

USDA
TWC Partnership Series Webinar Public 5.4.2012

Ms. Julie Curti:

Welcome and thank you for standing by. All participants will be able to listen only until the question and answer portion of today's conference; to ask a question please press star (*), one (1). Today's conference will be recorded, if you have an objections please disconnect at this time. I would now like to turn this conference over to Mr. Max Finberg. Sir you may begin.

Mr. Max Finberg:

Thank you very much Julie and thank you all for being willing to spend a little of your afternoon, or morning for our west coast friends, talking about how we can connect for success with the US Department of Agriculture; it is a lovely day here in our nation's capital and, again, I am very, very grateful that you would join us for this: the first in our "Together We Can" Partnership Series. I am particularly excited that my boss, the Chief of Staff of the entire US Department of Agriculture, is joining us to provide a welcome this afternoon. Krysta Harden serves as Chief of Staff for all one hundred thousand, seven hundred and ten employees of the Department of Agriculture and has done a fabulous job in helping to guide our work. Had done a terrific job with Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, in positioning this department where it is. She comes from South Georgia, and those community roots serve her well as she was able to bring the Secretary back to her home to dine with mom, dad, and her sister. She knows more than most the importance of partnerships in doing the work that we do. I am pleased to introduce my boss, Krysta Harden, the Chief of Staff of USDA.

Ms. Krysta Harden:

Thank you Max, I appreciate that, I wish I had the ability to give you a raise but I don't. Anyway, lots of thanks and thanks to all of you who are on the phone. USDA just cannot exist, and we would not be able to fix the lives that we do, without folks just like you around the country. Max gave you a bit of my background. I came from the private sector to the government having, a long time ago, starting on Capitol Hill. The bulk of my career has been in the private sector and I know the value and the importance of partnerships and leveraging limited resources, which can be money, but can also be time and effort and people. When we work together we accomplish so much more.

We very much appreciate your time, your commitment, and wanting to learn more about the opportunities, the programs and the policies that we have at USDA. Yesterday was a really special day for our agency; we celebrated 150 years of existence. If you put it in a perspective, President Lincoln established USDA in the midst of the civil war; it was a pretty hectic time, you would think for a president. A lot going on—a lot of priorities, and distractions, he could have been dealing with, but he maintained a vision. He saw the importance, and the significance, of what farmers, ranchers, and folks in rural areas do and how they impact every American. He spent time during those crazy days to make sure that the peoples department, what he [President Lincoln] called it, was established. We live on that legacy at the USDA but we don't just look back, we are looking forward. The challenges of today are just as significant in other ways as the time when our department was created; we can only look

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ahead to the future for our kids, grand kids, and the next generations if we're working together. We think we can help each other during this time. The Secretary today is in Pennsylvania at Penn State celebrating the partnerships we have with Universities, colleges, community colleges, and other learning institutions. So he takes very seriously, previously as a small town Mayor, the importance of what happens when we work together to solve problems instead of pointing fingers at each other, we can come together for common ground. I just thank all of you for your time and your interest; I know that we can find ways to work together. This is the first of many of these types of sessions, and I look forward to the future of what we can accomplish together. So thank you Max for organizing this, and thank you for giving me just a couple of minutes to say hello and to recognize and welcome everyone on the phone for taking time from their busy careers to learn more about USDA.

MF: Thank you very much for that Krysta. I appreciate that. And my thanks to everybody on. It is very clear both from Secretary Vilsack who started life in a Catholic orphanage, to Krysta's work with her Methodist church across the way in Virginia, that some of our faith-based partners are absolutely essential to the work we do and that extends to secular non-profits and community groups of all sorts.

Before getting into the meat of it, just a few housekeeping details if you are unfamiliar with this wonderful webinar tool of technology: there are a couple of handouts that you can access through the icon, up top on the right hand side, with the great pieces of paper together. If you want to ask a question from the webinar tool just hit the Q&A button there on the upper left hand side and you can type one in; we will do questions both from there as well as via the phone where when we get to the Q&A period, all you do is hit star (*) one (1) to un-mute your line, and we will be able to do it that way as well. Just to get things started we have an opening poll just to get a better sense of the folks on the line. [The question asks] What type of organization do you work or volunteer with and then, have you worked with USDA before? For those of you in front of a computer go ahead and vote now; this will give us a better sense of the audience and who we're talking with. We've got a number of different choices there, and will be getting a wide variety of responses from the folks that we were able to reach and who were able to join us this afternoon. That gives us a little sense, at least, of who's on the line and we are grateful.

Have you ever worked with USDA before? I am just curious if your organization, non-profit, faith based organizations, state, local, tribal governments, university, otherwise what other organization have you worked with? We see that about half have and a little more than 1/3 have not. And there are some who are unsure if we have worked together. Again, [I am] thanking you for giving us a better sense of who is on the line. So, to get started, the President recognized the importance of both nonprofit organizations and faith based and community groups early on in his life as he served as a community organizer in the Southside of Chicago working with unemployed steel mill workers. He realized that the people who were really helping him day and in day out were those community organizations. And, when he became President within days he signed an executive order that revamped, revitalized, and renamed the faith-based initiative. We are very grateful to have had bi partisan commitment to recognizing the importance of faith-based and community organizations in

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our neighborhoods and communities around the country. So, what exists is a small White House Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood partnerships and then there are a baker's dozen of these centers around the federal government which I will touch upon in a minute. From the very beginning, our focus has been on building the partnerships between government, faith-based and neighborhood groups for a purpose: so we can better serve individuals-- especially those in need. And these four priorities have really guided our work over the last three and a half years. As I mentioned, there are a dozen more of these faith-based and neighborhood partnership centers in different parts of the federal government. Listed here, but also one of the most important websites I will leave you with is whitehouse.gov/partnerships. We recognize that many of you and the organizations you work and volunteer with are not single issue organizations and that you're trying to meet the needs of people who are coming through your doors—and they are usually varied. And so our sister centers might be able to help with issues around housing, or working with veterans, or jobs, or reentry work and some of the responsible fatherhood stuff that we do. All of that is available right there at whitehouse.gov/partnerships to access my counterparts around governments and different centers.

Here, at the Department of Agriculture, as Krysta touched upon, we are 150 years and a day old and a day and proud of it. We are very varied in the work that we do along these four strategic goals. We will be focusing a good bit on the first one of helping ensure that the 1 in 4 Americans who use our nutrition assistance programs have access to safe, nutritious, and balanced meals, as well as all the other Americans that we service through other means: revitalizing rural communities, making sure we work with our environment and natural resources—especially with conservation-- and looking at how we can promote American products overseas and helping to feed hungry people in a variety of ways, are the four goals that USDA has. For those of you who have those organograms and flow charts that gives you a sense of how USDA is divided up in seven different mission areas [please follow along] as we refer to them. The bullet points and dots underneath are the various different agencies that the Department of Agriculture has. For example, the forest service works with the almost two hundred million acres of forest that belongs to the tax payers of the United States. But then the Natural Resource and Conservation service works with private land owners promoting conservation practices on their own land. And then the other six are listed there as well. For a better sense, these are all available at usda.gov. To narrow it in by combining the priorities of the White House Faith Based Office and the Department of Agriculture we have been able to really guide our work in a number of different ways. This series, the “Together We Can” Partnership Series, is an outgrowth of many conversations: by having done many community round tables around the country; being able to speak with many of you; and participating with the White House in “Connecting Communities for the Common Good Summit” all around the country. A few years ago we were in Sioux, Iowa right outside of Dubuque right after the President and the Secretary hosted a world economic forum; we held a town hall meeting with faith based and community organizations to just explain some of the resources that the federal government has. We held it at North East Iowa Community College and had a wide variety of community growth from that corner of Iowa; but also, Wisconsin and Illinois came and joined us for that.

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Just a couple of particular initiatives that we focus on in this office include tackling childhood hunger; a priority of this administration, and one we've worked very closely on with other parts of USDA. Tied in with that has been our Latino outreach initiative called La Mesa Completa, or setting the complete table, to reach out to the underserved Latino community with a number of our programs. We will touch on this a little more, but we have joined the First Lady and her efforts around addressing the epidemic of childhood obesity called "Let's Move" by targeting faith and community groups through "Let's Move Faith and Communities."

Working very closely with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary on an initiative called "Know Your Farmer Know Your Food" -- connecting the people who make the food with the people who eat the food. A couple of others are our international and food security and hunger efforts called "Feed the Future" that the USDA has been very involved with. Just a couple of days ago we had an outreach call with colleagues here at USDA talking with the non-governmental organizations that are doing work overseas, as an example of our outreach. Last but not least, we have been doing work in interfaith cooperation and dialogue base; given that every faith I have encountered and worked with all have their holidays that deal with food it is important in every faith tradition [to provide] for those who are hungry and less fortunate. Just to give you a quick sense; this is going to be a lot of information for those of you who are unfamiliar but some of you who have worked with USDA will be somewhat familiar.

We at the government love acronyms so this begins the alphabet soup of the programs that we have. With one of those mission areas, one of the seven that I mentioned, the Food Nutrition and Consumer Services administers fifteen distinct programs that serve 1 in 4 Americans. For example, what used to be the Food Stamp Program now the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) serves 46 million of our brother and sisters; 1 out of 7 Americans are given money to buy groceries. The "Women Infants and Children" program or WIC program serves 1 out of 2 babies born in the United States of America; 49% participate in the WIC program. And then through school, lunch and breakfast we are serving 32 million kids every school day with lunch and 22 million of them are getting free and reduced price. But as we will touch on in the next webinar, and I will tell you more about that soon, we are only able to reach 1 in 10 of those kids during the summer months. These are referred to as "gaps" by Secretary Vilsack. This is one of the particular areas in where we need your help and partnership.

We have another program and resources with dietary guidelines that is now named "MyPlate" or "MiPlato"; we have a great new tool called the "super tracker" to help with keeping track of nutrition and physical activity which is worth taking a look at. And then just to give you a sense on what that actually looks like we started a partnership with the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh through the "Summer Food Service" program. They are successfully running it; they recruited senior citizens to serve as volunteers to serve some of the kids we serve [during the summer]. They actually did such a great job that they won one of our contests last summer which highlighted summer feeding programs last summer. By getting these senior citizens as volunteers they were really able to share

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different experiences, stories, and ideas among generations. That had a huge impact on the satisfaction and the success of having these activities; we are able to provide the meals and the great thing is when there are other wrap around activities it is so much more successful. These [programs] address the summer learning loss which because they were able address cultural barriers: they served kosher food which allowed them to attract kids from the orthodox Jewish community but also kids from the other broader community who may never have heard of kosher before. And as you can see they did such a great job of, obvious from the smiles, keeping their program fun. So the kids not only [had] a good lunch but they were able to do arts, crafts, and a variety of projects that show such a fabulous example of what partnership with the Department of Agriculture looks like.

Then, another whole category or whole mission area [of USDA] is that of rural development. This explains some of what our rural development folks get to do. Just yesterday, I had the Under Secretary of Rural Development sitting down with the Catholic Bishop because of the work of Catholic Charities and also discussing with the head of Lutheran services in Iowa to discuss where there might be a potential for partnerships. You will see that last bullet, the connect with your state office, is underlined; you are able to get this as one of the handouts and that link gives you with a list all of the state offices and people that you could contact right after we are done with this to begin the process of partnership in that area. Another great success story I was able to tour just a couple of months ago was in South West Florida, Casa San Juan Bosco, which was a grant to Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Venice. After Hurricane Charlie in 2004, Arcadia and surrounding communities were decimated; through the support of USDA and other partners like the Florida Housing Finance Corporation we [now] have 53 single-family housing units being built literally as we speak. And what is amazing is that these are going to be for low income migrant farm workers and they're going to be some of the best housing in the entire county, says the local country housing authority. They are able to withstand hurricane-level winds, they have a wonderful community feel including a community center with a kitchen facility; they're exploring whether they could do summer feeding right there or perhaps put a community lab. Also, they are going to have a computer lab and a community area which will be just a terrific way of using a partnership and of using tax payers provided programs to help achieve the goal of revitalizing rural communities. The last one in terms of one of our bigger areas that we do is, as I mentioned, working – side by side– with the First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama, and her effort to really target and address the epidemic of child obesity which is effecting 1 in 3 kids; and it is even higher in other communities. She has done an amazing job of really trying to build awareness and provide resources and tools for families, clinics, chefs, and schools; for a while variety of folks including faith based and community organizations—to increase access to healthy affordable food; to promote healthy choices; to promote healthier foods in schools; and to promote physical activity.

In fact, just yesterday as part of our 150th celebration we had two former NFL players do a little impromptu, physical fitness exercise with us, and it showed us that you can have a little fun and really make a difference. So we have more than four hundred non-profit community partners for “Let’s Move Faith and Communities” and we do monthly calls and highlight some of success stories on the White

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House Blog. We have a great example of one of our partners-- the Seventh Day Adventist headquarters—which is just up the road from here; their North America division answered the first Lady’s call by launching “Adventists in Step for Life”. You can see from this picture that they were putting their money where their mouth is, or their feet, with a “fun run.” Collectively last year they walked over two million miles and they even had a Let’s Move Day, like this one, in September where more than seven hundred Adventist organizations throughout North America did something around physical activity: 5k runs, walks, relay races, bike rides, and hikes—a whole bunch. Now their goal for this year is to place trained and equipped “Wellness Ambassadors” which is what the First Lady is calling them or “Health Leaders” in every one of their congregations across the North America. It is just great to see how this is all coming together under the First Lady’s “Let’s Move” banner. Without getting too much into them--we will touch on them in future parts of the series-- these are another half dozen examples of initiatives that we are involved with and engaged in. “People Garden” is fabulous in that we have fifteen hundred gardens across the country and around the world spearheaded by USDA employees and community members. Just exciting as a touch on “La Mesa Completa” brings to life some of our Latino outreach efforts.

The Deputy Secretary just released a “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food” compass report which you can find at usda.gov. These are great examples of how we are reconnecting producers and eaters. And a few of others which you can take a look at serve.gov/hunger where there are opportunities both to volunteer as well as to list your organizations, opportunities where you’re looking for volunteers. The next slide is just ways of staying in-touch; all of these are ways of keeping connected. We have a regular e-newsletter that goes out with grant opportunities, with webinars like this one, and others. We also have a blog at usda.gov which we use to highlight community partners that are doing great stuff. We just did one around Cinco de Mayo, where the Deputy Director, here at the center, and other employees were out for their health fair targeting the Hispanic community here in Washington D.C; they were doing great things including a Zumba class. This connects with our “Let’s Move Faith and Communities;” signing up to be a supporter connects us and gives us a way to plugging in when the First Lady is travelling to events. Also, we can draw in on our list of partners for those activities. Our Food and Nutrition Services I touched on serves 1 in 4 Americans with the programs I highlighted in the beginning and there are ways of being a formal partner with them through agreement forms and ways of really staying connected. And finally, we have a few resources: you can take a look at usda.gov/partnerships which will get you to our website, and an easy entry ramp to the USDA. At the whitehouse.gov/partnerships website you will find a tool kit which goes across the federal government giving ways of contacting us and with our Food and Nutrition Service as well.

This [webinar] is a kick off to a seven part series, where the next one is two weeks from today; same bad time, same bad channel. We will focus on feeding kids during the summer and really highlighting our summer feeding efforts, because summer is just around the corner. At that point at the end of May, some schools will already have let out and others will be there soon thereafter. This will give you the opportunity to get all of the information you need to either connect and perhaps serve kids at your site or send kids to a different site all around the country. As you can see from the series, we will have you

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as see different ways of accessing partners, resources, opportunities, both financial and otherwise, to partner with USDA around putting healthy and affordable food on the table, nutritious habits through cooking and eating and how you can get [healthier] resources to your community and your constituents; also we can provide information around local and regional food systems including community and people's gardens. How to feed kids after school-- beyond just summertime, and then the last one on Old Hallows Eve, as we get ready to dress up for Halloween, we will discuss other opportunities on partnering and working with the USDA. With that let me jump to the last couple of questions we have and then open it up to questions and then we can go from there. So, what do you think? Is this compelling enough for you? Is the work that you are doing connected enough to what you're trying to do that you might be interested in partnering with us through some of the programs and priorities I have highlighted and some of the ones we don't quite know about yet?

[Participant Response via MF]: A little about half of them, shrinking down a little, which goes to one or more of the above, but that's where we are interested in following up. And in staying connected beyond just an hour of your time, as it makes sense for you and your organization.

Without further ado let me skip to the other one: Have you already received our USDA Center newsletter? Where can I sign up ask 69% of you. Well it just so happens that we can help you answer that question. If you go to usda.gov/partnerships there is a "stay connected" button. This will help us provide you with the resources, information, invitations; again, it is a way of really developing the relationship that can hopefully lead into a partnership which allows both of us to serve the needs of others even better. That is what President Obama believes and he says over and over again, even as Commander and Chief, and Executive Branch of our government, he knows that government cannot and should not do it all on their own. Despite some comments to contrary, he has a firm belief that we can only succeed in addressing the challenges that we have, in the United States and around the world, in partnership. And he is willing and interested in doing that in so many different ways and has said that over and over again; and this is a tangible outgrowth of his commitment to work with all of you in a variety of ways.

So this is our contact information. With that Julie will switch to the question and answer session and take anyone who can hit star (*) one (1) to un mute their line and get in the queue with Julie. And if there is anyone waiting Julie I can take the first one.

JC: Thanks and, once again, please press (*) (1). And we do have a question.

Reverend Eva: This is Reverend Eve Nunez with "Help 4 Kids."

MF: Hello Reverend Eve

RE: Hello Max and hello from Arizona.

MF: I did not set this up folks but [when asking your question] can you give us thirty seconds of how we have been able to work together in serving kids in your community?

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RE: It has been wonderful because in the community that we live we have a lot of programs. 100% of the kids in our community get the Free Meal program during the school year. So last summer, we were doing four days a week: we were picking up meals and serving the children in our communities. So we served sixteen hundred and eighty meals during the summer last year; and, these are kids that normally have two of their meals at school. The entire summer it was close to twenty thousand meals that we were able to serve to children in Phoenix, Arizona.

MF: That is fabulous, thank you. It really is a great testimony to how we are able come together and work together.

RE: Now my question for this year Max is now there are 32 million school kids across the U.S that have the “Free Meals” program but during the summer, how many of those, nationally, are still going for the “Summer Feeding” programs? My second question is can we, on our cards, get a list to see what ethnic background they are from because it would be interesting to know which is the highest percentage [demographic group] that attend the “Summer Feeding” program.

MF: Good question. The answer is last summer we were only able to serve about two and a half million children—only about 1 in 10-- of those who receive those free and reduced priced meals during the school year. But as a great a testament to the work that many of you did and partnerships in the summer 2011 we served 3 million more meals than we were able to do in the summer of 2010 primarily because there were about 1500 more sites by non-profit and community and faith-based organizations. Now we do not have the demographic data beyond boys and girls, so on gender, for the summer feeding participants. We do have that information for the National School Lunch Program and we would be happy to share that as we collect it. We have one question that relates to that in the webinar tool: Johnny asked: What about feeding students that attend vacation bible schools? And this is a perfect fit, even if it is in the evenings or when the day is done. Vacation bible school, whether it is a mosque or synagogue, is a perfect venue for the “Summer Feeding” program, no matter what time. Johnny we would love to have you on the next [webinar] to make sure that the folks that you are serving this summer are able to be fed through the “Summer Food Service” program. You can also take a quick look at summerfood.usda.gov for a little bit more information on that program if you cannot wait two weeks for our next one. Julie, do we have another one on the phone?

JC: We do. Sir, your line is open.

MF: Williams go ahead.

Williams: I am from the Jackson, Mississippi area and we are looking to do a summer camp, kind of a sports camp, to fight childhood obesity here. And we wanted to be able to feed the kids in a nutritional way and educate them as well and we wanted to see what outlets would be available to us to be able to feed the kids for the summer?

Max: Great! I knew this would be popular, which is why our next [webinar] two weeks from now is on summer feeding. Sir, let me give you a number when we are done that can help you connect a

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Summer Feeding Program in Mississippi. Every state administers the program. This number is just for those in Mississippi (601) 576-5000. So they are in Jackson at the Mississippi Department of Education. Everybody can find their own state contact at summerfood.usda.gov. Do we have another one Julie?

JC: I am showing no further questions.

MF: So Karen Hunt, the question on the webinar tool: What is the typical lead time between the time you present the topic, submit a proposal and receive funding? The great thing about a number of the programs that we touched on is that they're not a standard federal government grant programs. Many non-profits are eligible for federal government grants and they are easy to find on grants.gov; there is a whole array, not just from the Department of Agriculture, but across government. They are extremely competitive, and that process does take a long time. From the initial announcement of the requests for proposals, the notice of fund availability (there are technical terms for submitting those grants) and [finally] being awarded the money is usually a multi-month long process. But, as I touched on just briefly, and we will be highlighting throughout the series, including the "Summer Feeding" program, these are not grant programs per say. Although they do involve some process, because they do involve tax payers dollars and we do want to make sure they are stewarded well, they usually have a relatively quick turnaround.

Rick asked a question: If an organization is or if anybody else is organizing an event, a benefit drive or fundraiser type of event, whether that's a walkathon, raceathon, something like that what kind of role we could look to for USDA to play in terms of sponsorship, staffing? In terms of community garden development what about the access to feeds and other materials? Another example is one that I highlighted just last weekend when a community organization came to us with just enough lead time saying [they were doing a health fair for] Cinco de Mayo. We were able to help organize a taste test with a table that had variety of information and free materials. In fact, we had somebody there, on site, to help the folks that were on the ground applying for the "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program." With enough lead time we can work with our state partners out there. We do not sponsor events, it's not something that we have a budget to do as private sector companies do, but that's a great way that we are able to help. And then another thing Rick in terms of your questions for community gardening we have a whole garden resource on letsmove.gov. Our People's Garden has a whole network of the People's Garden forum of nonprofit groups that provide free tools and seeds and other types of assistance so you can take a look at that.

MF: Julie, do we have questions on the phone?

JC: Yes we do, we have a couple more, one moment. Your line is open.

Christina: Hi, I volunteer at a local church and we are setting up a food pantry and I was wondering if you had resources for local churches that are interested in doing that?

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Max: Yes and no. Thank you for asking Christina. We don't have a program. Congress eliminated the program that provides direct support for shelters, pantries, and direct feeding programs. The way that USDA, as a federal government entity, is able to help your congregation or organization that might have an emergency or supplemental feeding program is through the network of food banks around the country. So we have a program called the "Emergency Food Assistance Program" that purchases USDA food and then goes to the state, usually through the food bank network in a state; it could also be Catholic Charities or community action agencies that then distribute the food through the tens of thousands of congregations and organizations which are actually feeding folks directly. So we do not actually have any grants for setting up food or otherwise but through your local food bank you are able to access free food that is provided through one of our USDA programs.

And then we have a good question from Sue Portish: What kind of regulations would be imposed upon a church for instance that would be inspected and then licensed to prepare and serve meals for any of these programs? That's a terrific question Sue. There are no federal, as in USDA requirements, for a particular kind of kitchen; it does not have to be commercial grade; but, there are often local health codes and local health department standards that need to be met. It is not uniform so I cannot help everyone one of you in terms of what that looks like in your particular community, but that does not have to have a commercial oven, necessarily, it does not have to have a walk-in freezer or refrigerator. It varies a great deal. For example, the sponsor of a feeding program would be able to walk every congregation through. My church, for example, had a feeding program for the homeless out of their church basement for years. And this met the local health code; we had volunteers doing it. We were able to offer pantry services as well for folks who had the facilities to prepare their own food. Those kinds of restrictions are not from the USDA but from the state and local officials. And that is where with the different programs, you would be able to find out that other information from your sponsors or from the state. Julie?

Herb: I apologize, I came on late. What is the date of the next to webinar?

MF: Two weeks from today on Wednesday, 30th, same time. And up on your screen now is the list of all of them. On Wednesday May 30th at 2:00pm Eastern Time you know that we will be doing this again, with a focus on feeding kids during the summer.

H: By us being a fitness facility, we are going to be housing the kids with a summer camp. Would we be eligible or would there be restrictions.

MF: Are you a for-profit or non-profit organization?

H: For profit

Max: Gotcha, you could consider partnering with someone else and that would be able to work. You can contact that number I gave you in Jackson is the state agency and they will be able to help you. And for everyone listening, the login that you used today will be the same throughout the webinar series.

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JC: Reverend your line is open.

RE: I have a recommendation here, what we did with our food pantry, because we only had enough food in our pantry—during the holidays—for about 350 families we used our wonderful partnership here with St. Mary’s food bank; we were able to feed almost 3,000 families that they were able help. And, we got our food from two different high schools and they helped us do a food drive. And that is a great way to start getting help for your community. As a church, get your folks to help you and do what your organization can do and then work with your food bank like we do in Arizona. We serve 10 percent but they serve a whole bunch and it was wonderful to see all the money that was spent. When we did our summer feeding program at Litchville School here in the West Valley, they were able to bring all the coolers and other equipment we needed. We did not have the equipment so they brought what we needed to keep our meals cool.

MF: Great, Thank you. And Mary Ellen (working on small programs) had a great question: How do we find partners who already maybe funded for these programs? One of them, as Reverend Eve just touched on, is your community food bank. You can take a look at feedingamerica.gov and type in your zip code and the network of food pantries around the country comes up. They are a great resource for especially small programs and partnering and working on whatever it is you might have an interest in. They are a great way to start.

Question from a bunch of folks: How do you let consumers understand that even though the sell by date has passed the food is still consumable? Good question, and that is where our partners in the food banks come in. This is a great way of recognizing that even though they are pulled from the shelves they are still safe for consumption. Our food safety and inspection service trying to get the word out about what is safe to eat and what is not. We have a great service called Ask Karen, though a food line or thorough the computer, where you can ask questions about safety issues.

Alexis has a question: If an organization misses the deadline for a summer feeding site this summer is there anything that can still happen for 2012? Two things. Alexa, many states allow sites to come on board even after the initial summer deadline. Some states let them add on. Even though you see a deadline has passed I would still inquire. Last year we were able to help a number of congregations and organizations sign on even after deadline has passed by connecting them through their state agency. Another one is subject of a future webinar is feeding kids after school beyond the summertime through what is called the “Child Adult Care Food” program, where thanks to President Obama signing into law the Healthy Hunger Free Kids act, we have a new at risk supper program that would be of interest because it is above beyond just the summer. Julie, do we have another from the phone line.

One from Shiela Menadez, a fabulous AmeriCorps Vista member; I used to supervise participants in the program so I am thrilled. I understand that you are working on two major projects there in rural North Carolina, on local farmers markets that want to partner with SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or what were food stamps, to make food available for those who utilize the assistance program. She asks: What is the best avenue to take? That is a great question. Just last week

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our colleague, Under Secretary of Agriculture, for Food and Nutrition Services was just in Goldsboro, North Carolina in the eastern side of the state at a local farmers market talking about SNAP benefits for people who are getting these benefits using their card through the electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card at the market. What is great is there are no more stamps, which is why the name changed. And we are able to get the fraud and abuse rate down to the lowest levels in history, because of it, but that also means that you are able to do it at Farmers markets. And there are two other programs that you should take a look at Sheila; the “WIC Farmer’s Market” voucher program and the “Senior’s Farmers Market” voucher program. These allow pregnant and breast feeding women and their kids, and senior citizens specifically to be able to use some of their benefits at farmer’s markets.

We have another program the “Farmer’s Market Promotion” program that is looking to use its resources to help farmers markets buy the card readers for example. That grant program, unfortunately, however has just closed but that is another one to take a look at. And finally, I would encourage you to take a look at the Wholesome Wave Foundation, not USDA affiliated, but we worked with them and they’re providing grants to farmer’s markers to expand their work in that space.

Maryellen had another question: Where would a small community garden find out how to connect with local and regional food systems? Two places to take a look: One is usda.gov, which I would encourage you to take a look at for the “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food” compass report which would give you a very good sense of how to do just that; it gives you an interactive map that will help you be able to find other things in your area that dovetail these programs. And then finally, as mentioned on the Letsmove.gov, you will have a fabulous community garden resource there.

A question from Karen Hunt: When is the deadline for the summer food program start? Well, it varies for each state; take a look at summerfoods.usda.gov in addition to the list of the contact is in your state. They will also have those deadlines for the various states. Some of them are coming up shortly, some of them may have passed and others are still to come. Julie, any other questions on the line?

JC: I am showing no further questions.

MF: Well, great. I am always glad when we are able to conclude by the time I have said. I am particularly grateful that all of you have been willing to put an hour of your time aside to learn more about what you tax payer dollars provide through the Department of Agriculture. As I mentioned, this is just the initial one, this is just the beginning. We know that you are the trusted leaders and messengers in your community. We are not able to work in every single community, but we are trying whatever we can— to reach out and to partner—to finding the Reverend Eve Nunez’s around the country, like what she has done in Phoenix, to do all we can to connect you with the resources that are available to help as you serve your constituents. We are grateful. The information that is up there is how we continue to be in touch. We look forward to having many of you on in a couple of weeks as we address summer feeding in particular and wish you all a wonderful rest of week. Thank you very much.

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JC: Thank you all for your participation you may disconnect at this time.