

Alexa Sandbakken
Prof. Mohrbacher
ENGL 500
26 May 2011

The Supplying Staples Program

Since 1990, the Cornucopia Food Bank has provided free, nutritious food assistance to central Minnesota residents. We have been recognized as the leading supplier of emergency food for central Minnesota. However, in the last two decades, population diversity has increased, along with the demand for nourishing, familiar foods. Therefore, the Cornucopia Food Bank seeks funding to buy rice, beans, and other ethnic foods that are dietary staples for our diverse clientele.

The USDA (2009) also reported that 5.6 million households received food assistance from a food pantry at least once in 2009, and that one in six Americans now deals with hunger (Feeding America). Hunger-Free Minnesota, a campaign against hunger, reports that hunger in Minnesota has doubled in the last five years, with 530,000 Minnesotans encountering hunger every month and averaging ten missed meals every thirty days. The largest minority groups within central Minnesota—the Hispanics, Somalis, and Hmong—are among the most vulnerable in regards to hunger.

The populations of Hispanics, Somalis, and Hmong in central Minnesota have skyrocketed in the last two decades. From 1990 to 2000, the Hispanic population in Minnesota grew 166 percent (Giguere). The number of Hispanics in Minnesota rose from 143,000 in 2000 (Martínez) to 4.7% of Minnesota's population, or almost 250,000 people, in 2010 (U.S. Census). Estimates of the local Somali population range from 6,000 to 10,000 people (Anwar), with Somali students making up around ten percent of the student population in the St. Cloud Area School District 742 (Espinoza). Minnesota has the largest population of Somali immigrants, and the second highest population of Hmong (Ronnigen). Jerry Jaker of the Minnesota Institute of Public Health estimated that between 60,000 to 70,000 Hmong now live in Minnesota.

Immigrants have dramatically influenced food in Minnesota. However, since ethnic food staples such as rice and beans are not typically donated, Cornucopia Food Bank would like to establish the Supplying Staples Program to purchase shipments of rice and beans from local food suppliers. All Cornucopia Food Bank clients will benefit from the increased availability of these ethnically diverse foods.

Cornucopia Food Bank's main sources of donation come from food market contribution boxes, farmer's market leftovers, and drives sponsored by local churches and schools. While these sources are enough to supply the food bank, the lack of ethnic representation is evident. The current recession has led to an increase of need and decrease in donations, especially for the dietary staples that are typically consumed by our disadvantaged immigrant populations.

The Cornucopia Food Bank is requesting \$5,000 to fund our Supplying Staples Program to provide ethnic dietary staples such as beans and rice to our increasingly diverse clientele. At our food bank, monetary donations can buy up to four times as much food as regular food donations (State News), and we will use this grant to purchase up to \$20,000 worth of rice and beans for all of our needy clients.

Bibliography

- (Feeding America) <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-facts/hunger-and-poverty-statistics.aspx>
- (Hunger-Free Minnesota) <http://www.hungerfreemn.org/>
- Giguere, Nancy. "¿Se Habla Español?" *Star Tribune* (12 Feb. 2004). Web. 3 Dec. 2010.
- Martínez, Daniel Eduardo. "Minnesota: Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932." *Jrank.org*. Net Industries, 2010. Web. 3 Dec. 2010.
- (U.S. Census 2010) <http://www.demography.state.mn.us/>
- (Anwar) <http://stcloud-somali.blogspot.com/>
- (Ambar Espinoza) <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2010/03/15/st-cloud-tensions>
- (Barbara Ronnigen) http://www.macalester.edu/geography/faculty/lanegran/courses/geog111/lectures/MN_Immigration.pdf
- (Jerry Jaker) <http://www.miph.org/blog/hmong-minnesota>
- Diaz, Kevin. "Minnesota catching up with changing Heartland." *Star Tribune* (8 May 2010). Web. 3 Dec. 2010.
- (St. Cloud employment information) <http://www.areavibes.com/st.+cloud-mn/employment/>
- (St. Cloud, Minnesota Poverty Rate Data) <http://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-St.-Cloud-Minnesota.html>
- (State News) <http://www.hungersolutions.org/newsroom/demand-high-st-cloud-area-food-shelves>