



Advocates for Older Adults Begin Monthly Distribution of Supplemental Food

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Scarborough, Maine—On Monday April 12 the Southern Maine Agency on Aging will press “send” on a system to distribute U.S. commodity foods to people age 60 or older living in Cumberland, York and Oxford counties. Distribution for the remaining 13 Maine counties will be handled by “sister” area agencies on aging (Aroostook, Eastern and Spectrum Generations) and by Western Maine Community Action.

Commodity foods, otherwise known as surplus, non-perishable food from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, have arrived in Maine where either food pantries or community program sites have agreed to take the food. Older adults or their representatives will pick up the food at these local sites.

Southern Maine Agency on Aging can accept 100 more applications when they will have 666 people enrolled. To qualify, household income is limited to \$14,088 for one person per year and a household of two can have a gross income up to \$18,960.

The Maine Department of Agriculture asked for enough food for 9,000 older adults; however, for now only 2,814 people will be served. Advocates for seniors are confident that more food will be available when the new federal fiscal year begins October 1, 2010.

“We know there are many more people who are entitled to this food,” says Ted Trainer, Director of Healthy Aging programs at the Southern Maine Agency on Aging. “What we have now really is a drop in the bucket. We anticipate that the supplemental food for 9,000 households will be here by October.” Trainer encourages older adults to call the statewide, toll-free number 1-877-353-3771 to apply.

Food includes cereal, juices, canned fruits and vegetables, pasta, canned meats and stews, peanut butter and dairy products including two pounds of reduced-

fat cheese—the only refrigerated food item in the monthly package. Foods will vary from month-to-month. A complete list of foods can be found on the USDA web site: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/fy10-csfpfoods.pdf> Recipes for using the foods at http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/csfp/cfs_csfp.htm

Hunger in Maine among older people

- The State of Maine has the highest rate of food insecurity in New England at 13.7%. The national average is 12.2%. The number of Mainers who are food insecure increased by more than 15% between 2006 and 2008 (USDA, 2008).
- Of the 1,600 people assessed for the Meals on Wheels Program of the Southern Maine Agency on Aging in 2008-2009, 71% were at either moderate or high nutritional risk. (SMAA, Determine Checklist, 2009)
- Living alone increases the rate of nutritional risk. Of the 183,402 people age 65 and older in Maine, 55,483 or 30.3% live alone. Women comprise 76% of those people living alone. (US Census 2000.)
- In Cumberland County alone, 776 men and 2,023 women 65 and older have incomes of less than the poverty level. (US Census 2000)
- The majority of Maine's elderly people live on incomes of less than \$15,000 a year. (Office of Elder Services.)
- Currently people between the ages of 60 and 64 are more likely to be at risk of hunger than older adults. This Baby Boomer generation will soon become a significant population facing an unmet food need. Older people with difficulties obtaining food had higher levels of depression, poorer quality of life, and lower levels of physical performance and there is "a positive relationship between food insecurity and obesity among seniors." (Meals on Wheels Association of America, 2008)

Maine Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CFSP)

- In York and Cumberland counties the Southern Maine Agency on Aging will be arranging for 666 people over age 60 to receive USDA commodity food monthly through Wayside Food Rescue (Cumberland) and York County Shelter Programs (York).
- Recipients must have an income of 130% or less of the national poverty level, \$14,088 or less for one person.

- There are an estimated 5,000 older people in York and Cumberland counties who are eligible for this commodity food, yet only 666 people or 13% of that 5,000 will get food.
- The state of Maine requested 9,000 monthly units for the CFSP and received 2,814. It is expected that demand statewide will greatly exceed supply, and people will be put on waiting lists.
- The number of seniors living alone who seek help from food pantries in the U.S. increased 81% to 408,000 in 2008, compared to 225,000 in 2006. (Associated Press, Maine Sunday Telegram 11/29/2009)

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