

# Our Neighbors' Food: Sitting at the Table

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## Objectives:

Identify crisis situations for families and individuals and their effects on nutrition.

Identify local sources of food for those in need.

Identify social issues that affect individuals and families when resources are limited.

Examine your role in addressing issues of food security for American families.

Gain a better understanding of poverty and food security issues.

## Community Service Activities

1. Contribute to the local Family Nutrition Program or other nutrition learning opportunities supported through K-State Research and Extension.
2. Volunteer at a local food pantry, faith-based program, community soup kitchen, or other places that provide meals and emergency assistance.
3. Share with another group the video "Hunger Next Door." (Available at the local or area K-State Research and Extension office.)
4. Sponsor a poverty simulation in your community. (See *Alternative Meals I-III*, page 3.)
5. Supplement or follow up this lesson with *Making Ends Meet Part 3: Using Community and Family Resources*, L-811 (Revised), K-State Research and Extension Publications Library.
6. Sponsor a local observance of National Hunger Awareness Day next June. See information at [www.secondharvest.org/](http://www.secondharvest.org/)

## Lesson plan:

Give each participant a copy of *Our Neighbors' Food: Sitting at the Table*, MF-2591, and discuss "Food for Thought" statements about food insecurity, hunger, and special populations.

**Share with participants these definitions dealing with food security.**

**Food security:** Access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes, at a minimum: (1) ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) assured ability to acquire those foods in socially acceptable ways.

**Food insecurity:** Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire those foods in ways that are socially acceptable.

**Hunger:** The uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food, and recurrent, involuntary lack of access to food.

## How do we know how many households are food insecure?

In a U.S. Census Bureau Current Populations Survey (CPS) the following sample questions were answered Often, Sometimes, or Never.

- In the last 12 months did you or other adults in the household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money or food?
- In the last 12 months have you been hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food?
- During the last 12 months did any children in your household ever go without food for a day because there wasn't enough money for food?

## Leader Note: Pointers for Hunger Educators

- Know your audience. Make sure you reach the people you want to reach by designing a program they won't want to miss.
- Have fun. Make sure participants enjoy the educational experience.
- Encourage participants to share. People learn best when they connect their own opinions, experiences, and feelings with those of others.
- Do something new and different. Try activities that give people a fresh experience – something they haven't done before.
- Aim toward the future. Plan an educational event so it leads to something else.

How might the questions on the previous page be used in your community? What might they tell you about your community's food security? How might they help your group decide some next steps?

**View the video “Hunger Next Door,” which focuses on the plight of ordinary people and their struggles with hunger. Use the following questions to discuss the video.**

- What were the various crises in the video?
- What coping skills did each crisis require?
- Could people in your community have a crisis similar to any of those shown?
- How did you feel about the individuals and their situations? Why?
- What help is available in your community?
- What could be available that is not?
- It can be uncomfortable to be around people in difficult situations. What would you be willing to do to help?

## What can we do?

Discuss what steps your group might want to take as individuals or a community group.

Volunteer at the local food bank, Meals on Wheels, or soup kitchen.

Reach out to people you suspect are in need.

Educate your children about hunger in the community.

Give your time, money, and food.

Make hunger and food security issues a regular part of your group's agenda.

Divide the group into teams to do a scavenger hunt to find what local food sources and emergency assistance exist, what each provides, and what niche is not being filled.

Organize a food drive.

Adopt a family in need of food security.

Be an advocate for the hungry.

## Leader Note:

### **Make the experience come alive.**

Select Alternative Meal I, II, or III (page 3) for your group, then repeat that or another meal to reach others in your area. Share with a faith community at a fellowship or missions event, or use the meal as an activity to bring together the hunger resource representatives identified in the scavenger hunt.

As part of any educational experience, mealtime can be a “teaching moment” too. A “meal” is served and funds are raised to help stop hunger. Use the following questions to discuss people's reactions to the experience.

What did you see happening? What happened in your group? What feelings did you experience? In what ways might your actions and feelings during the simulation parallel the daily interactions among people, countries, and continents? What actions might we take to bring about a more equitable distribution of food in our own country and in the world?

## **Alternative Meal I - Third World Banquet**

Tables are set in the manner used for a banquet. Seat participants and begin to serve the meals. One-third of the group will receive a meal consisting of only a roll; one-third receives only rice and tea; and one-third receives a full dinner. Alternate serving each type of meal so that some people at each table have each of the three different meals. Sharing may take place spontaneously. To enhance the banquet motif, you may want to feature a speaker, an awards presentation, or an appropriate audio/visual presentation.

## **Alternative Meal II - Hunger Restaurant**

Set up tables as they might be in a restaurant. (Alternative: Ask a local restaurant to reserve part of its space as a one-time site for this meal.) Use tablecloths, candles, and real or facsimile menus to set the atmosphere. Volunteers serve as host and wait staff, and may dress accordingly.

Everyone orders from the menu, but regardless of the order each receives a cup of cooked rice and a cup of tea. While people are waiting to be served use Hunger Facts from the lesson or other facts discovered in your scavenger hunt survey of local resources. For effect, the meal of rice and tea may be served after a length of time similar to the wait one would experience in a restaurant. (Alternative: Distribute food in uneven portions as described in Unlucky Potluck.)

After dinner, guests are presented with bills for what they ordered and are encouraged to pay all or part of the bill to help end hunger. They may also add a gratuity as they would in a standard restaurant

situation. (This money will be used as described in the event publicity.) Those paying by check should be advised to make out checks to the appropriate organization or hunger program.

## **Alternative Meal III - Unlucky Potluck**

Set up a self-service buffet line with a large variety of prepared foods. (You can do this most easily as a potluck.) The last three dishes on the buffet table should be bread, beans, and rice. Each guest draws a meal ticket from a hat. Tickets indicate whether each guest is among the “Haves” (1/5 of group), “Enoughs” (3/5 of group), or “Have Nots” (1/5 of group). Guests with “Haves” tickets may take as much food as they want from the total buffet selection. Guests with “Enoughs” tickets also pass through the buffet line, but can take only the last three items – beans, rice, and bread – and as much as they want only of the dish they contributed. (Their contributed dish symbolizes food they have raised.) Guests with “Have Not” tickets also pass through the buffet line, but can only take one of the last three items – beans, rice, or bread.

After everyone has drawn a meal ticket, those holding “Haves” go through the line first, “Enoughs” ticket holders follow, and last are the “Have Nots.” Special tables are set for the “Haves” with elegant place settings and the best view or location. “Enoughs” sit at tables with regular place settings in a less desirable location. The “Have Nots” either get unadorned tables at the very back of the room or outside the normal eating area – in the kitchen, hallway, or outdoors – segregated not only by their food, but also by where they are allowed to eat. Young children (age 8 or under) share a parent’s meal ticket and its designated limits, though they may have their own plates.



## Leader Background Resources

Every community in Kansas has the tools to make a difference in food security. Review and discuss the handout *Toward a Food-Secure America: An Interactive Continuum of Community Food Security Goals and Activities*.

(Community Food Security Resource Kit, U.S. Department of Agriculture, [www.reeusda.gov/food\\_security/foodshp.htm](http://www.reeusda.gov/food_security/foodshp.htm) – three-page handout)

Many faith communities have additional support dealing with hunger. Check Web sites or local clergy for added resources.

The Hunger Site: [www.thehungersite.com](http://www.thehungersite.com)

The Campaign to End Childhood Hunger, coordinated by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) [www.frac.org/](http://www.frac.org/)

Consider holding a local National Hunger Awareness Day next June sponsored by America's Second Harvest. Information can be found at [www.secondharvest.org/](http://www.secondharvest.org/)

Use existing opportunities to raise awareness of global issues. World Food Day is observed on October 16 to commemorate the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 1945. World Food Day is intended to heighten public awareness and encourage action against hunger and malnutrition. A new global coalition – Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger – offers lessons to enable students to gain a better understanding of these issues. The lessons are available on the FAO Web site: [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org) or from U.S. National Committee for World Food Day, 2175 K St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20437, 202-653-2404

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## Lesson Resources

*Kansas Youth Can Make a Difference: An Empowering Youth Anti-Hunger Project* (See Kansas 4-H Food and Nutrition Project Leaders Notebook.) Contact the local K-State Research and Extension office for additional information, or visit:

[www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/4h\\_y2/4H677.pdf](http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/4h_y2/4H677.pdf)

*Making Ends Meet Part 3: Using Community and Family Resources*, L-811 (Revised), Kansas State University, October 2002  
[www.oznet.ksu.edu](http://www.oznet.ksu.edu)

SRS Web site:

[www.srskansas.org/ees/food\\_stamps.htm](http://www.srskansas.org/ees/food_stamps.htm)

Pre-screening Web site to determine income level eligibility for food stamps:

[www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov](http://www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov)

*We Can Do That! Hunger Awareness Activities That Work*, Church World Service, Great Plains Regional Office, 3301 SW Arnold, Topeka, KS 66614, 1-888-CWS-CROP  
[www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org)

## Thanks to reviewers:

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