

Waushara Food Connections
Making nutritious food available and accessible to all county residents through sustainable, community-based projects that strengthen the local food system.

<p>Central Wisconsin Community Action, Inc. 1000 Highway 13; P.O. Box 430 Wisconsin Dells, WI 53985 (666) 251-8353 ext. 243</p>	<p>Pam Hughes and Sara McKee Project Directors pam@owcac.org; saram@owcac.org</p>
--	---

Community Food Assessment Report
November, 2010

Funded in part by a Community Food Projects Grant
 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Mission and Vision Statements

- **The Mission of Waushara Food Connections:**
 Making nutritious food available and accessible to all county residents through sustainable, community-based projects that strengthen the local food system.
- **The Vision of Waushara Food Connections:** Waushara County will have a thriving, sustainable food system where safe, nutritious and affordable food is accessible to all county residents; where local food providers have strong, viable businesses that meet local needs; and where key players work collaboratively in an atmosphere of mutual support and respect to ensure long-term food security.

Purpose of Study

- How much of a problem is food insecurity and hunger?
- Where do people get their food? Why?
- How can we improve access to nutritious food, especially for those of low-income?
- How can we strengthen our food system (including grocery stores, farmers, and food pantries)?

Purpose of Study cont.

- What obstacles do people face in getting the food that they need and want, and what are potential solutions to these obstacles?

Our Study of the Food System in Waushara County

- Survey of Household Food Use and Needs of low-income residents: 1300 distributed, 451 collected
- 10 Focus Groups: half with low-income residents, half with mixed-income residents (67 people total)

Our Study of the Food System in Waushara County

- Interviews
 - Local food pantry managers: 7 interviewed (8 contacted)
 - Local farmers: 25 interviewed (228 called)
 - Local grocery store owners: 5 interviewed (7 contacted)

Our Study of the Food System in Waushara County

- 1 Focus Group: Food Pantry Managers
- Price comparison of local vs. out-of-county grocery stores
- 12 Steering Committee Meetings: Input from community members and service providers

Study Results Overview

- Many people in Waushara County are not getting the food that they need to live a healthy and active life.
- Local grocery stores need more local residents to shop at their stores.
- Many farmers in Waushara County want to keep their businesses strong by selling more products locally.
- The food pantries in Waushara County are providing food to approximately one thousand and fifteen families each month, yet are not meeting the current county-wide need for emergency food.

Suggested Solutions

Improve Physical Access to Food

1. Offer transportation services and support
2. Improve sidewalks
3. Buy motorized grocery carts

Support Local Grocery Stores

1. Buy more food at local grocery stores

Improve Financial Access to Food

1. Lower prices at local grocery stores
2. Create community gardens
3. Expand fresh produce voucher programs
4. Teach people how to save money on food
5. Create more money

Suggested Solutions cont.

Make More Locally Grown Products Available

1. Educate/train farmers (marketing options, funding)
2. Implement a "Buy local" campaign
3. Offer more locally grown food at local grocery stores
4. Aggregate farmers/products
5. Get more locally grown food into the local institutions i.e. Senior Meal Site, Hospital, Schools
6. Create a farm to school program
7. Educate the public – nutrition & food preparation
8. Create a local farmers' market

Suggested Solutions cont.

Improve County's Ability to Meet Emergency Food Needs

1. Add another Ruby's Pantry in the Western part of the County
2. Increase the advertising for the Ruby's Pantry in Wautoma so more people participate
3. Collect un-used food from restaurants and grocery stores
4. Collect surplus food from farmers
5. Create a communication system for soliciting food donations
6. Use Ruby's Pantry's vehicles to pick up donated food
7. Use new cooler/freezer to store fresh food items
8. Educate the public – nutrition & food preparation
9. Deliver food to people in need

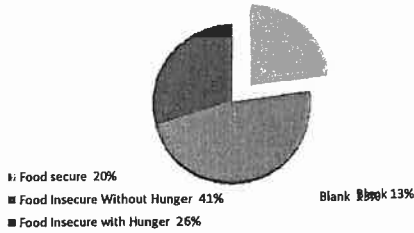
Develop Food-Related Youth Projects

Food Insecurity and Hunger

- Food insecure families may worry about not having enough food, eat inadequate foods, or skip meals due to lack of money. Hunger is a severe form of food insecurity.

Food Security Status

Low-Income Survey Respondents



Food Security Status

(Low-Income Survey Results)

- 26% of survey respondents reported that in the last year they were hungry but did not eat because they couldn't afford to buy food.
- 67% said they often or sometimes either ran out of food and didn't have money to get more, or worried about running out of money for food.

Food Assistance Programs

(Low-Income Survey Results)

- The vast majority of low-income residents know how to apply for food benefit programs and most know where to find food pantries (14% do not).
- Many who appear eligible do not participate in FoodShare (35% do not) and WIC (51% do not).
- The rate of participation in the free and reduced-cost school lunch program is much greater at 85%.

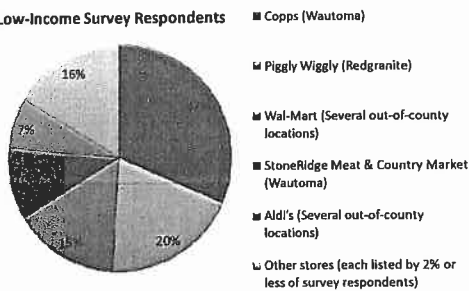
Low-income shoppers...

(Low-Income Survey Results)

- Stretch their food dollars in a variety of ways
- Get food from many sources, such as purchasing food at farmers markets or farm stands (50%), growing vegetables or fruits (46%), receiving donated food at pantries (44%), and hunting or fishing (36%).

Where do you grocery shop?

Low-Income Survey Respondents



Why do you shop where you do?

Low-Income Survey Respondents

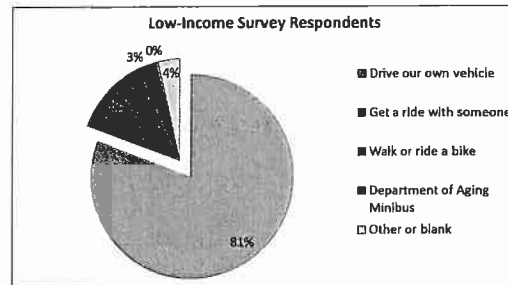


Why do you shop where you do?

(Focus Group Results)

- FG results support survey results
- In addition to price, location, and quality & variety of food:
 - sales/coupons
 - One-stop shopping/convenience
 - high quality customer service (including friendliness)
 - To support local businesses

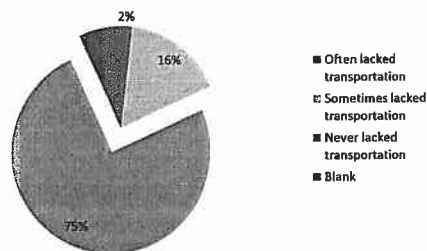
How do you get to the grocery store?



Obstacles: Physical Access to Food Transportation

(Low-Income Survey Respondents)

We didn't have the transportation needed to get food



Obstacles: Transportation

(Low-Income Survey Results)

- In the last 12 months, 18% of low-income survey respondents either often or sometimes lacked transportation to get food. (Note: this number is probably much higher in reality, as all survey respondent had some form of transportation available to get to the public locations where the surveys were given out.)
- Surveyed seniors-only households are less likely to lack transportation to the grocery store: only 9% said they sometimes or often didn't have the transportation needed to get food.

Improve Physical Access to Food Solution 1: Offer Transportation Services

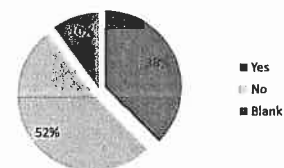
(Survey and Focus Group Results)

- Offer/expand local transportation service to grocery stores and food pantries
 - Department of Aging Van
 - Volunteers pick up and deliver food
 - Rideshare/carpool
- Offer gas vouchers
- Subsidize driving classes and fees associated with obtaining a driver's license.

Transportation

(Low-Income Survey Respondents)

If it were available in your community, would you or other members of your household use public transportation to get food?



Solution 2: Improve Sidewalks

(Focus Group Results)

- Create sidewalks where there aren't any
- Keep existing sidewalks clean
- Obstacle: Many people walk to the grocery store and have a difficult time getting there in the winter because either there are no sidewalks to walk on or they are not shoveled.

Solution 3: Buy Motorized Grocery Carts

(Focus Group Results)

- Find Financing for Motorized Grocery Carts to be used at local grocery stores
- Obstacle: People with mobility issues need motorized grocery carts to be able to shop. Many of the local grocery stores currently do not have them.

How far is your primary grocery store from home?

(Low-Income Survey Results)

- All low-income survey respondents: 16 miles
- Seniors-only households: 13 miles
- Residents of Western Waushara County: 25 miles.

Grocery Shopping Locally

(Focus Group Results)

- Most people who have a local grocery store shop there for some of their food needs (95% of low-income participants and 79% of mix-income participants).
- At least 27% of survey participants shop outside of the county for the majority of their food needs

What would make shopping locally a more attractive option?

(Focus Group Results)

- lower prices
- have more sales and don't use coupons
- increase variety
- increase the quality of produce and meat, stock healthier and more locally produced food
- cater to locals
- have larger package sizes and/or buy in bulk
- make accessible for people with mobility issues
- cater more to diabetics (stock more items and display them all together)
- have better customer service (be friendlier, have faster check-outs, and carry bags to car).

Price Comparison: Buying Local

(Price Comparison Study)

- When travel expenses are included, unless someone is driving out of town anyway for another purpose, or is buying a large amount of groceries at one time, it is more cost effective to grocery shop locally than it is to shop out of town for sales and lower prices.

Support Local Grocery Store

Solution: Buy More Food at Local Grocery Stores
(Grocery Store Interviews)

What do you need to continue to successfully operate your store in Waushara County?

- More local customers
- More local advertising
- Stronger local economy (i.e. more people, more jobs, and more money to spend)

Improve Financial Access to Food

Solution 1: Lower Prices at Local Grocery Stores
(Survey and Focus Group Results)

- Lower prices at local stores
 - Discount to all that shop— “get rid of money saving gimmicks”
 - Sell in bulk at lower prices
- Open local grocery stores in Hancock
- Open an inexpensive grocery store (such as Wal-Mart or Aldi’s) in Waushara County

Lower Price at Local Stores cont.

- Could stores buy wholesale products together in bulk quantities at better rates and pass the resulting cost savings onto the customer?
 - Most owners are open to learning more, BUT all five grocery stores interviewed have different wholesale distributors and several of them have computerized, automatic ordering based on available inventory.

Solution 2: Create Community Gardens

(Survey and Focus Group Results)

- Saves money
- For those people who cannot grow a garden where they live
- Volunteers help grow vegetables to donate to the food pantries

Community Gardens

(Low-Income Survey Respondents)

If it were available in your community, would you or other members of your household grow vegetables in a community garden?

Note: 46% of all respondents grew vegetables or fruit in a garden in the last 12 months. Of this 46%, 53% said they would grow vegetables in a community garden, while 40% would not.

Response	Percentage
Yes	41%
No	9%
Blank	50%

- Yes
- No
- Blank

Solutions 3: Expand Fresh Produce Voucher Programs

(Farmer Interviews)

- Create or expand current programs that provide low-income residents with nutritious, fresh food, as many residents currently may not be able to afford fresh produce.
- Currently there is a Farmers’ Market Voucher Program through WIC and Senior’s Programs

Solution 4: Teach People How to Save Money on Food

(Focus Group Results and Farmer Interviews)

- How to grow food
- How to store/freeze food
- How to save money by stocking up and shopping in bulk
- Alternative sources for purchasing food – buying clubs, co-ops, ordering online

Solution 5: Create more money!

(Focus Group Results)

- Create/Improve jobs
- Build the local economy
- Lower the cost of living (utilities, gas, etc.)

Make More Locally Grown Produce Available

(Farmer Interview Results)

- Over half of the vegetable and meat producers, and all of the specialty producers, currently want to increase their local sales. An even greater percentage may be interested depending on the project.
- Several options were discussed. The most popular choices: selling to institutions and farmers' markets.

Solution 1: Educate/Train Farmers

(Farmer Interviews)

- Marketing options (including rules and regulations) and contacts
- Selling to institutions, Senior Meal Sites, grocery stores, restaurants, farmers' markets, web-based sales, produce auctions, certification for accepting WIC and Senior produce vouchers
- Obtaining grants/ low interest farm loans

Solution 2: Implement a "Buy Local" Campaign

(Farmer Interviews)

- Campaign: Local food tastes better, more nutritious, supports local farmers, strengthens the local economy
- Publish free listing of local farm producers (88% of interviewed farmers would like to be listed)
- Teach the benefit and how-to of storing food i.e. canning, freezing, root cellar, etc.

Solution 3: Offer More Locally Grown Food at Local Grocery Stores

(Focus Group Results and Grocery Store Interviews)

- All grocery store owners interviewed offer some local products on a limited basis
- Main obstacle: "unreliability" (quantity, quality, consistent availability of products)
 - Solution: local producers could come together in some form to aggregate their products.

Solution 4: Aggregate Farm Products

- Easier for farmers to sell to grocery stores and institutions because if they work together with other farmers to aggregate their products, they are able to provide larger quantities with greater reliability

Solution 5: Get More Locally Grown Food into Institutions

- Institutions buy and serve more local food products
- There is currently legislation that would require local institutions to buy more food from local providers (5%-10% by 2020)

Solution 6: Create Farm to School Programs

(Focus Group Results)

- Fresh, local food served for lunch and snack at school & sent home with low-income kids on weekends.

Solution 7: Educate the Public – Nutrition & Food Preparation

(Focus Group Results)

- Provide information/teach about good nutrition for kids and adults
- Provide information/teach about how to prepare food

Solution 8: Create a Farmers' Market (possibly a traveling one that accepts food stamps)

- Focus group participants want more variety at farm stands
- 82% of survey respondents said they would buy food at a farmers' market
- 50% of the interviewed farmers said they currently sell or might be interested in selling at farmers' markets; 13% said they might be interested if there was a market closer to home
- There are a large number of Waushara County residents (approximately 14%) currently receiving FoodShare/Food Stamps
- Focus group participants want to be able to use different forms of payments at Farm Stands and Farmers' Markets

Farmers' Markets and Farm Stands

(Low-Income Survey Respondents)

If it were available in your community, would you or other members of your household buy food at a farmers' market?



Note: 50% of all respondents bought food at a farmer's market or farm stand in the last 12 months

Shopping at farmers' markets and stands...

(Focus Group Results)

Why?

- **Support local farmers**
- **Buy unpackaged products**
- Quality
- Price
- Variety
- Location
- Convenience

Shopping at farmers' markets and stands... (Focus Group Results)

Why not?

- **Can't use different forms of payment such as credit cards and FoodShare/Food Stamps**
- Quality
- Price
- Variety
- Location
- Convenience

What would make shopping at farmers' markets and stands more attractive?

(Focus Group Results)

- Lower prices
- Offer more pick-your-own options or gleaning possibilities
- Increase the variety of products offered
- Accept different forms of payment (credit cards, Food Stamps)
- Increase the hours of operation
- Provide "how to" information on cooking and storing different types of produce
- Make farm stands and farmers markets cleaner and more attractive.
- Better and safer parking options

Improve the County's Ability to Meet Current Local Emergency Food Needs

(Focus Group Results)

- Offer more
 - Quantity (more food or allow people to come more often)
 - Quality
 - Variety
 - Personal /Household Care Items(soap, etc)
 - Fresh fruits and vegetables
 - Bread, Cheese, Milk, Meat (or vouchers for above)
 - "Complete meals" instead of separate items

Improve the County's Ability to Meet Local Emergency Food Needs cont.

- Open more pantries
- Pantries keep longer hours
- "Pantries shouldn't only provide for their town"
- Make it easier to find food pantries (14% of low-income survey respondents do not know where to find local food pantries)
- Provide recipe information at food pantries

Solution 1: Add Another Ruby's Pantry

(Food Pantry Interviews)

- Food donations are available for another Ruby's Pantry to be hosted in the Western part of the county. (Ruby's Pantry asks for a \$15 per household food donation.)
- Need person to coordinate, approximately 40 volunteers, and a distribution location
- If interested, contact: John Roe,
Ruby's Pantry, Northeast Wisconsin Distribution Coordinator rubyswaupaca@live.com
(715) 281-0459

Solution 2: Increase Advertising for Ruby's Pantry in Wautoma

(Food Pantry Interviews)

- Ruby's Pantry has a site in Wautoma that currently serves approximately 160 families per month. There are food donations available to provide food to at least twice this amount of people. (Ruby's Pantry asks for a \$15 per household food donation.)

Solution 3: Collect Un-used Food from Restaurants and Grocery Stores

(Focus Group Results and Grocery Store Interviews)

- Current practices in local grocery stores
 - Most (80%) donate some items to the local food pantries.
 - Most (80%) return items to their distributors or wholesalers for credit
 - Some (40%) mark down items that are nearing their expiration date
 - Some (40%) grocery store owners are concerned about liability when donating food
- Perhaps grocers could receive a tax-deduction for their donation to offset some of what they currently receive from returning goods to wholesalers

Solution 4: Collect Surplus Food From Farmers

(Farmer Interviews and Focus Group Results)

- 88% of the vegetable farmers are interested and capable of donating their surplus produce to the local community
- Gleaning Farmers' Fields
 - Volunteers harvest and bring unused produce from farmers' fields to food pantries and others in need.
 - Refrigerated vehicles and refrigerated storage available

Solution 5: Create a Communication System for Soliciting Food Donations

(Focus Group Results)

- Inform people who have extra and want to give about how they can help, and inform people who are in need about where they can get help.

Solution 6: Use Ruby's Pantry's Vehicles to Pick Up Donated Food

(Food Pantry Interviews)

- Ruby's Pantry has several vehicles (including refrigerated) available for use in picking up large supplies of non-perishables and/or fresh produce. The vehicles can be made available (driver included) within a half-day's notice.

Solution 7: Use New Cooler/Freezer to Store Perishable Food Items

- Waushara County Commodity Food Pantry has just received funding to purchase a large walk-in cooler/freezer. This cooler/freezer will be available for use by food pantries throughout the county.
- If needed, more cold storage space is available at Ruby's Pantry's headquarters in Waupaca

Solution 8: Educate the Public – Nutrition & Food Preparation

(Food Pantry Interviews and Focus Group Results)

- Offer food preparation classes
- Offer food tastings at the Waushara County Commodity Food Pantry (food from that week's donations are made into a meal that people can taste. They can also take the recipe home with them)
- Put together a recipe/cookbook for food pantry recipients including a section on good nutrition for kids and adults, and a section on specialty health needs such as diets for people with diabetes, high-cholesterol, gluten intolerance, etc.

Solution 9: Deliver Food to People in Need

(Survey Results, Focus Group Results, & Food Pantry Interviews)

- In the last 12 months, 18% of low-income residents surveyed either often or sometimes lacked transportation to get food. (Note: this number is probably much higher in reality, as all survey respondents had some form of transportation available to get to the public locations where the surveys were given out.)
- Food pantry managers said they were aware of individuals in need who were not receiving food donations because they were not able to get to the pantries.

Develop Food-Related Youth Projects

(Focus Group Results)

- Get youth involved volunteering – food pantries, gleaning projects, Community Gardens, CSA projects, etc.
- Teach kids in school where food comes from and how to grow it.

For more information

Please contact us.
We'd love to hear your feedback and suggestions.



Waushara Food Connections

Making nutritious food available and accessible to all county residents through sustainable, community-based projects that strengthen the local food system

Central Wisconsin Community Action, Inc.
1000 Highway 13; P.O. Box 430
Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965
(608) 254-8353 ext. 243

Fam Hughes and Sara McKee
Project Directors
pam@cwac.org; saram@cwac.org