. The Federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act protects all food donors and gleaners from criminal and civil liability.

With the liability issue covered, the focus turns to program development and donor recruitment. For this, marketing materials are needed for recruitment and a tracking system to measure the program's impact. Spreading the word is obviously important, but of equal importance may be tracking donations. These numbers will be useful for reporting or when applying for grant funding

to expand or maintain your local or regional program. Examples of marketing and tracking materials may be found in the appendices.

PAR participants will be community members actively gardening or those interested in getting into the hobby. In either case, the most effective way of reaching such individuals is to develop outreach materials, like brochures and posters and strategically place them where you know gardeners will congregate, like nurseries, garden centers and garden clubs. This will be your primary direct recruitment method.

It is important that the message you take to the public be as simple and clear as possible. The idea is simple, "Grow food for your neighbors in need", but the logistical framework must be communicated to ensure quality donations and continued participation.

- ...> When, where and by whom will donations be received and recorded?
- ...> How much fresh produce can be held and for how long?

The fewer restrictions you place on participation, the more successful your program will be. For those who request further guidance, such as, "What should I plant?" have materials prepared based on the local food bank's needs.

Visibility

Once you have a clear mission to use when recruiting gardeners here are a few ideas for getting the word out.

Garden centers: Establishing a relationship with local garden centers provides an excellent platform for promoting Plant a Row where gardeners are purchasing goods in preparation for and maintenance of their gardens. Some ways garden centers have promoted the program have been displaying posters and brochures near seeds and vegetable starts and checkouts, and in some instances even stapling PAR information to customer's receipts. Other local businesses have donated vegetable starts as a way of bringing in more business and increasing PAR visibility in the community.

Media: PAR was started by the Garden Writer's Association, making contact with this group is a logical place to start. Contact the Garden Writer in your area by looking for their column in your local newspaper or online. Taking your message to local radio and

television stations can also be a great way to reach a broad audience. Typically, radio, TV and print media will have a single email address for receiving community news stories. Always alert the media when something positive is taking place in your program's development. This can be meetings to discuss community involvement, a group starting a garden, a business donating plants or materials, kids getting involved, or any other concept your community may embrace. Media outlets love positive stories and will be happy to provide coverage if you alert them.

Community Clubs: Gardening clubs and groups such as Master Gardeners through your county extension office will be your best source for reaching potential PAR donors. Other community clubs such as Rotary and Kiwanis can be very helpful in donating resources and expanding your network. Again, it is simply a matter of being prepared with a clear mission and concise ways individuals can get involved. Everyone loves a good idea, but the more direction and tools you can provide, the more likely people will follow through on that idea.

Religious Groups: Another excellent pool of individuals sympathetic to your mission, who may be your best allies, in not only spreading the PAR idea, but also following through with a garden or produce recovery effort.

Education



An often overlooked piece of the hunger relief puzzle is educating individuals and families about the importance of making healthy dietary choices. The food bank, while not solely focused on nutrition education, should consider the opportunity to take compassion a step further. One way is to provide access to diverse foods of high nutritional value and the means to prepare them in an appetizing way. If anyone is overworked and underappreciated it is a food bank manager, and the prospect of adding an element beyond the business of food-in/food-out can be overwhelming. Fortunately, there are resources within the community and online that can be utilized by bank management with little effort on their part.

As with much of the advice in this guide, local pantries can improve their impact in the community by clearly defining a present need and connecting with the people that have the means, motive and opportunity to meet that need. This problem can be solved much the same as the problem of finding food which pantries are very familiar with. In addressing the nutrition education deficit that breaks down to:

Means: Who in your community is a nutrition or public health expert? Who has the information your customers need access to?

Motive: Is there someone in the community motivated to bring this knowledge to the customers? This motivation may come from their job requirements, in the case of county health officials, or the moral imperative of a local physician or other health practitioners.

Opportunity: Do they know the problem exists and that the bank is open to their assistance in nutrition education?

How to prepare fresh produce and the health benefits of doing so is an important part of our overall goal to end hunger in America. See the documents section for a list of online resources for finding further assistance in nutrition education programs for your customers

Building Strategic Partnerships

Incentives matter. With any community based program, you will only be as successful as the willingness of those around you to participate. This willingness is proportional to their belief that their involvement is important and effective. To succeed in retaining well-meaning volunteers or donors you must be able to demonstrate the necessity of their participation by connecting them with a problem that has a mutually beneficial solution.

In the development of a PAR program those solutions may look like this:

Community Garden: The local parks department has an incentive to decrease maintenance costs (mowing) in neighborhood parks and increase park usage. The PAR program incentive is to decrease hunger in the community by increasing access to garden produce. The mutually beneficial solution is to work with the Parks Department and interested gardeners to create a community garden in the park maintained by volunteers with a portion (1-100 percent) of the produce donated to local food pantries.

School Garden: The school district Nutrition Services Director has an incentive to increase the nutritional quality of meals provided which will largely be achieved through increased fresh fruit and vegetable consumption. This goal has been proven to be more easily achieved when students have a better connection to where food comes from and how it is grown. Again, a school garden can mesh with PAR incentives when the garden is donating a portion of their harvest to the local food bank. The positive externalities of a solution of this kind can be amazing.

Nutrition Education: Partnering with the Benton/Franklin Health Alliance in the Tri-Cities led to a partnership between local food pantries and nursing students in need of clinical hours. This partnership exposes future health professionals to the difficulty of meeting nutritional needs with limited food access while fulfilling requirements of the Community Health class. This arrangement requires little from the food bank's volunteers or management, other than coordinating when the students may interact with customers and providing insight as the students develop ways to provide effective nutrition education.

These programs in turn provide excellent publicity opportunities for PAR promotion. Whatever solutions you may find in your community, you cannot forget who your efforts are meant to be benefitting and not lose focus on what they truly need. This may require surveys or other methods of gathering this information. Maybe they would like to grow their own food and could use help obtaining materials or the knowledge to do it successfully. Perhaps the customer has access to sufficient fresh produce during the summer months but not through the winter. What if they can't get their kids to eat the vegetables? When you are able to address a clearly defined problem it becomes much easier to find solutions by building strategic partnerships which are mutually beneficial and sustainable.

Plant Start Distribution

When asking the community to grow extra produce to feed their neighbors the barriers to entry for the individual gardener will be the cost of plant starts and seed, space and inputs, time and motivation. The space and inputs barrier can be lowered through the creation of a community garden where the cost of land and inputs can be spread across all participants. Time and motivation can become huge barriers in the height of the summer, but can be overcome by connecting your volunteer/donor with the recipients of their hard work and other ways of acknowledging their hard work. As for plant starts and seeds find those in your community that have an abundance of these goods. That could look something like this:

High School Horticulture Class/FFA: This can be an excellent source for securing donations of plant starts. The classes are required to grow a certain number and variety of plants that are often sold in plant sales to raise money for their clubs. Clubs such as FFA and 4H are exposed to different aspects of farming and environmental studies, and are required to fulfill a number of community service hours to maintain membership. It becomes mutually beneficial to form a relationship with the teachers overseeing these projects when you spread the word about their plant sale in return for the leftover vegetable starts. Students can also be brought on as volunteers in PAR gardens to fulfill community service requirements.

Local garden center: What better way to stand out from the big box garden center competitor as a local nurseryman than to offer free or discounted plants and seeds to benefit PAR with qualified purchases? Media coverage at the height of the planting season that is mutually beneficial to the local garden center and a local hunger relief solution can be priceless.

Distribution can be a challenge when you receive hundreds or thousands of vegetable starts all at once and you have no place to put them or water to keep them alive if you did have the space. Avoid this by staying in touch with your potential donors and having a good idea of what quantities your PAR volunteers can absorb. When distributing vegetable starts try to make the transfer as direct as possible; otherwise, the plants will suffer as will you. This can be achieved by having individuals pick up their starts from a central location or delivering directly to a larger garden that will handle planting and distribution from that point. For donations and distribution of seeds, see the, Master of Free Seeds' Spokane PAR Chapter, for insight into this process.

Lessons Learned Overall

1. Have a clearly defined objective and plan in place for achieving it.
2. Be flexible; every problem you have an idea or solution for, no matter how brilliant, may not work out as conceived. Step

back, and get a better understanding of how to achieve your goal in a way that works for everyone involved.

3. Cast a broad net when searching for support; you will be surprised how opportunities arise in the most unexpected places. It never hurts to ask.
4. Follow through. Plant a Row is not a priority for most; a continuous presence is essential.
5. Some seeds take longer to sprout than others. Be patient, be proactive and don't get discouraged.

Gleaning Resource Guide #4

At Second Harvest

By Americorps*VISTA Keith Burgeson

History

Our mission is “Fighting hunger, feeding hope: Second Harvest brings community resources together to feed people in need through empowerment, education and partnerships.”

Second Harvest has led the hunger-relief network in Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho since 1971. Second Harvest distributes more than 1.5 million pounds of donated food each month to help people in need in its service region. Partnerships with more than 250 neighborhood food banks and meal centers make it possible for us to feed 48,000 people each week.

Volunteer Relations

Volunteers are more than likely critical to your project's functionality. Respecting volunteers and knowing each of their strengths and weaknesses saves a lot of time and money.

Know your needs. Make sure you know how many volunteers are needed, what will be expected of them, and for how long.

Recruit volunteers. There are several ways of doing this:

- Recruit at an event
- Send a news release to the media
- Use social media sites
- Ask volunteers/staff for referrals
- Partner with other agencies
- Keep volunteers motivated

Motivation fuels volunteers' eagerness to serve. Familiarizing yourself with what motivates your team can go a long way. Competition can be a very useful motivational tool. Tracking produce donations for yearly gleaning events fuels motivation for groups to surpass previous accomplishments. Every Columbus Day, Openeye (a company based in Liberty Lake, WA) sends 50-60 employees to a family-run apple orchard in Spokane Valley. Their goal, better last year's gleaning total. Second Harvest tracks the pounds of every glean, giving the volunteers an exact number as a goal.

Be sure to thank you volunteers often and in a sincere manner.

Volunteer Opportunities

Second Harvest offers a wide array of volunteer opportunities, most of which occur in our warehouse, but several gleaning events arise throughout the season as a way for volunteers to get involved off-site.

1. Green Bluff glean: Every year, Second Harvest collaborates with the local Rotary Club, Kiwanis, Lions Club, Thrivent, and Green Bluff Growers Association for a massive glean the first weekend in November. Hundreds of volunteers are sourced from the participating clubs to glean surplus fruit from several Green Bluff orchards.
2. Call-in harvests: Farms/orchards contact Second Harvest in regards to excess produce needing to be gleaned. Volunteers interested in gleaning are often given just a few days notice. This “on-call”-style can lead to an insufficient number of volunteers per event. Building a large volunteer pool is very advantageous for this reason.
3. Familiarizing volunteers with job requirements: Setting a priority for contacts is critical to ensure adequate volunteers are available for all Second Harvest programs. Determining specific product for volunteers to sort is based on current needs, the time of the month, and the age of the product. To effectively manage the volunteer program, there are regular monthly reports or activities that need to be done by the volunteer coordinator or assistant.

Occasionally the volunteers have been asked to fill out a survey about programs and/or services to get their ideas and input about operations. You can always learn from volunteers and make improvements based upon their suggestions. Some of the regular volunteers are retired professionals and they have talents in organization and management that can be applicable to work for the food bank. It is always good to remind volunteers about the impact they have on providing food to those less fortunate.

Donor Relations

Much like volunteers, donor relations are vital to an organization’s sustainability.

Second Harvest’s Food Sourcing/Development Team meets frequently to discuss and measure strategies in building relationships with its donors. A creative, soft approach (friendly; not overbearing) has proven advantageous in their line of success. Being sensitive to donors’ time and schedule are critical for the sustainability of the partnership.

Some helpful elements to successful donor relations are as follows:

- Donation Acceptance and Management: Encompasses procedures that address a variety of “issues” to consider before, during and after produce donations are made, ensures that donations are put to work as donors intend. This element is in reference to produce donations from a donor’s garden or farm.
- Safety is of the utmost importance. Neither side wants to deal with liability issues, nor do they want anyone getting hurt in general.
- Establish ground rules (general safety guidelines and specific requests from the homeowner) before you begin.
- Incorporate age restrictions where necessary.
- Use ladders properly.
- Leave the property cleaner than you found it. Upon completion of the harvest, have each volunteer scour the area for trash and debris. Bring trash bags in the event that yard waste bins aren’t available on site. Do not leave the trash bags on site for the homeowner to deal with. Take them with you.
- Acknowledgment: Cover protocol for and execution of accurate, timely, and meaningful expressions of gratitude.
- Send a “thank you” letter later that day or the following. Simple expressions of gratitude leave a good impression on the donor, increasing the likelihood for future gleans at their site. If possible, bring the letter to the harvest and have each volunteer sign it. The more personalized the better.

Attached is a structured breakdown of these terms from the Association of Donor Relations Professionals.

Visibility

Poor visibility can suffocate even the most amazing of projects. Just because you’re working sixty hours a week, knee deep in project logistics, doesn’t mean one can assume their hard work is being recognized by all. Marketing, while often overlooked, is essential to the health of the project.

- Create a PowerPoint presentation:
- Presenting your project to organizations using visual aids is engaging, professional, and enjoyable for both the presenter

and their audience.

- Utilize social media, blogs, social networking sites:
- Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and even Craigslist are great resources. This Bootstrapping Your Social Media Engagement slideshow gives some great ideas on how to increase Facebook and Twitter engagement for your nonprofit. These sites are free, easy to setup and maintain, and reach virtually every age and lifestyle demographic. A great site for free how-to webinars geared towards, but not limited to, nonprofits is: <http://www.ventureneer.com/webinars>.
- Master the art of writing a press release:
- Depending on one's writing skills, this may take a little practice, but will definitely prove worthwhile.
- Public relations is not the same as advertising:
- While advertising allows one to control their message, it can also be extremely expensive. PR is not only much lighter on the wallet – basically free – but it also gains credibility where advertising struggles immensely. This is where a great press release comes into play. Most readers are more likely to trust independent authorities such as reporters or broadcasters than an advertisement. Without a doubt, these authorities are directly influenced by good public relations and specifically, a well-written press release.
- Media coverage: Television, radio, or print can provide a lot of bang for very little (usually free) buck. Second Harvest does a phenomenal job incorporating the community into their programs. For example, the premise behind Plant a Row is a community-driven effort. Media outlets love the idea of a local business sending its employees on a glean for the hungry. If an orchard contacts you about gleaning their produce, make a strong effort to collaborate with a local business. There are many benefits to doing this:
 - ◆ Media outlets tend to prefer collaborations between two identifiable parties.
 - ◆ You can potentially obtain all the necessary volunteers from one source, saving a lot of valuable time and frustration on your end.
 - ◆ The local business gets media attention. This makes the event mutually beneficial, and in turn, more appealing to your volunteer source.

Plant A Row For The Hungry



Plant a Row for the Hungry, or PAR, is a people-helping-people initiative to assist in feeding hungry members of the community. The program encourages community members to dedicate a row (or more) of fruit, vegetables and/or herbs in their garden to help feed those in need. PAR was spearheaded by Jeff Lowenfels, a garden writer for the Anchorage Daily News and former Garden Writers Association president. The idea was implemented as a national program by the GWA soon after.

Second Harvest has implemented Plant a Row programs at each of their two locations; Spokane and Tri-Cities. Second Harvest also collaborates with the University of Idaho's Nutrition program in Coeur d'Alene, ID. Produce donations from all three sites are tracked under Second Harvest's annual Plant a Row figures.

PAR hinges upon community engagement. Much of the community engagement has been fueled by the distribution of free garden seeds and plant starts. Dozens of seed companies across the country were contacted (see attached seed donation request letter) in search of support for the program. The response was astronomical:

- Over 1,700 pounds of garden seeds were donated by numerous companies.
- Several nurseries in Spokane collectively donated over 3,000 plant starts to the PAR effort as well.

These donations not only encourage program participation, but also open an avenue of volunteerism for local middle and elementary schools. Students who are too young to volunteer their time in the warehouse, found an opportunity to organize seed packets for distribution. A large portion of the seed donations arrived in excessively large bags, making them impossible to distribute without breaking into easier to distribute quantities. To address this issue, seed packet templates (see attached) were created. The customized packets allow for additional marketing of the program on top of the increased community engagement opportunity. Students from several middle and elementary schools cut, filled, pasted, and distributed thousands of seed packets throughout Spokane.

Spokane County receives an overwhelming response from residential gardeners, small and large scale farmers, schools, places of worship, businesses, clubs and organizations, all committed to putting their green thumbs to good use. An exceptional example is East Valley High School. Their school district has turned an entire four acre lot nestled between the high school and middle school into a garden. The garden, which is on the verge of becoming a small farm operation, has proven to be worth its weight in gold for a wide array of classrooms. Biology, horticulture, agriculture, woodshop, construction, and alternative school students of all ages have benefited immensely from the district's utilization of a school garden as a learning tool. The garden donated over 2,000 pounds of produce to the Plant a Row campaign during its inception year in 2010.

Starting a Plant a Row campaign couldn't be easier. The Garden Writers Association will help you get started, offering brochure templates and step-by-step instructions on implementing your own Plant a Row project. Their four step process model is as followed:

- ◆ Step 1: Enlist a Network
- ◆ Step 2: Plan Your Campaign
- ◆ Step 3: Publicize Your Campaign
- ◆ Step 4: Celebrate the Harvest

Carol Ledbetter, Program Administrator, is a phenomenal resource for breaking ground on your own Plant a Row project. Email Carol at: par@gardenwriters.org.

Follow Second Harvest's Plant a Row program on Twitter

Workshops

Working in collaboration with WSU Extension, and several likeminded community members, Second Harvest has incorporated a series of gardening workshops through its Plant a Row program. The goal is to help community members become more efficient gardeners to produce more for the community. The workshops have an all-encompassing focus on gardening: before, during, and after the harvest season.

Workshop Topics

- Seed Starting: getting a jumpstart on the growing season; focuses on planting from seed.
- Building a Greenhouse on a Budget: homemade greenhouse alternatives that save you money.
- Fruit Tree Maintenance: focuses on proper pruning and spraying techniques for fruit tree owners.
- Composting: the ins and outs of composting 101.
- Vermiculture: a highly efficient alternative to standard composting that uses worms.
- Food Preservation: focuses on the how-to methods of water bath canning, pressure cooking, fermenting, dehydration, and freezing.

The Plant a Row workshops have proven to be a great resource by:

- Enhancing the horticultural knowledge of those involved.
- Fostering community engagement.
- Getting community members excited to participate.
- Spreading the word about the program.
- Showing gratitude for all the hard work being put forth by those involved.

Attached are some material resources from the Plant a Row workshops listed above.

Fruit Tree Gleaning

The term “gleaning” is foreign to many people. Gleaning is the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers’ fields after they have been commercially harvested, or from fields that are not economically profitable to harvest. Basically, gleaning salvages crops that would otherwise be left in the fields to rot or be plowed under.

Home Fruit Harvest

Under the Plant a Row umbrella, Second Harvest has implemented Home Fruit Harvest (HFH) - a fruit tree registry program geared towards salvaging fruit from residential and orchard trees.

Homeowners ideally maintain and harvest their own fruit when possible. Second Harvest supplies the education (workshops), as well as banana boxes and transportation on harvest day.

When homeowners are unable to harvest their fruit, Second Harvest will utilize its volunteer database. Acquiring volunteers is a necessity for orchard gleans due to their size.

Helpful Hints

- Dress in layers. Mornings are often cool and wet. Wear pants and long-sleeved shirts as your outermost (cool weather) layer. Shorts and short sleeve shirts should be worn underneath. As the day progresses, remove the top layer, exposing the warm-weather layer.
- Pants and long sleeves are recommended for orchards. This helps minimize skin exposure to poison ivy that may be growing.
- Hats and gloves are also recommended.
- Reusable grocery bags are great for carrying through the field. They’re lightweight and can be placed around your neck while climbing ladders. You can also use a three to five gallon pail with a handle.
- Make sure someone brings a first-aid kit.
- Most fields will lack bathroom accommodations. Be sure to use facilities prior to arrival.
- Make provisions for water, especially on hot days.

The Alsperger family of Spokane Valley has 133 apple trees registered through Home Fruit Harvest. For the past five years, Columbus Day has been a day of giving back for OpenEye employees and their families. Owner Alan Aldous, has made an annual commitment to the Alsperger children to assist with gleaning the trees, continuing their father’s (Gene Alsperger) legacy of donating to those in need. 2011’s apples were noticeably smaller than previous years, but the trees were laden with an unusually high volume of fruit. The glean was a tremendous success, far surpassing 2010’s record-high of 9,800 pounds, as the weigh-in recorded a staggering 15,218 pounds! That’s 287 pounds of apples per person – an incredible accomplishment.

Just like any other produce being gleaned and distributed by Second Harvest, HFH fruit is not required to be organic. Spraying is a necessity for certain varieties, such as cherries, in the Spokane area. Second Harvest distributes over eight million pounds of fresh produce annually. Restricting donations to only organic produce would drastically reduce the number of customers we serve.

Gleaning Resource Guide #5: “Yes, we CAN!” Cannery Project

At South King County Food Coalition

By Americorps*VISTA Basil Weiner

The South King County Food Coalition was founded in 1983 to assess the needs of south King County food banks, organize their collective efforts and assure the effective distribution of food to south county residents.

The coalition currently seeks to strengthen the efforts of its member agencies by enhancing the local food security network through increased engagement with faith based organizations, non-profits, social service providers, local businesses, service organizations and individual volunteers in the fight against hunger and poverty. For the 2010-2011 cycle the coalition acquired a Harvest Against Hunger AmeriCorps VISTA to increase its capacity for this kind of outreach, network building and volunteer

engagement. The VISTA's projects included the "Yes, we CAN!" canning initiative, the Sonju Park community fruit orchard and garden, GIS mapping with the University of Washington, digital storytelling, grant research and assistance, and other projects. These efforts helped the coalition to increase its visibility in the community while increasing the amount of healthful produce distributed by the eleven food bank coalition.

Volunteer Relations

Outreach and Recruitment:

The "Yes, we CAN!" cannery project is volunteer intensive. It takes 30-50 volunteers to keep the cannery humming over a 7 hour period of time. If it mobilizes the necessary volunteer force, the coalition has access to upwards of 50 days of canning per year. With an average daily production of 2500 pounds of produce and an ever dwindling supply of produce from other sources, the motivation to recruit cannery volunteers has been great.

The VISTA found success in both active and passive outreach and recruitment strategies:

Active Outreach

Characterized by face-to-face, phone and email contact, active outreach is effective when you know who in the community might be interested and how to get connected to them. This takes some strategizing but is well worth the effort.

Some questions to consider in building an active outreach strategy:

- What is most compelling about your volunteer opportunity?
- You probably already know the answer to this question but it can't hurt to ask around to your colleagues and friends. Why is this an important project from your point of view? Your project might have wider appeal than you think and the more ideas you can get about its benefit the better prepared you will be to speak about it from multiple angles.
- Does it address an un-met need in the community?
- Who else in the community might care about filling this need? You could also ask: Who else in the community might feel compelled by the different benefits of your project?

Answering these questions will help you start to identify your key community partners for volunteer recruitment.

- Once you have a few potential community partners identified you can start to contact them to set up meetings and presentations.
- The VISTA carried out his active outreach strategy mostly in the form of presentations to potentially interested community groups. These included service organizations (Kiwanis, Rotary Lions, etc.), church mission groups, college clubs, other non-profits, volunteer organizations and corporate volunteer teams.
- Suggestion: When presenting to any group always arrive with a sign-up sheet! Once or twice the VISTA presented to groups and didn't have a sign-up sheet for interested volunteers. Instead, he gave out his business card and didn't hear from anybody. Make sure you always get their contact information.

Passive Outreach

- The strategic placement of advertisements and postings both in the physical community and on the web can be another effective way to find interested volunteers. Volunteermatch.com and the United Way's volunteer recruitment tool brought in many extra groups that the VISTA did not identify in the planning of his active outreach strategy.
- Observation: The dividing line between "Active" and "Passive" outreach can sometimes be blurred. A relationship you've built through active outreach might overtime become more passive. Once people have experienced how much fun your project is firsthand they will become the active recruiters and your role will turn a bit more passive. But passive outreach can be more active at times as well. For example, A group might approach you after seeing your internet posting and request a presentation.
- With this in mind, consider "active" and "passive" outreach and recruitment as tools for understanding different methods of finding volunteers, not as rigid silos for recruitment activities.

Leveraging Volunteer Resources:

- When looking to recruit large numbers of volunteers you are going to need to take actions that are efficient and effective. You don't want to be the only one telling volunteers about your project. The South King County VISTA

leveraged community volunteer resources by identifying other volunteer coordinators in the community and building relationships with them.

- There were two distinct types of relationships developed
 - ◆ **Volunteer Programs for local cities and suburbs:**
Most cities and suburbs near Seattle have their own volunteer management staff. This person's job is to connect interested volunteers with volunteer opportunities that benefit the community. Oftentimes they will have a monthly newsletter and are constantly looking for more material. One short meeting with someone in this position expanded the VISTA's reach beyond what he could personally manage. Make sure to equip these people with any necessary recruitment materials like sign-up sheets, pictures, videos and the like.
 - ◆ **Volunteer Programs for other Non-Profits:**
Make sure you know what the other non-profits and human services agencies in your area are doing and that they know about what you're doing. Often, volunteer groups will need a few referrals to find the right opportunity given their size, availability and interests.. The more people in the community who know about your work the more referrals you'll receive.

Donor Relations

The South King County Food Coalition's VISTA projects differed significantly from many of the other Harvest VISTA positions this year. Little focus was placed on agricultural gleaning and thus the picture of donor relations looks very different. That said, the coalition has several key donors with whom this year's VISTA collaborated closely.

- All of the produce sourced into the cannery project comes from Northwest Harvest (NWH). Relations with Northwest Harvest as a donor have been extremely important to the vitality of "Yes, we CAN!" as a reliable source of produce for the coalition's food banks. The VISTA cultivated working relationships with key staff in both the NWH volunteer office as well as in the warehouse.
- Perhaps the single most important tactic employed to keep this relationship healthy was the simple act of publicly recognizing and thanking NWH for its invaluable support. Within the nonprofit sector any chance at promotion and visibility is a very valuable opportunity for an organization. The VISTA paid special attention to thanking this donor whenever possible.
- The United Way of King County is also a central partner in the cannery project as the principle monetary support of the program. The same care is taken with them to make sure their name is out in the community and associated with the wonderful benefit that this project brings to the region.
- The Church of Latter Day Saints Bishop's Storehouse in Kent, WA is the other central donor to the "Yes, we CAN!" project. They donate not only hundreds of hours of cannery time to the coalition but they also pay for all the necessary staff, materials, utilities and temporary storage space for the project. Coalition staff regularly met with the Bishop's Storehouse coordinator to check in about the status of the project, refine processes and streamline communications. So much of successful donor relations is finding ways to express, not only how appreciative your organization is of the donation made, but also of how much of a positive impact their generosity has on the lives of those you serve. We all need to know that our participation is valued and important so that we'll keep participating!

Visibility

You can increase visibility for your organization, produce recovery or volunteer engagement project in a number of different ways.

- **Think in terms of personal stories**
Yes, you are collecting thousands of pounds of produce with hundreds of volunteer hours in order to benefit countless families in need. In order to garner real awareness and visibility, you're going to need to learn how to tell the story of your project and organization in more specific terms as well. Telling the story of a specific person gives your audience a chance to connect to the human conditions that make your work important. Start with yourself. Why are you doing this kind of work? Think about your own experiences with hunger or poverty. Did you or someone close to you struggle in these ways? This is a good place for your story to start. People will connect with the source of your motivation in ways that bring out their own. This is a great tactic when dealing with any type of "donor" (volunteer, agricultural, financial). The VISTA worked on developing digital stories this year. Check out what he put together here.
- **Digital Materials**
You can only be in one place at any given time promoting your program and increasing the visibility of your organization. Putting in the time to develop some digital materials to send out via email or written on DVD and

distributed can multiply your effectiveness. If you know how to make digital movies or stories or you want to learn you should do so. You can also broaden your vision of what a donor is by looking to folks in your community who already have this knowledge. For example, marketing teams or ad agencies might do some work pro bono or you could collaborate with a college film class. This year's VISTA built a relationship with a local aspiring film maker to develop a short promotional video about the cannery project. Check it out here.

→ **Press Coverage**

This year's VISTA worked with the 11 coalition member food banks as well as partners like United Way of King County, Rotary First Harvest and Northwest Harvest to leverage previously existing press relationships with local and regional news outlets for the benefit of the cannery project. A word to the wise: Sometimes it makes sense to try and get coverage from the big networks, but for community based efforts the most beneficial are often local papers and blogs (see the attached press releases for examples of how to announce events).

→ **Inviting Elected Officials**

Elected officials both attract more press to your cause and have the power to support your organization when the time comes to make budgets. As with news outlets, it's much harder to schedule your state's Senator or Governor for an event than it is to get a county councilperson or local city councilperson or mayor. For "AmeriCorps Week" this year, the VISTA invited 60-70 officials of all types and received one state representative and the staff person from a county councilperson's office. Cast a wide net and be diligent about follow up. Elected officials are busy and they want to be assured that their support of your project will be seen by local voters on news outlets. It's a good idea to include their offices on any press release emails so they know who to expect from the press. They will also tend to invite the press to events they attend in order to assure greater visibility.

Food Bank/Community Farms

In a heavily urbanized area such as south King County, the potential for on farm gleans is somewhat diminished. However, there is a growing interest from some of the coalition's food banks to develop community gardens and small farms that produce a portion of their food for consumption by food bank customers.

→ **Sonju Garden and Community Fruit Orchard**

- ◆ This property was a commercial fruit orchard but was neglected and donated to the city of Des Moines. It sat unused for many years until the parks department, the Des Moines Area Food Bank and a neighborhood volunteer teamed up to make a plan for its transformation into a community garden, park and source of fresh fruit.
- ◆ The VISTA worked closely with the dedicated volunteer and food bank staff to take the lead on volunteer outreach and recruitment for weekly garden work parties.

Through his involvement with Sonju Park, the VISTA realized something important: As a representative of the food bank he could reach out to multiple community gardens to both provide support and encourage donation to the nearest food bank. Gardeners were eager but had little information about how to donate. By simply connecting the gardeners to food bank websites the VISTA could empower them to give.

→ **Solicitation and Distribution of Seed Donations**

- ◆ The South King VISTA utilized templates from other Harvest VISTA and successfully adapted a strategy for soliciting donations from seed companies. By providing seeds in the beginning of the growing season to "P-Patch" and other community gardeners, relationships were built in order to increase produce donations to food banks come harvest time.
- ◆ Note: As seed companies sell their products throughout the growing season they start to clean out their inventories during October and November. These are the ideal months to start a mailing campaign. Seeds were successfully solicited in October, November, December, January and February.

→ **Food Bank Farms**

- ◆ At present, two food banks within the coalition are strategizing and planning for their own food producing properties to develop greater capacity for vegetable distribution to customers. This model provides its own unique advantages and challenges. Both of these agencies have engaged in long processes with the aim of buying land. If your agency is interested in this model, it is extremely important to stay focused about why you have chosen this model throughout the entire process of development. With your own farm or large garden that is dedicated to food bank production you can dramatically increase produce access among customers. However, it is a very intensive process and can take a lot of time and energy away from the daily operations of

your agency.

- ◆ The VISTA worked with one of these agencies to research new funders that might support a capital campaign to buy agricultural land for a food bank. Research conducted at a local county library was highly effective. Utilizing the library's non-profit resource databases, philanthropic foundations regionally and nationally were pinpointed and a list of 30 potential new funders was developed. Here's the link to the King County Library's non-profit resource center. Perhaps there is something like this in your area!

Building Strategic Partnerships

Many partnerships have been formed through the work of this year's VISTA. However, the most strategic of these partnerships are those around volunteer resources. With so much potential to use the cannery depending on the availability of volunteer groups, the VISTA acting alone could only hope to fill a small percentage of the potential opportunity. His goal was to develop a network of volunteer program staff to promote the cannery project as well.

- For example, Seattle's Union Gospel Mission (UGM) is a huge agency that has great visibility among people, especially in the faith community, who wish to volunteer. They have such high visibility that they receive too many requests from volunteers. Rather than turn folks away, it is in their interest to find another opportunity for these extra volunteers. If the volunteer coordinator at UGM knew about other programs it is easy make referrals. The system itself is rather informal but could be made more formal and systematized if desired.
- Building these relationships can be as simple as meeting for coffee or a one-on-one tour of a facility. Your partnerships will be strong if you prioritize face-to-face relationship building and phone conversations over email. Plus, it's just more fun to meet people who are passionate about human services, just like you!

Telling Your Story

The best way to attract a person's interest is through a story. We've been telling stories for thousands of years and we're no different now. We can empathize with the feelings of others through stories and we can begin to relate on a personal level. Your success in attracting donors, volunteers, funders, press and whoever else you might want to participate in your produce recovery project will depend on your ability to effectively communicate your story. Here are some useful tips for getting started:

→ Tell your story first

- ◆ Whether you are starting a new produce recovery project or strengthening a program already in place you'll want to tell people why. The most important question to ask yourself is this: "Why do I do what I do?" A possible variation on this question is: "Why do I care about this work enough to dedicate so much time to it as opposed to something else?" You may be tempted to begin by talking about how important it is for low-income folks to have access to produce for health reasons. You may want to talk about the cost to society incurred by unhealthy eating habits. You may want to talk about food desserts or childhood nutrition and these are all important things to talk about. However, what is really going to get people listening is if you tell a story about your personal connection to the work.

- ◆ **This process can be hard but the good news is that an effective story can be as short as a few sentences!**

Example: "When I was growing up my family ate lots of fast food and microwaveable meals. My dad was diagnosed with diabetes and his doctor told him he had to eat more veggies. Our whole family's diet changed and his health got better! Since then I've been passionate about ensuring that everyone has the choice to eat better."

- ◆ By sharing your motivation for this important work you invite others to find and stay connected to their source of motivation, too!

→ Listen to the stories of others

- ◆ As you form and deepen relationships in the community you'll start to hear the stories of others. These can be great to remember and use in conversation. This way you'll not only be able to tell your story but you can relay the stories of why others are involved.
- ◆ "Sarah up in Fall City grows vegetables and said she likes to donate to the food bank because she would go to the food bank with her mom when she was a kid and she wants to give back."

→ Using Statistics Wisely

- ◆ Statistics can provide great context to a personal story but should never be the only tool used in attracting

interest in your project. A good rule of thumb is to always try and balance personal stories and statistics.

- ◆ “At the food bank 30% of those who receive food are children. That’s why we connected our apple gleans to the local backpack program. Kids who can eat some fruit over the weekend will come to school on Monday more prepared to learn.”

→ Images and Video

- ◆ A picture can tell an incredible story. Consider the above example. The story may be just as powerful if we say:
- ◆ “At the food bank 30% of those who receive food are children” and then accompany this statistic with a photo of a child in a food bank line. The audience is invited to participate by filling in the rest of the story with their imaginations.

→ Making Movie Files

- ◆ Most likely you are only one person or a member of a small team of people developing a produce recovery program. There’s a limited amount of places you can be so why not create some video files that can help you conduct outreach when you’re busy?
- ◆ Consider taking some time in the slower months to brush up on some simple movie making software. A good, affordable option for your PC is “Sony Vegas Movie Studio.” Also, most Apple computers come with “iMovie.” With these programs you can combine photos, video, narration and music to put together some great little stories for distribution online throughout your network. It’s really fun and you’ll make it easier for people to help you spread the word by giving them a link to pass on!

Gleaning Resource Guide #6: Yakima Valley Produce Harvest

At Northwest Harvest Yakima

BY AMERICORPS*VISTA JAMI WILLARD

Brief History

The Yakima Valley Produce Harvest gleaning program hosted at Northwest Harvest started in 2009. 2010-11 is the second year an AmeriCorps*VISTA member has worked with Northwest Harvest in Yakima. The Yakima Harvest VISTA position has been the driving force for the development of a produce recovery project and primarily focused on capacity building of resources, such as gleaning at orchards, organizing transportation and volunteer pickers. Since the beginning of the gleaning program, over 300,000 pounds of nutritious fruits and vegetables were recovered. The produce has distributed to 45 food banks partnered with the Northwest Harvest warehouse located in Yakima.

Overview of current activities of site

The focus of the Yakima gleaning program is orchard and row crop gleaning, as well backyard garden gleaning, community garden gleaning, and Plant a Row for the Hungry (PAR). Orchard and row crop gleaning focuses on larger gleaning events in commercial or hobby orchards, which require more resources such as boxes and ladders. Backyard garden gleaning is collecting excess produce from personal gardens, and community gardens in the region are typically larger with a wider variety of produce available for donation. Plant a Row for the Hungry is similar to backyard garden gleaning, except the model used in Yakima focuses on gardeners picking and delivering their produce to drop sites, instead of gleaning volunteers collecting it.

Volunteer Relations



Volunteer recruitment and outreach is a crucial part of gleaning in Yakima. We are surrounded by orchards and some of the highest vegetable production per capita in the nation, but if we do not have volunteers to pick, there is no viable gleaning program. A variety of mediums and messages were used to reach out to potential volunteers. We focused primarily on community education through, campaigns, presentations and flyers.

Be an Advocate: Networking is essential to being an advocate to increase volunteer awareness for your gleaning program in your community. When at community events, or while participating in community organization, talk to folks about your program and the great things you do for your community. This benefits your organization in several ways. First, and foremost, it allows for community members to see the face behind the program and builds trust. This is crucial in smaller or rural communities where relationships and who you know is vital to program or organization success. It is also a great way to share your passion for the goals of the program. This is a great tool to build enthusiasm for the program and allows for folks to see how their skills can help the program succeed. Additionally, it might even expand the program to new ventures to fill a need in your community.

Presentations: To increase your volunteer base, consider speaking with established service, church, and youth organizations. Most of these organizations have community service in mind and are looking to get involved in other service activities. Flexibility is crucial while presenting. If certain facts or statements get particular audience reaction elaborate further on the topic. Tailoring your message to your audience is another great technique to give an impactful presentation. Take a second to think of how a piece of your presentation will impact different audiences. For example, explaining gleaning and its history could be approached differently when talking with a church versus a Kiwanis Club. For example, during a presentation to a church, a verse from the bible that specifically mentions gleaning could be beneficial. When at a Kiwanis club meeting, talk about how gleaning is an opportunity for young people to gain a different type of volunteer experience. You could further elaborate that the produce picked will ensure hungry children in our community have fresh fruits and vegetables to eat. Use anecdotes as much as possible, and do not be afraid to get enthusiastic or passionate when you feel it. This adds a lot in regards to genuine interest and knowledge of the topic. The final and likely most important piece of presenting is at the end. Be sure to have time to stay and talk with your audience, have information on your organization, the program, and a sign-up sheet. Also be sure to follow up within the next week with the organizer who invited you to the event and everyone who signed up to volunteer.

Flyers: Using creative flyers is a great way to inform your community about your program. When creating a flyer, first ask yourself a few questions about your program and the outreach. What is the purpose of the flyer? What job do you want this potential volunteer to do? Why is your mission and purpose important to the potential volunteer? How can the information on the flyer answer questions the potential volunteers might have? If having low barriers to volunteering is important, how can the flyer do that? A low barrier approach focuses on very few things needed in order to volunteer, such as filling out superfluous forms, scheduling an appointment, and going through a back-ground check. These questions are a way to help you target your message.

As an example, view this volunteer flyer. The flyer has pull off tabs to ensure it's easy for potential volunteers to have your organizations contact information. Notice the targeted message to community members who are interested in exercising. The target market are people who are interested in fitness. Also pay close attention to the addition of "no minimum time commitment" as a selling point to handle the concern of, "I don't have a lot of time". Keep these things in mind when thinking about your program. Try to come up with new ways of "selling" your program to different types of community members. Once your local community is "sold" on your idea it can truly flourish.

Donor Relations

Donors are critical for gleaning. Handling grower concerns, keeping the producer happy, and managing the gleaning event well are very important to hosting a successful an event and any future gleans.

Important Questions: Handle questions concerns and liability upfront and as honest as possible. Be able to explain the Bill Emerson Act and Release of Liability and Waiver of Damages Form. Liability is a legitimate concern, and should be handled carefully. Preface the conversation by saying you understand and respect the grower's concerns, and have a focused and accurate explanation of the act and form as tool. In an area saturated with traditional producers, explaining the Bill Emerson Act and appropriate liability form plainly is important. For example you could explain, "if someone gets hurt on your property the liability waiver will cover you against civil liabilities." A way of explaining the Bill Emerson Act is, "as long as the produce is donated in good faith, you are covered from any civil liabilities in regards to food safety".

When on the phone with a producer get straight to the point. Just ask them what they need from you, and how you can make things easiest for them. They are very busy` and don't have time to play word games with you. Another tip when on the phone is to smile. People can hear that through the phone, and might help you and the producer to have a relaxed and productive conversation.

When working with producers: Be as flexible as possible. Every producer is different, and has their own unique way of doing things. They are taking time out of their day to help you, so coordinating gleaning events around their schedule is extremely helpful. Doing a walk through with a producer to see the facility is a great option if time permits. Knowing, and discussing what produce is available is a great way to handle what materials to bring. Having all your gleaning equipment in one place and ready to go at any time is a helpful way of going from the office to the producer to gleaning in a short amount of time.

Producers and Media: Inviting media to a gleaning event is a great way to spread the word about your program. Be sure to mention the opportunity of news coverage to the producer either in a conversation before the gleaning event, before disclosing the address of the gleaning event, or before agreeing to the reporters request to record the event. Make sure that the producer is comfortable with someone from the media on their property. Also ask the producer if they would like to remain anonymous and ensure there are no conditions specifics about their location. These are legitimate concerns, and easy to manage as well. When the reporter arrives at the site take a moment to mention details that need to be excluded as prefaced by the producers. Reporters typically respect these requests as long as they know about them ahead of time.

Appreciation: Be sure to get a mailing address or email at some point before the gleaning event ends. Some producers ask for a receipt, and mailing or emailing it is a great way to take the pressure off while in the field. It is an opportunity for the organization to get the right weight, and the receipt together without being rushed. Mailing the receipt with a hand written thank you letter is a nice way to say thank you one more time - even though you have probably thanked them already.

Visibility

Visibility is important to ensure community members know about the program and are interested in participating.

Social media: Using social media is a great way to spread the word about your program. A really simple way to do this is to create a Facebook page. It is a very easy way to inform members of your community about what great things your program has accomplished. You can do great things such as post an upcoming event, add pictures from an event, include videos, plus volunteers can comment about their experience. A very simple way to increase the awareness of the community page is to create cards with the page name on them. See Volunteer Card. You could include information about the program and volunteering on one side, and the Facebook name on the other. After talking to community members about your program, a leave behind is a great way for volunteers or donors to keep up to date with what great things you're doing.

Use video as a medium for sharing your story: Video is a great way to share your story in a different way. If you just had a great event, producing a video is a nice way of sharing the information in a more engaging manner. It can be as simple as recording volunteers or supervisors that were involved in the event. Write a basic script to ensure all details and important facts are included in the clips. The clips don't need to be fancy and editing several clips together can produce a great and short video. Clips of the supervisors speaking about the total pounds picked and impact in community can make a simple yet extremely effective aid.

Traditional Media: Using the media, such as newspapers, TV and radio to share your message is a great way to touch lots of community members with the information of your program. Share and publicize your events with the media. As a best practice, send out a press release several days before the event, or even the first day of a several day event. Writing a successful press release is not scary. As long as the basic who, what, where, when, why and how are included. This press release should be sent to news stations and the local paper. If you have connections, such as knowing the producer or specific staff writers, it's helpful to send it to those contacts specifically.

Not every produce recovery program will have connections with the news media, and in that case email the release to the generic breaking news email. The station or paper will get in touch with you most likely a day or two later, and on the day they are interested in interviewing or speaking with you about the event. If you don't have an event planned, and you're still looking to get into the media writing a letter to the editor is a good way to accomplish this. Check the newspaper for articles that are generally related to the work of your program. This allows for you to connect relevant news to the work of your program. Ensuring that your letter is relevant to current news is important, because if the letter is not connected with local news it might not be published.

Seed Start Distribution



There are several ways to distribute plants into communities. The plan for the plants acquired in Yakima was to focus on distributing to food bank customers and other people who are hungry in our community. Our thought process was to directly fight hunger. The plants we distributed were gleaned from plant sales. The left over vegetable and fruit plants were saved from the trash and distributed.

The first step is to contact the people organizing the plant sale and offer your program as an option for any fruit or vegetable plants that might be left over after the sale. Master Gardener plant sales are great because they grow high quality plants and have a great variety. Don't be afraid to cold-call or

visit an advertised plant sale and ask about the plants left over after the sale. They might just get thrown out, and there is no harm in asking. If the plant sale organizers agree to participate and there are plants available to distribute, contact food banks, emergency services providers, community gardens, and shelters to inform them about the opportunity. Call as many organizations and people as you deem necessary, depending on how many plants exist and how much time you have to move them.

Capitalizing on available transportation is extremely helpful, otherwise minivans and pickup trucks can move quite a few flats of plants in one trip. Once the initial contact has been made to the organizations about the plants, it will be fairly easy to move all the plants you have available. Direct agency drivers willing to distribute plants to the greenhouse and distribute the plants. With the variety available at our plant start distributions, it was important to ensure that agency drivers got a variety of plants, but still took quite a few of the specific varieties we had in abundance such as tomatoes and peppers. Be sure to include care and planting directions with the seedlings to ensure that every plant made it to the point of production.

Pick-A-Thon

A Pick-A-Thon is an event which allows for two organizations to benefit mutually. A produce recovery organization can benefit from a regular gleaning event, for a day or multiple days, while the other organization has an event in which they can raise money. For example, Northwest Harvest Yakima and the La Salle High School have hosted a Pick-A-Thon every year for the past 5 years. La Salle raises money for their scholarship fund, and harvest or pick produce to alleviate hunger in their community.

Preparation

When planning such an event, meet with the co-organizers, a few weeks or months, before the event to touch base with coordinators. During this meeting, discuss details such as bathrooms, information for the students and chaperones (if partnering with a school), where the orchards are located and lunch. For an all day gleaning event, having a portable toilet is a must. Most producers do not want kids trudging in and out of their home using their personal bathroom for an entire morning. Ask a local service club if they would be willing to sponsor the toilet. If gleaning in the same orchard for several days, the toilet can remain, saving time and money. Be sure students receive a gleaning guideline before the glean, and that parents or chaperones get a similar copy that also covers supervisor tips. During the meeting you may have orchards lined up, or you might not. Depending on your partner organization, they might know producers, and it's good to ask. Be sure to find a final date when you absolutely need to know where the students are going, so that permission slips can be signed. Something to keep in mind for an all day glean is who is providing lunch. Students can pack their own, or for this type of event a local cafe or nearby fast food restaurant might be willing to sponsor lunch.

Alternatives

If you can't find an orchard be sure to have an alternative productive activity for a class or group. For example, we did not have an orchard lined up for every day of the event. We had a class go to the food bank warehouse and repack produce. Such an activity can be very and is still an opportunity for students to get physically active and have a rewarding experience. Think creatively about your own organization or network and brainstorm similar projects .

Farms or Orchards

Hosting an event for another good cause is a great selling point for a producer to host a gleaning event. Hosting a Pick-A-Thon glean at an orchard is not very different from any other glean except to make sure that you manage your volunteer force. In

regards to a school with several grades, depending on how large the orchard or field is, make a clear mark of where to stop in order to have product harvest the following day.

Logistics

Be certain to ask the producer where to park vans or buses. Do not be afraid to flag the bus down and direct them to exactly where they should be parked. Also make sure that you train students every day, because it will most likely be a new batch of students or even a different type of produce. Most students have never gleaned or worked in an orchard so be sure to explain to them about picking bags, ladders, pick etiquette and where the fruit goes.

Media

Be sure to send a press release to the local news stations and newspaper. It's a great story for stations willing to broadcast a positive and community orientated story. A reporter will come out if they have time and are engaged. Try not to be nervous during the interview. If gleanng is your passion, the sound bite will just flow out during the interview. If talking unscripted is not your style, write notes and facts to ensure that all the points you find important are discussed. When talking to a news reporter look at the one who is asking the questions and answer their questions honestly and with pride in your event and organization. If you can't answer the questions at that exact moment don't worry, just take a moment to gather your thoughts and start when you're ready again. Reporters are generally very flexible, unless it's a live interview.

U-Pick Gleaning

U-pick orchards or fields are an opportunity for anyone to pick their own fruit or vegetables. They are fairly popular with tree fruit and berry growers and occasionally with vegetable growers, like tomatoes. Approaching u-pick growers is a great way to diversify the type of growers you are marketing your gleanng program. In most cases, when compared to medium or large scale growers, accessing u-pick orchards and farms tends to be a lot easier. Such growers have the general public come onto their property on a daily basis, and are familiar with pickers with little experience. Once they have agreed to host a gleanng event you should continue with a similar protocol as you would with any other grower.

Finding Producers

The best part about u-pick growers is that they're usually more open to community members on their property and the idea of gleanng. When calling to pitch your project ask how their market is doing. This will let you know how many u-pickers are coming to their property. If the number is dwindling this is an opportunity for gleanng, as long as there is still produce on the trees or in the field. Typical, u-pick orchards are not always picked clean by the general public, so it is a great opportunity for traditional gleanng. If you present producers, for example cherry growers, the choice between harvesting their remaining fruit for the hungry, or letting the birds have it, they will likely choose gleanng.

Equipment and materials

Most u-pick producers have their own liability waiver, buckets, picking bags, boxes, and ladders. You will need to check with the producer to ensure they have all of these necessary materials, and ensure you can fill in the gaps of any items they may not have or let you use. For example, u-pick producers may have ladders, but are simultaneously harvesting and selling other fruit on their property. Thus, their ladders would be used by professional pickers in another orchard and not be available for volunteer gleaners. When touring their facility before the glean, or on the phone, be sure to ask what specific items are needed for local gleans to ensure nothing is overlooked.

Volunteer Specifics

If in a gleanng in an orchard, most of the fruit will likely be in clusters only accessible by ladder, but some should still be accessible from the ground. Most groups or individuals participating in gleanng will come out for a few gleans and training in the field is much easier, especially when a low barrier to gleanng event participation is important. Below are some tips about in field training on specific topics.

- **Picking bags:** Volunteers will need to be advised on how to put on a picking bag, because most have never used one before. Also be sure to inform them of how the bottom of the bag is tied, specific to the style of bag. Another important thing to share is how to release the fruit from the metal holding mechanism. Be sure to inform volunteers if they're picking very soft fruit such as peaches, plums, or very ripe pears to release the fruit into the box or bin very gently to prevent bruising and damage to the fruit.
- **Ladders:** This is a very important topic to discuss with volunteers because ladders are one key piece of equipment, if not used correctly could result in injury. Another thing to keep in mind, is most volunteers have not used an orchard ladder before, so good field training on use is extremely helpful. Teach volunteers how to set a ladder correctly. Teach them specific ladder use safety such as ensuring that while on the ladder the users "belt buckle" remains within the outer

rungs of the ladder at all times. This will ensure that when volunteers are at the top of the ladder they will stay on the ladder, and stay balanced. Sharing tips and tricks to setting up a ladder to reach more fruit is also extremely beneficial.

- ◆ A tool that is helpful to learn more about ladder safety is a video called “Tripod Ladder Safety” by Washington State Dept. of Labor and Industries in 2008. You can view a copy of the video from WA Labor and Industries through their resource library. Registration is free, and several video resources can be sent to you. They only cost would be in returning the video. It is also available for free on YouTube, Tripod Ladder Safety. The video is targeted towards professional pickers in the commercial fruit business, but the information about using a ladder is extremely helpful for a gleaning coordinator to gain the knowledge to teach ladder etiquette to volunteers.
- **Picking:** Sharing picking knowledge is important because volunteers who might not know any better could potentially destroy next year’s crop by breaking off the spurs. There is lots of information on the internet about how to pick different types of produce, and reading some of that can be beneficial. Harvesting and Storing Apples and Pears The best thing to do is ask the producer. They know how it should be picked, and usually know extremely efficient tricks to help pick more fruit faster, such as cupping your hands around a whole bunch of blueberries and pulling them off in your hands all together as opposed to picking one berry at a time. Quality control is also important, even more so when picking into boxes, and standards should be shared with volunteers to ensure what you consider good product goes into boxes or bins. Keep in mind if you’re picking into bins the produce will most likely be resorted and repacked, but fruit in boxes will go directly to food banks and customers.
- **Other Details:** If using boxes, especially if they are a unique style, be sure to let the entire group know how to put them together and close them. Be sure to let volunteers know where full boxes go, and ensure you are on the same page with chaperones if they are present. Sometimes chaperones act like they know more than you do, so be sure to take a moment after the volunteers start picking to emphasize details so everyone clear about directions.
- **Weather:** If its calling for rain or wind keep several things in mind. If it rains the night before the glean or the day of, trees will be wet. Water will come down on pickers when in the trees. This does several things. First the volunteers will be wet, and eventually cold. Depending on how the rest of the day goes, you might want to end early to be sure your volunteers don’t get sick. Second, water on the ground and trees will eventually make the ladders very slippery. Inform the volunteers! Ladders can be hazardous, and if they are wet it can quickly become dangerous if they are not careful. Finally, some fruit act different after a rain. Cherries, depending on how sudden the introduction of water from a heavy rain might tear, which is called rain cracking. Golden Delicious apples will bruise even easier than normal would when picked right after a good rain and pears will ripen faster. These are just a few examples of fruit idiosyncrasies, and it’s good to talk with producers about weather if rain is in the forecast. Growers or the master gardeners group in your community are a good source for local information.

Logistics

Logistics are extremely different when picking into boxes verses bins. Packing gleaned produce directly into boxes is generally easier, depending on how much there is to harvest. If picking into bins, be aware they should be dropped off at least a day in advance. If your organization has bins it makes life easier, if not try to track down slightly used ones for donation. The producer you’re picking from might have some extras you can borrow. If not, and you know a larger producer in the area, call them and ask to borrow some. The key to borrowing bins is to ensure you get the correct bins back to the right producer. Another extremely important detail about bins is how to move them the field. Ask the producer if they have a tractor or forklift, because it’s absolutely critical to have one. If the producer does not have a way to move bins and you don’t either then you must use boxes no matter how much you are picking. Another important suggestion is that pallet jacks don’t work on dirt, so loading bins will be very difficult without a tractor or forklift. It’s also important to find out how many bins your truck can handle. Depending on how many full bins you have, it might take several trips to get all the fruit out of the field.

Gleaning Resource Guide #7: P.L.A.N.T. (People Learning Agriculture and Nutrition Together)

At The Okanogan County Community Action Council

BY AMERICORPS*VISTA SARA GERLITZ

Site Overview



The Okanogan County Community Action Council (OCCAC) is a community building organization which has served county residents since 1965. The agency's gleaning project called "Food For All" started in a small-space demonstration garden and has blossomed into a three-tiered program based on nutrition education, gardening and gleaning. Okanogan County is a diverse and rural area of north-central Washington State flanked by the Cascade Range to the west, the Canadian border to the north, the Columbia River to the south and the Colville Indian Reservation to the east. With 40,000 residents within an area the size of the state of Delaware, this county has a range of hunger needs. OCCAC is the county's emergency food distribution center, serving 8 food bank locations where 46 percent of county residents receive assistance. With the region's generational poverty, the unemployment rate currently hovers around

20 percent and continual declines in rural industries such as mining, timber and agriculture, the OCCAC food programs help this community in ways other agencies can't.

In 2009 the demonstration garden paved the way for the partnership between Rotary First Harvest's Harvest Against Hunger project that places an AmeriCorps*VISTA. After the first-year VISTA's cycle completed in August 2010, OCCAC continued this collaboration with and the second-year VISTA arrived in November 2010 to administer the continuing food program P.L.A.N.T. (People Learning Agriculture and Nutrition Together). The P.L.A.N.T. grant, which started in July 2010, aims to increase the daily fruit and vegetable intakes of low-income children in Okanogan County by gleaning 20,000 pounds of produce and increasing the amount of agricultural donors to the gleaning program. The three tiers of this grant and the gleaning program are: home gardens for low-income families on WIC (Women, Infants & Children); the on-site demonstration garden; and furthering the gleaning events at local farms and home gardens or orchards. The third and final year of the VISTA cycle will expand upon previous successes, by introducing food preservation education into this diverse approach to solving hunger issues for Okanogan County.

Volunteer Relations

Outreach

The outreach efforts for this program were heavily focused on making a community presence during the off-season months of winter and into the beginning of the growing season. Attending monthly meetings for existing community organizations and coalitions, local farmers market informational booths and having an active organization representative working with the community helped the outreach efforts earlier in the year. In a rural community "face time" is paramount.

Recruitment

Targeting organized groups during the off-season, outreach efforts and pin-pointing specific projects for these groups helped recruitment efforts. For example, a local organization has a commitment to donate one full work day per year towards community service. Instead of assembling a team from scratch, the Harvest VISTA reached out to this group and recruited them to volunteer with OCCAC by building a garden for a low-income family. Other recruitment efforts were made in public spaces such as farmers markets where new volunteers signed up on a general volunteer sign-up sheet. During early spring, seeds and surveys were distributed to food bank customers for the upcoming gardening season. Several volunteers were gained by this type of recruitment outreach.

- ...> Seek out existing organizations that seek community involvement.
- ...> Find businesses or groups that want to have a volunteer day, event or project.

Retention

As the age range for this season's volunteers was kindergarteners through senior citizens, retaining them was a challenge as different generations approach volunteering differently. Retention ranged from regular contact via phone or email, to a gradual increase of responsibilities forming lead volunteers. Some volunteers like working on their own schedule, while others like less responsibility and enjoy just "showing-up." In either event, flexibility is key. One-on-one attention and fitting the volunteer(s) to the event (or vice versa) seemed to be the best approach for retention.

Appreciation

A volunteer appreciation event was put in place last January as a way to generate off-season recognition to our 2010 volunteers and donors. A simple gathering with appetizers, beverages and mingling took place at the local grange hall. Additionally, previous end of year gleaning totals were shared and awards were handed out to lead volunteers and major donors. During the garden-building season and gleaning season thank you emails, cards and phone calls were administered to both volunteers and donors. A BBQ to kick-off the gleaning season was held adjacent to a Saturday Farmers Market and allowed existing and potential new volunteers to meet and learn about gleaning. Continual gathering events and small tokens of appreciation is the approach OCCAC has taken.

Donor Relations

Outreach

OCCAC repeated the outreach strategy of the first Harvest VISTA. This included off-season recruitment tactics focused on agricultural association meetings, trainings and farmers market presence. Communication by an gleaning spokesperson, in this case the Harvest VISTA, who is knowledgeable or experienced with farming or the agricultural industry and has a personality to engage farmers is very helpful in establishing relationships that benefit a gleaning program.

Communications

By attending farmer-focused events in the off-season and planning farm visits mid-winter, connections between the Harvest VISTA and the farmer could be planted or re-established for the next growing season. Being flexible to the factors of weather and seasonality is key, as knowing when to contact a farmer about a specific crop will vary by year. For example, the growing season in Okanogan County was three weeks late on average for most crops in 2011. This delayed the gleaning events from early July to the end of July for several varieties. Keeping the gleaning coordinator “on-call” to these elements of farming helped, but can lead to problems with volunteer recruitment. For example, gleans were sporadic and lacked a consistent schedule during the summer months. Scheduling ahead of time is key. Usually this was done through weekly or monthly contacts via phone to the donors.

Appreciation

Donors are called or thanked in-person by the gleaning coordinator and host site department manager on a non-formal basis, however, a seasonal newsletter, weekly blog and regular Facebook updates tout the growers who donate produce to the food banks. A gleaning graph was also developed this year showing pounds per farmer and crops donated. The pre-season BBQ and off-season appreciation event are also used to show donors appreciation as well as our volunteers. Tying in our donors to our volunteers is a good way to achieve community connections and future sustainability.

Liability

Educating donors about their protections under the “The Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act” is an essential part to establishing and maintaining good donor relations within a gleaning program. It is also an encouraged best practice to inform potential and existing donors that all volunteers have signed a liability waiver and confidentiality notice prior to any and all gleaning events. Determining donor preferences for volunteer engagement is important. Prior to a gleaning event, it is recommended to ask donors if children may glean and if so, what age range. For example a mid-sized commercial grower preferred that no minors worked in the fields as certain regulations currently in place within the agricultural industry. Other specific preferences requested included sign-in and sign-out sheets, hand-washing stations, restroom facilities and a no-dogs rule. Some farms were more stringent than others. Just make sure to be aware of and track each farmer’s preferences. Rapid adaptation to changing circumstances is key to donor relations.

Visibility



In a small community, such as Okanogan and the surrounding areas, visibility ranges from word-of-mouth, radio ads, newspaper coverage and general marketing approaches such as flyers and merchandising. A repeat visibility tactic is OCCAC’s annual “Food For All” T-shirt. This year an attempt was made to generate public interest with a T-shirt design contest. Visibility online was accomplished this year with the incorporation of a Facebook page with daily or weekly updates and a revamping of the “Food For All” blog. Our social media was mentioned in our quarterly newsletter and a link to our blog is on our

OCCAC website. Radio ads were utilized to find applicants and volunteers for the P.L.A.N.T. project during the winter months, which helped set-up recruitment efforts to pin-point agencies during early spring. Countywide outreach via flyers and brochures was also a way to gain visibility. One approach this year was a “branding” toward the marketing of “Food For All” by incorporating the T-shirt logo design into all documents, flyers and online materials, in the hope that recognizing an image would tie the variety of programs together.

Visibility was also attained through collaborative projects with existing local non-profits or educational programs. This year, in lieu of a nutrition education grant, a collaborative project was forged with a long-standing and well-supported community program of the local Washington State University (WSU) Extension Agency called Food \$ense. Five cooking classes were held at OCCAC and led by the WSU Extension instructors with the food bank customer. With the advantage of having a certified kitchen at the OCCAC office, this collaboration was achieved through steps gained from volunteer relation efforts earlier in the year. For example, the leader of an alternative high school class volunteered the students to build on-site gardens at a social services office located in one of OCCAC’s less-targeted towns. As we are hoping to inform the residents of that region about OCCAC’s food programs, this project tied two groups together to attain a common goal: gardens for low-income people.

Press coverage is another useful tool. Beyond networking and future alliance-building to aid the program, press coverage was achieved through this collaboration. Strategic press coverage tactics should be utilized for starting a produce recovery program, as it is crucial for the program’s success. Designate a press coverage cycle for the program prior to the growing seasons or any off-season events in order to attain visibility within your community. In rural communities, such as Okanogan, often the press for the local paper would be called ahead of a volunteer event and would pay a visit to the gardening or gleaning site. For example, a reporter was emailed the gleaning announcement a few days prior to the event. The reporter responded and sought more details. Using the host site’s chain-of-command, press coverage at the gleaning event was approved and the gleaning donor was informed of the upcoming coverage. With approval from the donor, the press attended the apple glean and coverage was attained.

Food Bank Garden

OCCAC started an on-site demonstration garden located at the Okanogan food bank and distribution center in 2009. Successive gardens have been planted, maintained and harvested in 2010 and 2011 with plans for continual use of this educational tool and fresh produce source for the adjacent food bank. Supplying a direct source of gleaned produce to a specific food bank is a great way to build a produce recovery program of any scale. Below are a few step-by-step recommendations based off of the third season at OCCAC’s on-site demonstration garden.

Location

Decide if the garden is on-site or off-site. On-site, OCCAC’s model.

1. Easy Access to food bank and customer. Potential volunteer source is your customers. Provide access to the garden during food bank hours with a staff or volunteer present to answer questions and for educational purposes.
2. Instant publicity. A visual demonstration of how to grow food generates interest to all who visit the food bank and adjacent areas. The on-site approach provides an educational tool at your host site.
3. Guaranteed source of produce. A designated source of fresh produce to the food bank keeps produce recovery fresh, local and reliable.

Scale

Decide on amounts, type, size, etc. Pick a baseline of “how much” produce you want to grow and fit the size of garden to your needs. Also determine which “style” of gardening to utilize. For example, OCCAC grows food for one food bank, uses twelve apple bins filled with a dirt/compost/manure blend and utilizes the square-foot method of gardening with organic practices. Hashing out these details prior to any further planning is essential. Identify the necessary materials and supplies necessary for the correct location and scale of the project. Identify potential donations to project. Designate the management of the garden to staff, volunteers, lead gardeners or groups of unskilled volunteers. Figuring out the specific order of operation will help down the line.

Work parties

For the project construction, building as well as planting events, can help generate community interest in the project. A maintenance schedule should also be arranged in advance. Assign proper staff hours and/or volunteer hours to upkeep, maintenance, replanting etc.

Harvesting Schedule

Coordinate with food bank distribution schedule and/or secure a convenient storage location with a cooler available.

Results

Develop a baseline goal for the project and how it will impact the food bank. For example, “increase fresh produce by 1 serving” or a survey of food bank customer opinions on access to fresh produce before and after the season are used at OCCAC. These baselines can be utilized for larger scale projects down the road or for future grants.

End of Season

Review surveys, production amounts, garden plans, successes, failures and incorporate all information into future planning.

Home Garden Construction

OCCAC planted ten gardens this past spring as part of the P.L.A.N.T. (People Learning Agriculture and Nutrition Together) program. The program included a gleaning element but was focused on home garden construction for low-income families receiving WIC within Okanogan County. The home garden construction of the grant included three elements of community:

- Qualifying families interested in gardening
- Mentors to assist families
- Volunteer groups to construct the gardens.

The goal of this project is to create community around a common theme, home gardens, by reaching a wide range of groups from WSU Master Gardeners to community college students. While community gardens are successful elsewhere, a history of failed attempts at community gardens and the geography of this region dictated a different approach. The rural setting and travel required to access food banks, grocery stores or farmable land vary throughout the region. By building gardens in the families' backyards, similar to the victory gardens during WWII, food security and access to fresh produce are literally outside the doorstep for low-income families. These gardens utilized the square-foot method of gardening and each family was provided one 8 foot by 4 foot raised bed garden as well as all materials, seeds, plants and irrigation elements necessary for this type of gardening. Through OCCAC grant sponsors and collaborators, gardens were planted countywide.

Below are ten points to consider before starting a home garden construction program.

1. Target Your Goals
 - ◆ **Recipient population** - do they have particular needs, like senior citizens, low-income families or Spanish speaking?
 - ◆ **Metrics** - measures of success like, “increase access to produce by 2-3 servings weekly.”
 - ◆ **Education** - skills training, nutrition, construction.
2. Develop partnerships specific to home garden construction. Pursue co-grantees or supporting organizations or find a self-sustainable approach. Clearly define a budget to dictate the amount and type of home gardens your agency provides.
3. Divide budget to amount of desired gardens for program based on cost-for-cost estimates on a full garden build and planting. Choose type of garden and materials. Look for donation sources for materials like plant starts, manure, seeds, etc.
4. Define selection criteria for recipients, educators/mentors, volunteer groups. OCCAC applications included a “needs survey.” Also considered were general criteria requirements, rental versus ownership information. This information was compiled and used to develop a rank-based system that took into account the date applied and proximity to available mentors. Site visits were used to attain important information in the process of deciding on recipients. For example, you need to see if a garden is even feasible at the families' dwellings. Other factors considered included availability of a water source and seasonal versus permanent housing. A similar screening was done for the mentors and volunteer groups. Inform all parties of their roles and the overarching goals of the project before they commit.
5. Campaign for applicants. Utilize media and program outreach venues. Review applicants based on pre-determined criteria.
6. Select applicants and determine schedules. Give applicants two date options to commit to a garden installation/ planting and then schedule based on their preference. Keep in mind that if a recipient can't commit to the build they may not commit to the entire growing season. For example, an applicant family failed to be at the garden build on the assigned date so a second date was made. A month after install, a site-check by the assigned mentor found the garden

neglected.

7. Provide pre-season engagement for applicants. A lead-up to the gardening season was not done this year but is built into OCCAC's grant for next year. Assessing families before the gardening season can help "weed out" commitment levels and can help determine what skill level the family has at present time prior to the program. Pre-season engagement was used via a mentor-training workshop teaching the agency's selected gardening methods.
8. Schedule, Schedule, Schedule! Scheduling was the biggest challenge faced this season at OCCAC. A late growing season, due to the long wet spring weather, plus multiple recipient cancellations led to a back-log of the garden installations and plantings. Pre-determine dates and limit recipients/volunteers to two options and stick to them no matter the weather. Assure materials are on-hand prior to assigned dates.
9. Growing season tracking and site visits are recommended to help recipients succeed. OCCAC partnered with individual mentors as advocates for the project after the builds. The end-of-season should include surveys, reviews and comments from all groups to incorporate into the next year of gardening and for measuring grant requirements of the program.
10. Review the program and begin strategic planning for the next season.

Gleaning Resource Guide #8

At Lettuce Link

BY AMERICORPS*VISTA MOLLY WOODRING

Background and History

Lettuce Link is one of over 30 programs of Solid Ground, a large social service agency that serves Seattle and King County. In keeping with Solid Ground's mission of "building community to end poverty," Lettuce Link seeks to create equal access to nourishing, healthy, culturally appropriate food by providing organic produce, seeds, starts, and gardening information to those living on low-incomes.

Since 1988, we've worked with community gardeners in Seattle's P-Patches to grow extra produce for local food banks. In the years since, our program has grown to include two urban farms that grow for the food banks in their neighborhoods, educational programming for children, annual seed distributions, and a backyard fruit gleaning program.

Volunteer Relations

Outreach/recruitment

We use a wide range of methods for recruiting new volunteers:

- Tabling at volunteer fairs, plant sales and harvest fairs, food- and urban agriculture-related events, and events held by organizations with similar missions.
- Emailing local listservs about specific volunteer opportunities.
- Neighborhood outreach, including distributing flyers door-to-door.
- Providing service learning and internship opportunities for local students.
- Posting on sites like Volunteer Match and Idealist.
- Using local media, such as Seattle's neighborhood blogs.
- Using social media, including Lettuce Link's facebook page and the Solid Ground twitter account.

Training

We hold orientations for new Community Fruit Tree Harvest volunteers before harvest season begins, usually in July. We go over how the harvest works, how to tell when fruit is ripe and how to pick it, and general safety. In 2011, we also started including a segment called "Communicating Across Differences" in an effort to begin an open dialogue with our volunteers about how the backgrounds of staff and volunteers can differ from those receiving fruit, and how those differences can influence our interactions.

When planning a volunteer training, you may want to consider:

- **Location:** If you are asking folks to volunteer in their neighborhood, they probably expect the training to happen there, too.

- **Timing:** Show your volunteers that you value their time by beginning and ending on schedule.
- **Visuals:** Ideally, you would hold an orientation under a fruit tree. But if that's not an option, you can still bring equipment to the training and demonstrate how to use it!
- **Paperwork:** Orientations are a great time to have volunteers fill out any remaining paperwork, such as applications and media releases.
- **Follow-up:** Is there a way for your volunteers to get started right away? If not, what can they expect next?

Communication

When volunteers fill out our Community Fruit Tree Harvest volunteer application, they select the neighborhoods in which they would like to help harvest. They then receive email alerts about harvesting opportunities in those neighborhoods.

Depending on when and where there is ripe fruit, this communication can be quite sporadic. To keep volunteers engaged and informed, we also send biweekly updates to the whole group. These updates include things such as:

- Announcements and logistical details that pertain to everyone.
- A running total of the amount of fruit we've harvested.
- What fruit we're harvesting now and what's coming up next.
- Upcoming events of interest.
- Organizational updates and events.

Recognition

We strive to recognize fruit harvest volunteers on several levels:

- At the harvest: Whether they've harvested 10 pounds or 100 pounds, it's something to be proud of!
- After the harvest: Many volunteers are attracted to the very tangible results of the fruit harvest, so they want to know exactly how many pounds were harvested and where the fruit went.
- At the end of the season: Lettuce Link holds a program-wide volunteer appreciation potluck at the end of the summer, but we've also held smaller gatherings for fruit harvest volunteers.
- Publicly: volunteers are hugely important to Lettuce Link's work, and we want the world to know. We post updates, pictures, and volunteer spotlights on our blog and facebook page.

Donor Relations

Outreach

We recruit new fruit donors in several ways:

- Asking current donors and volunteers to encourage neighbors and friends to give.
- Tabling at plant sales and harvest fairs, food- and urban agriculture-related events, etc.
- Emailing local listservs.
- Door-to-door canvassing*.
- Using local media, such as Seattle's neighborhood blogs.
- Using social media, including Lettuce Link's facebook page and the Solid Ground twitter account.
 - ♦ While talking to someone directly is best, if you're going to leave a flyer, remember that it's illegal to leave it in someone's mailbox. We tuck them in the door, under the doormat, or rolled up in the door handle.

Screening

We are very lucky to partner with Seattle Tilth, a local gardening nonprofit, on the intake process for new fruit trees. Homeowners can call their Garden Hotline and give information about their fruit tree, and the Hotline staff passes this

information along to the correct fruit harvesting organization. Our Donor Survey asks about tree health, accessibility, and homeowner concerns.

Communication

We get in touch with previous donors early in the season and follow up as needed. Most of our donors are very understanding about the back-and-forth it can take to know when fruit is truly ripe, but we try to streamline the process as much as possible. We've found it can help to:

- Give homeowners specific signs of ripeness to look for (ex. Black seeds on apples, plums just starting to soften, etc.).
- Tell them early on that it can take a few days to get volunteers together.
- Ask them up front if they want to be there when you come, if they want to know when volunteers are coming, or if it's fine to just drop by. Some homeowners just want to look out the window one day and see that the fruit has been harvested!

Harvesting

In terms of donor relations, there are several things you should keep in mind while harvesting:

- Leave the yard as you found it. If the gate was closed, close it on your way out. Be careful of gardens and landscaping.
- Clean up after harvesting. Try to pick up any fallen fruit and branches—often you can find the yard waste bin to leave them in.
- Respect the tree. Harvest carefully and don't climb the tree.
- Be safe. Besides concerns about liability, homeowners don't want anyone to get hurt!
- Leave a note or flyer. We leave a "Thank You" flyer behind, and often write a quick note on it about where the fruit is going.

Recognition/Follow-up

Just as volunteers want to know the results of a harvest, most homeowners do as well. We always follow up each harvest with a report of how many pounds were harvested, where the fruit went, and any other details about the harvest. For example, we'll often tell homeowners that while we harvested everything we could reach, some of the fruit was just too high. Or if the tree is showing signs of infestation, we include some information about tree care.

At the end of the season, we send another thank you to all donors. This letter shares the final results of the harvest and asks them to consider making a financial donation to keep the harvest going.

Community Fruit Tree Harvest

Lettuce Link's Community Fruit Tree Harvest (CFTH) is a residential gleaning program for fruit trees in Seattle. Since the program began in 2005, CFTH volunteers have harvested over 50,000 of organic fruit for local food banks, shelters, and meal programs.

Where to Harvest

The CFTH originally focused exclusively on one neighborhood, but word quickly spread and the harvest expanded accordingly. In the last few years, we have shifted towards a neighborhood-centered approach, in which key volunteers in each neighborhood serve as the point person for that area.

What to Harvest

We harvest mostly apples, pears, plums, and Asian pears. These fruits are popular, durable, and common in Seattle backyards. We also choose to harvest fruit only from unsprayed trees, in keeping with Lettuce Link's commitment to providing fresh, organic produce. Often, this can mean contending with wormy, scabby, or otherwise blemished fruit. While some locations can take small amounts of cooking apples, we generally don't harvest this fruit for donation. In 2011, however, we did harvest many pounds of wormy and/or scabby apples for community cider pressings.

How to Harvest

We organize harvests in a variety of ways, and each has its pros and cons:

- Send tree/owner information to the neighborhood Harvest Leader and he/she takes it from there.
 - ◆ Pros: Increased volunteer independence, more connected to the community, good way to engage new volunteers.
 - ◆ Cons: More back-and-forth for homeowner, can take a little longer, don't want to overwhelm Harvest Leaders with more than 1-2 harvests/week.
- Send an open-ended request to volunteer list. Respond to volunteers who are available with more details and allow them to self-organize a harvest.
 - ◆ Pros: Good for volunteers who prefer to work independently, can get trees harvested very quickly, saves staff time.
 - ◆ Cons: Intimidating to new volunteers, harvest can fall through, need to make equipment available to volunteers, need to make sure volunteers know where to bring fruit and what data to report back.
- Set a time with homeowner and put out call to volunteers:
 - ◆ Pros: Great for new volunteers, good chance to meet volunteers and build relationships, more control over harvest and data collection.
 - ◆ Cons: Takes more staff time, sometimes no volunteers are available (sometime too many!), more removed from community

Where to Donate

We deliver fruit to a wide range of organizations, and which one receives a particular harvest depends on what and when we harvest. Lettuce Link maintains a “Where to Donate” document on our website. We update it annually with food bank/shelter/meal program hours, locations, donation and distribution times, and preferences. When donating fruit, we look for a location that is nearby, open, able to take the amount of fruit we have, and distributing in the next day or so.

Neighborhood Harvest Leaders

Neighborhood Harvest Leaders serve as the CFTH point people in their neighborhoods. These key volunteers work with volunteers and homeowners to organize and lead an average of 1-2 harvests per week.

Coordinating with Tree Owners

The CFTH is lucky to have a long list of tree owners who donate their fruit each year. We contact them early in the summer and continue to follow up with homeowners throughout the harvest season, relying heavily on the Donor Master spreadsheet to stay organized.

We also do lots of outreach for new donors via email listservs, our website and blog, putting up flyers around the city, and tabling at events. Word of mouth remains one of our best methods for finding new donors, and we encourage all of our volunteers to look for fruit trees around their neighborhoods and to talk to or leave flyers with those homeowners.

Recording and Reporting

We use the donor master spreadsheet to track when we harvest each tree, how many volunteers help, how many hours they spend, what equipment was needed, and where the fruit was donated. We also keep track of total poundage by neighborhood and fruit type and also update a distribution log to show where the fruit is going and how evenly spread it is.

Plant Starts

Growing Food, Growing Community (GFGC) is the product of a motivated group of neighborhood volunteers who wanted to put a backyard greenhouse to good use. Over the past few years, they have connected with Lettuce Link to grow high-quality plant starts for P-Patch food bank gardeners. In 2011, they provided approximately 5,000 starts to P-Patch food bank gardens, community gardens, and low-income gardeners.

Where to grow

Although GFGC is a community effort, it is only possible with the enthusiastic support of Cyrus Appell, who owns the greenhouse and therefore stores much of the equipment, allows unrestricted daytime access to his yard for 2-3 volunteers each day, and fronts the water and electricity costs the greenhouse incurs.

That said, there are many potential locations for a similar project. In addition to private residences, many schools have greenhouses. You could fundraise to build a greenhouse on the property of a community organization or garden, church, etc. You could even invest in fluorescent lights and grow starts indoors!

What to grow

In determining what to grow, it's important to keep in mind the preferences of food bank customers, food banks, and the gardeners who will be growing the food. Early in the season, Lettuce Link surveyed P-Patch giving gardeners to see what starts they wanted and used the relative popularity of each request to guide the goals of GFGC. See the P-Patch Growing & Giving section for more recommendations.

Volunteers

There are two levels of involvement in GFGC:

- **Managers** – this group of 5-7 volunteers oversees planning, fundraising, and day-to-day operations. Each manager is assigned one day of the week to check in on the greenhouse. He/she makes sure that plants are watered and fertilized as needed, sets to-dos for daily volunteers, and checks in with and updates the other managers as needed. The managers group also takes care of:
 - ◆ Recruiting volunteers
 - ◆ Sending a weekly email update
 - ◆ Holding a volunteer training at the beginning of the season
 - ◆ Organizing volunteer potlucks throughout the season
 - ◆ Communicating with the other managers
- **Daily volunteers** – each daily volunteer is assigned one day of the week to work in the greenhouse, with 2-3 volunteers assigned to each day. They can work independently or arrange a time to meet (though the greenhouse can only comfortably hold two people). With a general guideline of 1 hour/week, they are responsible for:
 - ◆ Seeding new trays
 - ◆ Transplanting seedlings to 4” pots
 - ◆ Watering and fertilizing as needed
 - ◆ Recording daily activities in the greenhouse journal and on the tracking sheet
 - ◆ Greenhouse maintenance

Distributing starts

In 2011, Lettuce Link took responsibility for distributing starts, and we found it worked best to set up a weekly system:

1. On Mondays, LL picked up all the starts that were ready and sent a notice to the listserv of P-Patch food bank gardeners.
2. Gardeners responded with what they wanted and whether they could pick them up or needed them delivered. Starts were set aside on a first-come, first-served basis.
3. LL staff packaged and labeled starts for pickup. Gardeners could come to get them at the Solid Ground office Tuesday through Friday.
4. On Thursday or Friday, LL staff delivered starts to gardens that couldn't pick them up.

Recordkeeping

After surveying P-Patch gardeners, we were able to set goals and plan accordingly. By tracking how many trays we had seeded and/or transplanted as we went along, we were able to know when to stop and move onto another crop. We also learned:

- Using 18-pot trays as a unit of measurement made it easier to keep things consistent.
- We ended up with huge amounts of some crops after transplanting due to heavily seeded trays and not enough thinning.

Not all crops and varieties were equally popular. By taking notes along the way and soliciting feedback from gardeners at the end of the season, we learned which crops grew well, which ones failed to thrive, and how we could improve operations for next year.

Funding and Materials

Covering costs is a big concern for GFGC. In addition to repaying Cyrus for water and electricity expenses, the group also needs to pay for materials. We tried to mitigate these costs in several ways:

- Gardeners that received starts were asked to return pots and trays once they had finished planting. By repeating this request in every announcement about starts, we achieved a very good return rate.
- A local landscaping company donated enough pots and trays to meet most of our needs.
- We put out a call for large yogurt containers and cut them into strips to use as labels. Once you've removed the bottom of the container, using a paper cutter to cut the strips made this task much less tedious.
- Cedar Grove donated almost enough potting soil to cover all of our needs.

Of course, some fundraising was still necessary. One of the managers applied for a small grant from the City of Seattle, which we received. Another manager runs a small produce stand at her house and sold some of our extra starts for a suggested donation. This also proved to be a great outreach opportunity within the neighborhood.

P-Patch Growing And Giving

P-Patches are community gardens located throughout Seattle, and are run by the city's Department of Neighborhoods. Most are divided into individual plots, with common herb or flower gardens, tool sheds, and gathering spaces.

Since 1988, Lettuce Link has worked with P-Patch gardeners to connect the bounty of Seattle's P-Patches with the need for fresh produce in the emergency food system. Each year, P-Patch Giving Gardeners grow and donate over 20,000 pounds of fresh, organic produce to local shelters, meal programs, and food banks.

Where/how to grow

There are three main approaches to Growing & Giving, and many P-Patches utilize all three:

- Most P-Patches have at least one dedicated food bank plot, called a Giving Garden. One or more Giving Garden coordinators oversee planting, harvesting, and delivery, while other volunteers help with each of these tasks. All P-Patch gardeners have to complete at least 8 hours of volunteering in their P-Patch, and many choose to help in the Giving Garden.
- Giving Garden coordinators also encourage other gardeners to Grow a Row in their own plots. They are responsible for planting and harvesting, and there is often a designated area to leave donations, so that they can be delivered along with the harvest from the Giving Garden.
- Gleaning can generate a huge amount of produce to donate, while preventing waste and keeping gardens productive. Some gardens use a system of flags or stakes to indicate which plots/rows/crops can be harvested for donation. Most ask gardeners to alert Giving Gardeners if they're going out of town and will allow their plot to be gleaned while they're gone. At least one P-Patches asks each gardener to agree to "light picking" of his or her plot on food bank harvest days.

What to grow

- First, think about the preferences of food bank customers:
 - ◆ Learn about the customerele of the food bank you'll be donating to, and do your best to provide culturally appropriate produce.
 - ◆ Choose familiar varieties. Odd-looking vegetables benefit from a certain degree of explanation that food bank staff and volunteers may not have the time or expertise to provide.
 - ◆ Only donate clean, unblemished fruits and veggies. If you wouldn't buy it for yourself, don't donate it.
 - ◆ Herbs are often a big hit!
- Each food bank is different. Check in with the staff before you begin donating, and keep in mind:
 - ◆ Whatever you donate will have to withstand a certain degree of handling before it goes home with anyone. Don't donate produce that is overripe or easily bruised.
 - ◆ Ask about how to package donations. Don't waste your time bagging veggies if they'll only be dumped and repackaged!
 - ◆ Food banks that are very busy may not be able to accept smaller donations. If you only have a small amount of each type of produce, check with local shelters and meal programs. Anywhere that cooks on-site may be able to make better use of smaller amounts of produce.

- ◆ Most food banks already receive lots of potatoes and storing onions through the commodity system, and would prefer to receive other fresh veggies.
- Since the gardeners maintaining the food bank plot are often doing so as volunteers, try to keep things low-maintenance:
 - ◆ Herbs and vegetables such as greens can be harvested over and over, saving you the work of planting and replanting. Some will even reseed themselves at the end of the season!
 - ◆ Growing just one or two crops means less work for gardeners and larger harvests for food banks.

When to harvest

Ideally, you would harvest and deliver produce the same day that the food bank will distribute it—and many food banks would prefer to take donations before distribution begins so they have time to process everything. But if that isn't an option, you need to find a way to store and keep produce fresh at your garden. Many P-Patches have a designated area of the shed where gardeners can drop off produce they would like to donate. This area often includes a scale and logbook, extra bags and boxes, and a cooler for storing greens and other highly perishable veggies. Another great way to keep greens fresh is to keep bunches of them in buckets of water until right before they are ready to be delivered.

Make sure to wash the produce well and keep it separated by type. Check in with the food bank to see if they would prefer the produce be bagged or boxed. If you'll be donating a large quantity on a weekly basis, they may be willing to provide you with reusable crates. Finally, don't forget to label everything! Some of the veggies you've grown may be unfamiliar to food bank staff, volunteers, and customers, and some veggies are just plain hard to recognize, especially out of the context of the garden. Lettuce Link has a great set of multilingual labels available on our website (scroll to the bottom of the page).

Where to donate

Ideally, you will be donating on a regular basis (whether it's weekly, biweekly, or monthly) throughout the growing season. So when you're looking for a place to donate, choose somewhere that you can build a relationship with. Make sure that they are a good fit in terms of what you're able and willing to grow, and that you'll be able to come up with a delivery schedule that works for everyone.

How to get others involved

The more you integrate the idea of Growing & Giving into the culture of your garden, the more successful you'll be in getting others involved! Here are some ideas:

- Give new gardeners a Plant a Row sign and a packet of seeds along with their plot assignment.
- Involve the food bank plot in every garden-wide work party.
- Keep a running tally of how many pounds you've donated and let people know! Some gardens use a thermometer-style poster to display poundage, others challenge individual gardeners to make it into the "100+ club."
- Find a job for everyone—what can you delegate? Maybe not everyone can help with major work parties, but they may be able to deliver produce, water on off-days, grow starts, maintain tools, etc!
- Look beyond the garden. Many of the most successful P-Patch Giving Gardens have dedicated volunteers who aren't even plotheholders. Reach out to the community, or find a way to work with local schools or community organizations.
- Tending to the Giving Garden can be a great way to learn about gardening. If you pitch it that way, you'll have lots of eager volunteers who want to learn more!

[Looking for more resources? Visit our website and download our Giving Garden Tips.](#)

Lessons Learned

- Fruit is hard to predict. One of my biggest challenges this year was how delayed the fruit harvest was. Even though I thought I scheduled volunteer orientations accordingly, there was still a gap before the harvesting really started. If I had been better prepared, I could have gotten volunteers more involved in outreach and scouting trees during this gap.
- You won't know until you ask. There were times when I was hesitant to ask volunteers for help with something, whether it was a very last minute harvest or something outside of what they normally did. But almost every time I put

out such a request, I was overwhelmed with responses!

- Everybody likes plants. While working with the Wallingford Greenhouse, I noticed that anytime I went somewhere carrying a tray of plant starts, everyone wanted to talk to me! Some wanted to know what type of plants they were, some asked about the project, and others told me about their own gardens. Few could resist “petting” the plants, either. It was a great reminder that often times the interest may be there, but it takes something extra to spark a conversation.

Gleaning Resource Guide #9: Harvest for Hope

At Skagit County Community Action Agency

BY AMERICORPS*VISTA EMILY NELSON

Harvest Against Hunger expanded its project to the greater Mt. Vernon area in 2010 to build and strengthen produce recovery efforts in Skagit County. Great inroads were made the first year in expanding a gleaning project, growing a Victory Garden and rescuing produce at a farmers markets.

Brief History:

Skagit County Community Action Agency SCCAA, is the Community Action Program for Skagit County. Community Action Agencies (CAA) are local private and public non-profit organizations that carry out the Community Action Program (CAP), which was founded by the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act to fight poverty by empowering the poor in the United States and its territories, as part of the War on Poverty¹.

Community Action has a Food Access Department which runs several food programs. These programs include:

Mobile Food Express

- This program delivers food to the elderly and disabled who are home bound and unable to make it to the food bank. Food for this program is prepared by food banks in the county.

Basic Food Outreach

- SCCAA is able to fill out the paper work to sign people up for basic food (e.g. food stamps). This program does out reach in order to contact those eligible for the program.

Food Bank Distribution Center

- This is a warehouse facility with dry storage, cooler, and freezer. This site acts as a centralized location for large shipments of food that are delivered from Food Lifeline and Northwest Harvest. Every week, all 14 food banks of Skagit County come to the distribution center in order to get the food from these programs.

Harvest for Hope

- This is the gleaning program for Skagit County, which harvests produce from local growers. The program was initially started in the winter of 2010 and had its first growing season in 2011.

Victory Gardens

- This program encourages local gardeners to grow food for their local food banks, and donate any excess produce they may have. It was established in 2009-2010 and is now in its second year.

Skagit Food Share Alliance

- Program which uses money raised from the community to purchase food from local growers to go to the food bank.

Current Activities



Harvest for Hope was initiated in 2010 as a joint project between Rotary First Harvest, AmeriCorps*VISTA and Skagit County Community Action Agency. This produce recovery program gleans from local growers, homeowners, and farmers markets. The program focused on building relationships between local growers and grower organizations in the winter and spring. Through such outreach an important relationship was built with the Skagit Valley Food Co-op, which was extremely beneficial in reaching out to the community, and developing the legitimacy of the program. Due to a late growing season, gleaning did not pick up until late July, but ran rather strong for most of August and early September. During this time we have gained the trust of many growers in the area due to the program being highly organized. Next year we hope to expand the program to include fruit tree harvests from homeowners.

Gleaning Program Visibility

When trying to get a new program into the community, it is important that that program has a strong and consistent image. This sort of branding helps your audiences recognize the program, and assures them that the program is organized and reliable. Part of this identity should include

- Program Name
- Mission statement
- Catch Phrase
- Photo/Image

Program Name

The name of your program is very important. It is your first opportunity to convey information about what program tries to accomplish for your beneficiary. Whatever name you pick, you should stick with it! When names change it can be confusing. Try brainstorming with friends and work associates to come up with a name. Also, make sure there are no other programs in your area with the same or very similar name.

The name decided upon for the gleaning program in Skagit County was Harvest for Hope. After looking at different programs in our area we discovered that there was already a group called the Skagit Gleaners, which gleaned from local food stores. We knew to avoid confusion we did not want to use the word gleaners in our name. Thus we leaned towards harvest instead. We also wanted our name to have a positive tone, so hope seemed liked the right fit.

Mission statement

The mission statement is the purpose of the program. It is important that the statement is as concise as possible. This statement will tell your audience exactly what you are trying to achieve.

Our missions statement is: “Our mission is to increase the supply of fresh, nutritious produce to Skagit County food banks and hot meal programs through gleaning from local farms and gardens.”

Catch Phrase

This is not critical for a program but can be helpful. They are usually short and have a lyrical quality. This statement can often be found with logos. It is usually memorable, and comes to your audiences mind when they see the program logo.

The catch phrase for our gleaning program is “Glean it like you mean it!” It is short, and rhymes, and is easy to remember. We were aiming for something up beat that would get people motivated.

Photo/Image

This can be a logo for the program, or just an image you use with all of your handouts. This makes your program easily recognizable. Further, it is important to choose a color scheme, and stick with it. When you think about all the brands you are familiar with, a certain color and image always comes to mind first. These make a program pop.

Social Media

Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, can be a good way to keep stakeholders up to date with your program. However, it is less useful as a recruiting tool. Most growers do not frequently use this type of social media, and it is unlikely that volunteers will stumble across your social media. It is still very important, as it often allows you to show program pictures and tell stories. Use it as a way to keep people interested in your program, or as a reference to those who contact you about getting involved.

Newspapers and Radio

These can be very important resources for your program, especially if you are located in a medium to small community. Oftentimes, local newspapers contact information is listed on their website. If you work within another organization, you will want to ask around and find if they already have a specific contact. Also, be aware of the audience of your article, the more targeted information you can give, the more effective your article will be. For example, with a magazine specifically targeted towards growers you will want to provide information such as how they are protected from liability and what their benefits are for participating in a gleaning program.

Websites

Websites are a great tool for spreading information about your program. It is important that your program has one main web address. This is most likely going to connect to the greater website of your organization. Once you have this set up, you can multiple its effectiveness through connections to other sites. Take the time to search the web and find the websites of different agricultural, food, and volunteer groups in your area. Once you have a good list contact them, and ask them if they can post information about your program. With a link to your webpage you can limit the text that needs to go on their site, and thus make it less burdensome on the host site. In addition, such cross hosting can improve search engine results for your program and increase visibility.

Gleaning Grower/ Donor Relations

FINDING AND CONTACTING DONORS: RESOURCES TO UTILIZE

When contacting growers for gleaning, trust is the most important and difficult quality necessary for a successful relationship. Many growers are hesitant to work with individuals and organizations they are not familiar with, and for good reason. Liability is a huge concern for growers, as is allowing strangers onto their farm. **The best way to reach growers is through legitimate agricultural organizations in your community. These can include:**

- State agricultural extension offices
- Local business and organizations that work with the agricultural community
- Food co-ops
- State agricultural insurance companies
- Food banks

It is important to first contact these established groups with information about your program, and then ask them to either pass on the information directly to the growers of your area, or indirectly by referring the growers to you.

Suggestion: SCCAA already had a program establish called the Skagit Food Share Alliance. This program raised funds from the community, and then used those donations to purchase fresh produce from local growers. Due to this program, there was already a relationship established between SCCAA and the local growing community. Thus, the majority of growers that were originally contacted were already familiar with and had benefitted from SCCAA.

Talking to your local food banks is also a great way to find growers who are potentially open to gleaning. Many growers already directly donate to food banks, and therefore are open to the idea of giving produce to the emergency food system. These growers should be contacted as gleaning might make donating food easier for them.

Contacting Growers: Methods

When contacting growers you have a limited number of options:

- ...> Phone
- ...> Email
- ...> Letter
- ...> Flyers
- ...> In person

Phone

Cold calls are not highly recommended, as they often get a negative reaction from growers, and may make them less likely to participate in the future. It is ideal to call growers only when you have a direct referral. It is also best in this situation if the person who is referring you can be on the call with you and introduce you to the grower.

Email/ Letter

For those growers who are cold contacts, a non direct primary form of contact is ideal. This can include sending them a letter or an email. After enough time has passed you may then call the grower on the phone.

Flyers

To “recruit” growers who you do not have contact information, flyers are a great way advertise. Best are flyers that have pull away tabs with contact information at the bottom. These should be put in places where growers are likely to visit, such as extension offices and agricultural supply stores.

In Person

It is ideal no matter how you initially contact growers to visit their actual property. This is best done in the off season when growers are less busy. This gives you the opportunity to become familiar with their location, which is helpful when giving directions to volunteers when you go back to glean. It also helps build trust because growers get to see you, and know that you value your relationship as you are putting time into seeing them.

Also, use this as an opportunity to see their farm and ask questions about gleaning, such as: where would you like volunteers to park, do you have bathrooms they can use. Meeting growers in person also gives you an opportunity to be introduced to other growers. Let the farmer know you are looking for more people who are interested in participating. Ask them if they know anyone who might be interested, as they will likely know other growers in the area. Then, when contacting that grower, let them know who referred you.

Contacting Growers: What to Bring When Contacting Growers in Person

When visiting a grower this is an opportunity to exchange materials. Make a folder for the grower, which should include, but is not limited to:

- ...> Pamphlet with Basic Information
 - ◆ This should include information about the need in your community and how growers are protected from liability. Liability is usually a top concern for growers, so addressing it out right before they have even asked will assure them that you know what you are doing, and you have their best interest in mind.
- ...> Copy of the Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act
 - ◆ This clearly states how growers are protected during and after gleaning. Not all growers are aware that this law exists, so it is important to that they have a copy.
- ...> Survey With Questions About the Grower
 - ◆ This allows you to collect information about growers that will be useful once the growing season starts, plus it gives you a hard copy of their contact information. This should be kept on file.
- ...> Copy of Your Gleaning Form

- ◆ This shows the growers the information you will need from them when they call. This is helpful for growers because they will know ahead of time what information you will need from them.
- Copy Of Volunteer Rules
 - ◆ This is very important because it shows your volunteers will be well trained, and you are knowledgeable about working on farms. Also, always make sure to ask growers to tell you if they have anything to add to the list. They might think of something you have missed, and it makes them know you appreciate their knowledge.

By having all these papers with you it shows you are organized, have thought out gleaning, and thus will be successful. Also, the language you use to construct your relationship with the grower is very important. When talking to the grower you do not want to approach them with the expectation that they will definitely donate food. Instead, you want to address the program as a benefit to them, by making donating food as easy as possible for them. Let them know they do not have to make any promises, but you are just available to them if they happen to have some food to donate. Then, after having worked with the grower for at least a year, you may want to re-approach them and ask them for a pledge. However, this is not necessarily something all growers will be open to, so make sure to get to know the grower and assess whether this is something they might do.

Gleaning Volunteer Relations:

Training Volunteers

It is important before volunteers start gleaning that they have a clear sense of what to expect and what is expected of them. Making handouts that give them clear instructions helps insure gleaning runs smoothly, and you do not cause any problems that will lose the trust of the grower.

It is also important volunteers are aware of the Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act as they are required to follow it. Make sure they have a copy. In addition to this, having volunteers sign a waiver can add one more level of comfort to growers.

Coordinating Volunteers

Gleans are often hard to predict and therefore difficult to plan ahead of time. The best way to manage your volunteers is usually through an email listserv. This way, every time there is a new opportunity you can quickly get the information out to all volunteers without wasting time calling people. There are many different websites available for creating email lists online.

With Harvest for Hope we made a Google group in order to keep in contact with our volunteers. Anyone that joins the group gets all emails that are sent to the group. This system has worked fairly well, although there are a few disadvantages. It allows everyone to communicate with each other, so volunteers can see how many people have already responded to a glean. This can be a down side for some though, as it means more emails. Further, you have no way of checking to see if people are reading the emails you send out, which some other LISTSERVs can allow.

When sending emails to volunteers keep a similar format from email to email. This will save volunteers time when reading emails, and mitigate frustration if they get a lot of emails in a small time. The email should include straight forward bullet points, which can be quickly scanned. An example of what to include is below.

- Date
- Time
- Address
- Farm
- Produce
- Special Instructions

Suggestion: At SCCAA, in the first year of our program we had a limited number of volunteers. In order to cope with our smaller volunteer base, an email was sent out asking volunteers to respond when they were available. The glean was then scheduled around these times to include the ideal number of volunteers. Although this can create a few emails, it is one of the best options when your volunteer base is limited.

Once you have this listserv you can use it for other purposes than just announcing gleanings. You can use it to send out program newsletters or a thank you to volunteers for helping.

Volunteer Appreciation

Showing thanks to your volunteers is extremely important. Food recovery programs rely heavily on volunteers to work, and if you want volunteers to keep coming back you need to show them how important they are. There are many ways to do this, which includes, but is not limited to:

- ...▶ Thank you emails/cards
- ...▶ T-shirts or buttons
- ...▶ Newsletters highlighting volunteers
- ...▶ End of season gathering with volunteers (pot luck, etc)

Suggestion: At the end of each month with our program we send out an email called Volunteer Appreciation. Included is this email the volunteers are thanked for their help, told how many hours they have put in, how much food was gleaned, and the volunteers with the most number of hours.

Volunteers Taking Food

Whether or not you let volunteers take some food they have gleaned is a decision to be made by the program developers. This can be a great incentive for volunteers to come out and help, and is another way of showing your appreciation for the time they are giving. However, it is important if volunteers take gleaned food clear expectations are established from the onset. Usually this just consists of letting them know that they should only take what they will definitely use.

Gleaning Recipient Relations

Spreading the Word About Your Program

At the end of the day, the whole point of gleaning is getting food to those in need. Thus, it is crucial for the success of any gleaning program to have strong connections to the food banks and meal programs in your area that will ultimately be distributing your food. The first step is always compiling a list of local food banks and their contact information. Such lists often already exist and can be found easily online.

Next you need to contact these food banks and tell them about your program. If you are working within a county that has several food banks it is very likely these food banks have a food bank association and meet together in one place. This is an ideal time to talk about your program. Make sure to bring handouts specifically targeted to food banks. If no such meeting exists contact the food banks individually and set up a meeting. Either way, you will eventually want to make sure you speak with each food bank on an individual basis. Also, keep in mind not all food banks may be interested in receiving gleaning donations. Some food banks have limited capacity for dealing with food that needs preparation or cold storage.

Gathering Important Information

To effectively work with food banks and meal programs you will need a lot of information about how they run. This includes things such as:

- ...▶ Freezer storage capacity
- ...▶ Cooler storage capacity
- ...▶ Hours of operation

- ...► Important Contacts
- ...► Relative size of distribution
- ...► Their capacity to process (wash, bag, etc)

All this and more can be gathered in a survey. In addition to this survey, you want to write up a weekly schedule of their hours of operation. Even though they may only be open one day a week to distribute food, a person might be present at the food bank on non-service hours, and willing to receive donations. It is also useful to know what sort of tracking each food bank requires. Some will weigh the produce and record donations themselves, while others will prefer that you give them receipts. All of this information can be gathered during a meeting with the food bank managers or over the phone. To keep this information organized, create a spread sheet with the survey information of all food banks on one page.

Building a relationship

Food banks rely heavily on volunteer support to run, and are often built on a tight knit community of volunteers and staff. To work well with these food banks it is important to try and incorporate your program into this community. A strong relationship with food banks can lead to benefits down the road that you might not have expected, such as donations of boxes, volunteer help, or connections to local growers. One of the easiest and most powerful ways to build this relationship is to give the food banks something they are always in need of - volunteer hours!

Volunteering at local food banks, even if it is just once, can have lasting benefits. Logistically it allows you to get a strong grasp on the location and layout of the food bank, which will come in handy later when dropping off food, or giving directions to others who are dropping off food for you. It can also give you hints about the demographics of the food banks, particularly size of distribution. This is very important when trying to decide how much food to send to which food banks. Second, it gives you a chance to get to know the volunteers and staff and a feel for their “business” culture. For example some food banks are a little more laid back, and communication and behavior is more informal. Other food banks might have more of a hierarchy, and stricter procedures. This kind of information may effect how you work with the food bank. Finally, volunteering reflects well on your dedication to your program in the food community.

Volunteering at the food bank is a particularly useful activity in the non-harvest season as it can give you activities to do when work slows down. This is also a great time to volunteer because food banks are usually overwhelmed during the Thanksgiving and Christmas distributions and are in greater need of volunteers.

Victory Gardens

Victory Gardens can be a great source of extra produce to local food banks. The main framework of a Victory Gardens program is that outreach is done to connect with local gardeners, who are told that they can donate food to their food banks. Then they are given information about where to drop off donations. It is good to have a contact who can be called, and tell them where the nearest food bank and/or drop off site is and when it is open. Thus, it is important when running this program that the main contact has a list of information on all the food banks and drop sites in the area. Putting this information on a brochure or online resource is useful. Victory Gardens are very similar and in many ways the same as a Plant A Row programs. Plant A Row programs specifically promotes gardeners to plant an extra row of food from their garden. Victory Gardens asks growers to donate any food they have in excess. In many cases though, this “extra” food was planted on purpose for the food bank. Thus, the names of these two types of programs are often interchangeable.

Methods of Outreach

Most suburban and rural areas have home gardeners who are willing to donate produce; the most difficult part of this program is simply reaching out to these gardeners and making them aware that they can donate. The main avenues for contacting home gardeners include, but are not limited to:

- ...► Garden/ agricultural events
- ...► Local garden groups
- ...► Garden Supply Stores

Gardening/Agricultural events

Attending an Event

This is a great way to interact with gardeners in your area. These events are usually announced in the local newspaper or online. When you find out about an event coming up, contact the organizer as soon as possible about being able to table at an event. Most event organizers will not charge you to table if you are a nonprofit and not a vendor.

Table Set Up

When tabling at event, you should have a way to attract people to your table to start a conversation. This can include:

- ...> Giveaways
- ...> Games
- ...> Interactive displays

For informational purposes you should also have:

- ...> Sign-up/pledge sheet
- ...> Information Pamphlets
- ...> Business Cards

Suggestion: The Victory Gardens program of SCCAA created a game to get people to the table. This included color pictures of different foods taped to card board to make games pieces, and other pieces that have names of the parts of the plant. To play the game you have to match up the picture of the food with the part of a plant it came from. To make it a challenge we included some challenging produce (like tomato = fruit, and broccoli = flower).

Creating Incentives

For gardener programs it is more difficult to provide incentives, so you have to be more creative. One great incentive is seeds or plant-start giveaways. These can be used in one of two ways.

- ...> As Part of a Pledge
 - ◆ You can give seed packets to those growers who pledge to try to donate food from their garden. The pledge sheet should include a space for contact information. This allows you to contact growers and remind them of their pledge, and at the end of the season check-in with them to see if they made any donations
- ...> To Spread Information
 - ◆ You can also simply hand out seed packets with information about the program pasted on them. When they go to plant the seeds they will be reminded of the program.

Procuring seeds to donate is actually easier than it sounds. Most seed growers want to get rid of last years seeds to make room for next year's inventory. The previous year's seeds are still viable, and perfectly good for planting. This means that the best time to contact seeds companies is in early winter, when they are trying to get rid of old stock. They should first be contacted with a letter, and then followed up with a phone call in a week.

Local Garden Groups

Local groups can be found both online and through extension offices. Contact the group leaders using the contact information you are given. Presentations are ideal because it gives a face to the program and allows you to answer questions. Make sure to have hard copies of all handouts, as most garden meetings are informal, and thus a PowerPoint presentation will be of no use.

Garden Supply Stores

Leaving flyers and or pamphlets at local supply stores is another way to reach local growers. It is best to go to the store ahead of time and see if they have an area where flyers or business cards are posted. Bring materials with you when you go and ask around about posting information.

Tracking Donations

Tracking donations from local growers can be a big challenge. You are limited to two options, asking the food banks or asking the growers. You will most likely get more accurate tracking if you use the food banks. You should meet with your local food banks and discuss what tracking method works best for them. Most food banks already need to track all the donations they receive, so it could be as simple as putting VG next to donations that are Victory Gardens. If this does not work, you can instead try to contact the growers who have pledged at the end of the season and ask them how much they have donated. These numbers will be less accurate.

Farmers Market Gleaning

Developing a Program

Farmers' markets can be a great source of gleaned produce. Growers often have goods that will not keep until the next market. By donating this food it saves them the time of repacking and transporting. Before starting to glean at a farmers market, make sure to contact the manager of the market and get their approval. When you first arrive at the market, go around to the different grower booths with materials about your program and talk to them about donating. Always approach growers when they have no customers, which is most likely at the very beginning of the market. It is ideal when working with a farmers market to have a limited number of volunteers who consistently glean. This helps develop a relationship of trust between the donors and the volunteers. Also, make sure to have a tracking system in place, as many donors will want a receipt at the end of the season so that they can use their donations as a tax deduction. The more consistent and well structured the glean, the easier it will be for the growers and volunteers, and thus the more successful for the program.

Food Recovery Program Structure

Farmers' markets are set at the same time and place every week, and more predictable than gleaning. This gives you the opportunity to create a consistent and well structured program. Such a system will make it easier for volunteers to glean, and train other volunteers. This structure should include:

- ...> A specific food bank where food is dropped off, or which picks up food
- ...> A source of boxes for the volunteers
- ...> A method for exchanging materials

Food Bank

Suggestion: SCCAA gleaned from the local Down-Town Mount Vernon Farmers Market. There is a food bank nearby, and this was the destination of all food gleaned from the market. The farmers market is on a Saturday when the food bank is closed. After talking to the food bank we determined the best way to deal with this issue was to have a volunteer with a key to the food bank let our gleaning volunteers drop off food at the same time every week.

A Source of Boxes

Suggestion: The food bank itself was our source of boxes. After weighing and dropping off the food at the food bank, the gleaning volunteer took empty, unused boxes from the food bank and stored them in their car. Their car was big enough that they could keep them there without any interference.

A method for exchanging materials

Suggestion: At the beginning of the season the volunteer in charge was given all the papers they needed to track the food donations and their own hours for the whole season. At our office, there is a drop off box, so they were able to drop off these papers at the end of the market, even though the office was closed. This overall system saved volunteer time. Further, because the system is so clear, when volunteers switched off weeks, the original volunteer was able to train the new one in very little time. Another potential option is having the volunteer email you the data once a week.

References: 1. Wikipedia: Community Action Agencies. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_Action_Program>

Gleaning Resource Guide #10

At Thurston County Food Bank

BY AMERICORPS*VISTA DAVID MURPHY



Thurston County Food Bank (TCFB) is located in Olympia, Washington. Established by volunteers in 1965, TCFB has continued to grow since that time. TCFB utilizes about 30 volunteers each day it's open to food bank customers. Thurston County Food Bank has a large presence in our community serving 39,500 customers in 2010.

The current gleaning program began in 2009 with an AmeriCorps VISTA placement at TCFB. Previous to this, Olympia had a gleaning program independent from the food bank, but eventually the main volunteer departed and gleaning projects died. Our model is a centralized program with the gleaning coordinator organizing events, recruiting volunteers, and communicating with volunteers and farmers.

In addition to hosting the gleaning program, TCFB has launched a number of projects to improve its produce area including a winter community supported agriculture (CSA) program, a mini CSA program for children on free or reduced lunches at two elementary schools, a winter produce food drive at local grocers, a plant-a-row campaign, weekly work parties at the Kiwanis food bank gardens, and internships for students of The Evergreen State College focused on produce related programs.

Volunteer Relations

Outreach

The first thing to remember is volunteer recruitment is never done. Gleaning is physically demanding, subject to bad weather and intense during short harvest season. The vast majority of our volunteers will change from season to season. Our main volunteer demographic is 20 somethings who are often unemployed or underemployed. Many such volunteers work as many as 12-15 hours a week, but on finding a job cut back volunteering considerably or completely.

To compensate for these constraints the coordinator worked with The Evergreen State College, a school emphasizing community engagement, to enlist student interns. During spring quarter 2011, four part-time interns helped prepare the Kiwanis food bank gardens and school gardens for the season. Interns made vegetable information print-outs with cooking and storage directions for customers. In addition to official interns many students from Evergreen volunteer with our program.

Lessons Learned

- Internet classifieds are a major source of volunteer recruitment and Craigslist is the standout tool. Many volunteers who are between jobs or underemployed discovered our program through our Craigslist ads. My post was always titled, "Gleaning: Alleviate Hunger and Malnutrition." Postings expire after one week. Having images in your post of happy gleaners gets those potential volunteers excited. You'll probably have to edit your photos down to reduce their dimensions for uploading to Craigslist. Save time by saving your post as a document in a folder titled "Craigslist ad" with your edited gleaning pictures. I suggest identifying similar routine tasks and streamlining the process in a similar fashion as I described above.
- Encourage existing volunteers to tell their friends about the program. A volunteer sharing where they got those amazing heads of lettuce from will bolster group size.
- Tabling at volunteer events or events related to agriculture has provided some support. Often emails bounce back so you may want to write email addresses down yourself to avoid illegible handwriting.

Our first year gleaning coordinator made these observations regarding volunteers. "[Through various outreach methods] many potential volunteers expressed interest, mainly by email. The gleaning coordinator received about 8-9 inquiries about the gleaning

program each month. Approximately half of these people completed the application and orientation process and attended at least one gleaning event. About one quarter became frequent participants.” Don’t be discouraged if building a team of volunteers takes months.

Volunteer Intake:

When a potential gleaner expresses interest in the program, the coordinator asked him/her to drop by the food bank for an orientation, and to fill out intake paperwork. The intake paperwork consisted of the volunteer’s contact information, emergency information, and availability. The coordinator also asked volunteers to read and sign the TCFB’s volunteer policy and procedure paperwork, which mainly covers safety issues and customer confidentiality.

Lessons Learned

- When you receive an inquiry from a person who wants to volunteer, set an appointment with them for an orientation in the same encounter or email exchange. Eliminate the need for them to contact you again to get started volunteering.
- Don’t send people away with paperwork to fill out and bring back to you; have them fill it out at the orientation and turn it in the same day.
- Schedule your gleaning events to take place soon after the orientation. I had good luck having volunteers come in a half an hour before a gleaning event for the orientation. This strategy provides volunteers with a tour, description of the program, necessary paperwork, and a gleaning event all within the same day. In general, make sure to keep the process moving forward so you don’t lose the potential volunteer’s interest.
- Suggest they invite friends to come for an orientation. The more comfortable the volunteers feel the more positive their experience will be and the more likely they will continue gleaning

Volunteer Retention

Gleaning volunteers in our community are often short term. However, many do return as time permits. In ensuring that volunteers have a pleasant experience TCFB provides the following during a glean; food and drinks for events, while harvesting we play games, take breaks, and keep the atmosphere upbeat. We thank our volunteers after each glean and provide detailed information about weekly and monthly totals.

Lessons Learned:

- Sometimes you get a problem volunteer. I suggest talking with them directly rather than “misplacing” their email address or phone number. If they are making you or other volunteers uncomfortable, explain the situation to them and what appropriate behavior is expected.

Volunteer Demographics

- People underemployed or unemployed often stop gleaning once they find work.
- Students doing internships
- Students, often with their parents, during summer vacation
- Members of local churches (often retired)
- Other retirees

Agricultural Donors Relations

Thurston County Food Bank is set to glean between 40-50 thousand pounds of produce during 2011. We work primarily with six growers (5 small scale commercial farms and 1 service club who grows solely for the food bank). In TCFB’s experience, gleaning programs don’t need many donors, but rather key donors. TCFB currently has set gleaning days scheduled with several farms. Having a set schedule is easier on the farmer, the coordinator, and volunteers.

- Not all donors are the same. Let sites know that they have a variety of ways to donate. Find the right method for the

right farm and help make the process as simple as possible for them.

- ◆ Farm gleaning: Volunteers harvest produce from fields or orchards.
 - ◆ Cull gleaning: Some farms don't want gleaners in their fields. Instead they will let you glean their culls or products coming back from market. TCFB cull gleans directly from farms. We do not cull glean at farmers markets because other organizations already use the produce.
 - ◆ Cull gleaning is very efficient if the amount of food is large, because it only takes one to two people an hour or two to get in excess of six hundred pounds of high quality produce.
 - ◆ Farm drop-offs: Other farms will harvest and bring culled produce directly to the food bank. We don't count that in our gleaning numbers, but who could ask for a more efficient system?
- Be consistent with donors. If you say you are going to do something or be somewhere, keep your word. Keeping donors happy is the most important aspect of a gleaning program. If TCFB lost one of our major donors, we could miss out on as much as 10,000 lbs of high quality produce a year.

TCFB has organized over 80 events this year. The gleaning coordinator, or another paid staff person, has attended every event excluding two. This is to ensure the donor's property is not damaged and only specified rows of crops are harvested. Volunteers can easily make mistakes that can become deal breakers for growers. Be specific with volunteers and be mindful of their work.

Visibility:

1. Target your audience. Who makes up your gleaning volunteers? At TCFB our main demographic is younger people who are concerned about the environment, sustainability, and eating organic. This demographic also tends to be in better physical health and are able to do the physically demanding and repetitive work of harvesting. Speak to colleges and high schools, and when putting up fliers, target areas that are frequented by younger people.
2. Fine tune your pitch for specific audiences.
3. Speaking in the media or writing on community blogs is a great way to attract attention to your program. Often during gleaning presentations TCFB's gleaning coordinator has used such media as a way to highlight other key features about our organization. Maybe you don't expect to get a lot of gleaners from a presentation, but if you're present to the Master Gardeners you can educate them about your plant a row campaign and how personal donations of home-grown fruits and vegetables are always welcome at the food bank.
4. If you have a program that allows volunteers to receive a portion of the harvest ask them to tell their friends. People enjoy gleaning because it helps their community, they work in scenic agricultural areas, they are compensated with high quality food, and they help reduce waste.

Plant Start Distribution

Thurston County Food Bank distributed thousands of plant starts during spring and early summer of 2011. Other TCFB programs like the school garden project have plant starts grown for them, but the gleaning program received excess donations from growers. Use this opportunity to introduce yourself to potential donors.

1. Contact both existing and new agricultural donors early in the season. Tell them that your organization accepts plant starts. Let farmers know they are eligible for a tax deductible receipt when donating to a 501(c)3.
2. Check in several times with growers during spring and early summer. Often growers are excited that the excess starts are not going to waste and enjoy the reminder.
3. When you pick up the starts talk about your gleaning project and how they can get involved.
4. Be sure to water the plants at least every couple of days. Water in the evening so they are not wet during distribution.
5. Create informational sheets on the specific plant's needs like soil type, amount of sun, water, fertilizer, and planting instructions. Also include information on when the plant is ready for harvest. Optionally you could put up a sign with the name of the donor's business as a way of recognizing them.
6. The starts should be the last thing the customers receive before leaving the food bank so they are not damaged through the process of going through the line.

Building Strategic Partnerships

Networking in your community allows mutually beneficial partnerships and often increases your ability to meet customer needs.

- ...> Assess potential resources for volunteers.
 - ◆ Identify organizations and institutions in your area. Do they already do volunteer work? Hunger relief is an easy sell to organizations. When you tack on the added benefit of waste reduction it is even more enticing to environmentally conscious groups. If your organization allows volunteers to keep part of the harvested goods then many more (especially low-income) people will be interested.
 - ◆ Do you have universities, community colleges, or high schools where students need internships or community service hours? Would an entire class be willing to come volunteer for an afternoon or several? If an event goes well try to increase the commitment to an annual event or a series of events.
 - ◆ Contact your religious communities. Charitable work is a major focus of faith communities and their members are often long-term residents of a community. Faith communities can also attract younger members by highlighting their involvement in projects that have social and environmental justice as their focus.
- ...> Contact organizations.
 - ◆ Meeting in person with contacts from an organization is ideal. If the season has already started or you don't have time to meet with a couple dozen churches, schools, and businesses then creating a short but informative email about your program is a useful tool.

Starting a New Gleaning Program

1. Take a volunteer management class, at least a full day in length, before you start putting your program together.
2. Assess the following:
 - ◆ Your organization's ability to store fresh produce (How much can you bring in and how often? How are you going to train staff or volunteers on proper storage techniques?)
 - ◆ Customer needs. What types of produce do they want? Are you going to show them or provide them with information on how to use crops they are unfamiliar with preparing?
 - ◆ Where are your volunteers likely to come from?
 - ◆ What vehicles, tools, and supplies will you need?
3. Eliminate as many in-between steps to getting your donors and volunteers in place as possible. From the moment they express interest, keep the ball rolling until they are engaged and committed.
4. Use existing relationships to your advantage. If you don't know farmers yourself, take someone with you who does when you scout for donors. If you have personal friends who like gardening and agriculture, get them to come glean with you.
5. Research the crops you'll be working with before you start gleaning. Don't be caught uncertain whether or not to harvest something. For example: can kale be harvested after a freeze? Can plums be picked while they are under ripe? Is it OK to harvest green potatoes? Knowing these things ahead of time will make a huge difference in how productive your gleaning events are.
6. When possible, schedule gleaning to begin mid-morning, so volunteers don't have to choose between sleeping-in and participating.
7. Find key organizations that can provide volunteers during the peak months and establish ongoing relationships with them.