

NCCW October 2019 Member Call

Jane Carter, NCCW

FOOD SECURITY

FOOD SECURITY is probably not something that we think about. Most of us probably have **High Food Security**. We are blessed to live in households that have no problems, or anxiety about, consistently accessing adequate food.” When we run out of some food item we go to the grocery store and get more. If we get in the mood for a particular food, we add it to the grocery list. We find fresh fruit and vegetables in the refrigerator. We reach into the pantry or the freezer and find ingredients to CHOOSE from. We have food for meals, food for snacks, food for tomorrow and probably food for next week!

None of these are things are true for the 40 million Americans—including 12 million children. 40 million people in our country are **food insecure**. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as **a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life**.

If you think it is not in YOUR state—or your community, think again! There is a wonderful map you can pull up and check out the number of people in your state and county who fall below the SNAP requirements. It can be found on the feedingamerica.org website. According to the USDA Food Nutrition Service, the Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program ---SNAP--- eligibility for a family of **two is \$1,784** per month, and for a family of **four it is \$2,720** per month. And that is gross, not take home!

Of the 40 million, 10 million Americans are in the category of **low food security**...which means that at times, one or more of the family members had to reduce the quality and the quantity of food they consumed due to a lack of money or other resources needed to obtain food.

These folks rely on food pantries and ration food on a regular basis.

One way to address low food security are Neighborhood ‘Little Free Pantries’ –popping up all over the country.... Following the model of Little Free Libraries, the first Little Free Pantry was built in Fayetteville, Arkansas. They meet the needs of those working folks who make just a bit too much to qualify for food stamps, but still run out at the end of the pay period. They allow parents to give their Kids more than ramen noodles or PBJ for dinner. They provide a pkg of toilet paper or toothpaste, a small pkg of diapers or laundry detergent...meeting a need and allowing the family funds to make it to the next paycheck.

A few moments ago, I said that families lacked adequate food due to a lack of money **or other resources**. Sometimes the problem folks face is the limited hours that food

pantries are open or the physical location of the pantry is far from their home. **Little Free Pantries** in the neighborhood are open 24/7 ...and also anonymous. We know that many people are reluctant to let others know of their need or fill out paperwork with personal information. If the need is temporary...between jobs, new apt with extra month's security to pay, car repairs, etc, etc.....the Little Food Pantry fills in the gap.

What people who have built and opened the neighborhood Little Free Pantries have discovered is that their other neighbors often add food, toiletries and school supplies! And once a family gets on its feet again and doesn't need the extra food, those who used the pantry come back and donate for others.

It is a wonderful way to see how doing something small can make a big difference!

I have stressed that these pantries are in "neighborhoods" as that is how they began, but they have also popped up outside businesses that want to give back and churches that are too small to have a regular food pantry.

If this is a project you are interested in learning more about, the Official website www.littlefreepantry.org has all the information you need to build a cabinet-box and get started.