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Growing Need for Food



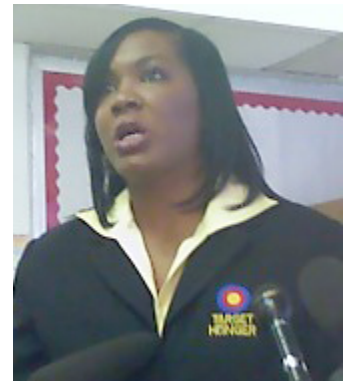
November 16, 2010

by: Pat Hernandez

The Houston Food Bank says it is distributing more food than ever before because the demand is growing. The appeal for help is not just for the holidays. Pat Hernandez has more.

It's called food insecurity, which means that people who need food can't be certain they'll get fed in

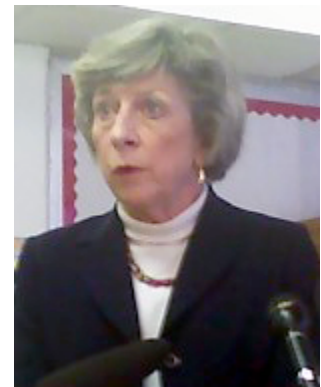
the future. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Texas has the second highest rate of food insecurity in the country, after Arizona. Target Hunger provides food to families primarily in the inner city neighborhoods. Last year, it helped 98-hundred people a month, but Executive Director Clara Cooper says that number will exceed 13-thousand per month this year.



"It's been a challenge for us, trying to keep up with the demand. Again the resources, donation, and also the food supply is not keeping up as quick as the people that are coming in, walking in through our door. So, the need is great, but Houston is a great community, people always come through, and we're counting on that's gonna happen that."

Jean Kegler is executive director of ECHOS, an outreach ministry in SW Houston. They help people complete and submit applications for public services, like food stamps.

"People come in, wanting food stamps, they have no food in their pantry. So we do keep on-hand a stock of non- perishable basic foods, so that when people come, they can get their application completed. We can fax it in for them, submit it to them, get them pointed in the right direction for their interviews, and send them out with something that will feed their family for the next three or four days."



She says when families have to pay bills, food is the expendable but she adds that hunger is more than a crisis.

"As a non-profit who believes in collaboration, I think we can work together. I think we can come together as a community and begin to resolve this problem. I think the Food Bank, the pantries, the churches, the schools, we can come together and we can do something about this. Lots will be done"

obviously over the holidays. Hunger goes on, but together we can lift the problem."

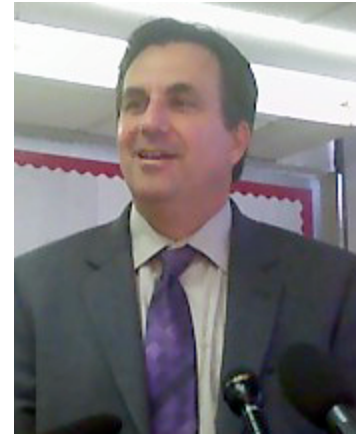
Brian Greene is president of the Houston Food Bank. He says that the need for food assistance will continue to increase, thanks in part to the economy, changing workforce and projections for elevated high school drop-out rates.

"We just finished a survey with the member agencies of Houston Food Bank, and the majority of the agencies report an increase in number of households requesting food assistance of between 25 and 50 percent."

Greene says they're seeing a very dramatic increase for food assistance from partner agencies.

"Even though distribution by Houston Food Bank has gone up by 14-percent in the last few months compared to the previous year, we are being outstripped and the area pantries are reporting they are not receiving nearly enough product from Houston Food Bank and we are appealing to the community for help."

Greene says he expects the growing problem to last months, if not longer. If you'd like to help, visit www.houstonfoodbank.org.



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