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Excerpts and Summary of the 58th Community Hunger and Nutrition Forum

Wednesday, September 14, 2005 12:00PM –1:30PM

Trinity Lutheran Church, Fresno

Sponsored by Fresno Metro Ministry

Supported by:

USDA, Community Food Project

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

California Food Policy Advocates

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**Vitamin Settlement Cases Consumer Settlement Fund to improve
the health and nutrition of CA consumers**

Community Alliance with Family Farmers

The following is a summary of the reports made at the forum compiled by Edie Jessup and Carey Berend.

Focus: Fresno Fresh Access Community Food Assessment Report

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Jeremy Hofer, Fresno Metro Ministry Hunger & Nutrition Project: My name is Jeremy Hofer and I work on the Hunger and Nutrition Project with Edie Jessup who will be presenting to you a report of the Community Food Assessment that has been a two-year-long process. It's a large part of what we've been doing on the Hunger and Nutrition Project. Jeremy reviewed the Packet of Materials for the Forum.

Edie Jessup, Fresno Metro Ministry Hunger & Nutrition Project: I am really looking forward to doing this today. We have some stiff competition. There is an obesity summit Fresno Health Policy Institute is putting on today, and I was there for a while this morning and glad that they are doing the work that they are doing because it does relate to what we're going to be presenting to you today. This particular project, the **Fresno Fresh Access Project** was funded by the USDA, and this was a USDA Community Food Project grant that we received two years ago. In addition, we have had support for the project from MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, California Food Policy Advocates, Kaiser Permanente, the Vitamin Cases Consumer Settlement Fund, and the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, and the Community Food Security Coalition. In addition to that, you'll hear about how many local people were involved in this as we began this project two years ago.

Almost three years ago the **Community Food Security Coalition**, which is the nationwide organization based here in California, came to Fresno and talked to us about Community Food Assessment. I'm going to start with what our goals were and where we are, but I want to make sure as we go ahead with this that you have an understanding of Community Food Assessment and food security here in the valley.

We had three goals for this project. The first was to implement a Community Food Assessment (CFA). Things that were unique about this CFA: **this is one of the largest Community Food Assessments that has ever been done in the nation.** Unique was that we proposed to do it by training local neighborhood leaders to conduct the assessment themselves so that they had a look at their neighborhood and began to feel some empowerment around assessing what *their* access to food was. We also proposed to collect

this data and issue it by city council and board of supervisors districts. We found that we really wanted to have somewhere to take the results, and we felt that if we could take them to our local city and county officials there would be some way to actually do something about what we found. **This is the first report to the community, and our recommendation from the data is that we should form a food policy council that would look at healthy food access, reduction of health disparities due to nutrition, and link Fresno's agriculture to fresh food access in urban planning.**

Those were the goals as we started out almost two years ago. **This project is concerned about linking the produce in the area to provide that fresh, affordable, culturally appropriate, healthy food to all of Fresno, and we saw this CFA as an economic development issue around food production and distribution.** We have heard it so many times: we have so much food and yet we have so much hunger and what is that about? We looked at food recovery projects, and there has been some progress made through various task groups on that. When we started the CFA there was no gleaning effort at all in the Fresno area. There is a small effort through Plant a Row, and now our food bank is beginning to step up to distributing fresh produce now that they have cold storage. And, the project wanted to **increase markets for local producers. We wanted to link agriculture to local health solutions through adequate nutrition.**

We have presented here at this forum reports on the issues of health disparities between different ethnic communities. We've looked at health disparities among the poor versus those who have plenty of access. We've looked at the difficult pieces of what we are seeing in terms of what's happening to our kids with obesity and diabetes. **So part of this project was to take a look at fresh produce and get it into different layers of the community – there's the school layer, but there is also the neighborhood layer and there's also the layer of other institutions and businesses in our community –to see if we can't develop more economic ways of getting food around.**

The other issue the project was really concerned about was the **use of the federal nutrition programs.** I'll have more to say about that because **our data illustrates some of the barriers that people using the federal nutrition programs have to stay healthy until such time as they have jobs that pay them enough to live.**

A Community Food Assessment is different than an academic scientific research project. The difference is that we're **doing research, and we are also engaging the community at the same time. The Community Food Assessment intent is to identify key factors in food availability, accessibility, affordability, and quality here in Fresno County.** This particular project, two years in the making and doing, **trained 84 volunteers** to survey their communities. **We created a total of 866 consumer surveys that were completed** and we **surveyed 131 retail stores,** and that is a lot of surveys. In your packets you have a copy of that survey.

↪ (See page 15 for CFA survey process description)

Let's look at some of the Fresno CFA data from the entire sample surveyed

Who was surveyed: mostly women, and the mean age was mid 30s, so these were primarily women with children. Eighteen percent were male. **The ethnicity of the folks who participated in this survey was primarily Latino. Sixty-nine percent, in fact, were Latino. Eight percent were African American, Hmong was little over 6%, Caucasian 5%, and other was 5%.** We have a Russian contingent (most of them were older folks that were on SSI who are refugees). We also had some multi-ethnic. As you can see, reflecting the demographics

of Fresno, the largest amount were Latino, and that weighted the data that we have. The yearly income of the folks that we surveyed was across the board; however, it was really weighted to low-income folks, so **57% of those that we surveyed had a family income under \$20,000.** That, too, will weight our data.

Participation by city district: we did major surveying both in **Cynthia Sterling's district in the southwest and Mike Dages' district.** A fair amount of surveying was done in **Henry T. Perea's district, Brian Calhoun's and over in the city of Coalinga that's reported here because we did a lot of city surveying there.** Less folks were surveyed in **Boyajian and Westerlund and Jerry Duncan's districts.**

Participation by county districts: the major surveying happened in **Henry Perea's district in Central Fresno,** and there is a fair amount of surveying both in **Phil Larson's district, which is up in the north there, and Susan Anderson's. Judy Case's district is primarily from Coalinga.** We have a smattering of folks from different rural areas but primarily from the City of Coalinga and a **few in Bob Waterston's district.**

Where do you buy your groceries? **Most people in the survey went to Big Box stores,** (like FoodsCo, Food For Less, Costco, Sam's Club, the kind of stores that are warehouse style stores where you can buy large quantities). **The next would be supermarkets and then local stores,** (stores that are locally owned and smaller like R&N or Bingo, Hut Market, Asia Market). You'll notice here that **we had a few people say that they got most of their groceries from a flea market,** and we'll come back to that. Big Box retail grocery has everything, and most are fairly centralized. They're not scattered out so much. Supermarkets (like Vons and Save Mart and Albertson's, etc.) **Local markets** are places that are probably a little closer to neighborhoods with better access, but people indicated that they **cost more. We were very interested in the extent to which people were shopping at convenience and liquor stores because those are in the neighborhoods, they're on the street corners, it's where you can send Johnny to pick up a gallon of milk when you run out. It's closer than most of the others.**

Why do you buy groceries at this market? For all people talking about wanting quality food for their family, **price was the driver for nearly everyone, 47%.** That was ultimately why they went to the store that they went to. **Second, was that it was convenient or close, it was some place they could get to. The next three reasons were the stock and selection, the quality issues, the personal preference, which was about 25%, but it wasn't the thing that determined where folks are going to go and get their food.** We had some folks that named the language or ethnic issues. We found in the qualitative data that this was something that people named. *They said that the stores they went to did not speak their language and it was rather hard and they did not feel welcome at those stores.* We'll go back to the language issues again. We thought that maybe some people would determine where they went by whether the store took WIC or food stamps or that kind of issue. That did not come up in this question as a reason why they went to the store they did.

Implications about where and why people shop. People expressed a desire for healthy, fresh foods, but the choice was driven by cost. Big box stores, which are not necessarily local or fresh food, were overridingly where people went. Some big box stores that we know of like Costco and WinCo do not take food stamps, and so as we got into the low-income data it was very interesting to us that people might go to those stores to maximize their dollar use, but if they

don't take assistance vouchers from people with low incomes that's an issue. Big box stores often are at a distance and require transportation. We have a slide that illustrates this in Southeast Fresno. It is a big issue that people have to travel a long way to get groceries. **We found that Big Box stores are replacing supermarkets and local stores in Fresno, especially in low-income areas.** We had many people tell us, "The Vons closed. I don't have anywhere to shop. I have to go a long way on the bus and it takes me hours to get there." Save Marts have closed. I know that that impacted the senior village tremendously. Hanoians closed. All over Fresno County we have reports of supermarkets closing. **Ultimately what that implies is a real decrease in the choice of where people can buy their food because as the Big Box stores take over and are further away it pushes folks to the convenience/liquor stores, which are more expensive and less healthy. Fresno County doesn't have much in the way of infrastructure for fresh markets.** .

We asked people '*Where else do you get food?*' **Forty-nine percent of the entire survey named Fast Food as where they got food other than going to the market.** That is huge, especially as we're talking about **health issues: obesity, diabetes, hypertension.**

There are reasons why people are eating more at Fast Food restaurants. **There are Fast Food stores and restaurants on almost every corner, and they are cheap.** If you do not have good cooking facilities, if you're out of funds, you can get a meal for a dollar and it puts something in your stomach. So, that is a really big thing that we need to look at in terms of **access.**

The other really surprising thing to us was that **30% of the people in the entire survey said that they got their food at Flea Markets or Swap Meets.** We didn't even have that listed. We had farmers markets, but they do not go to farmers markets, which are more expensive and further away for the population surveyed. Jeremy's **work with getting EBT Food Stamps accepted at Flea Markets becomes all the more critical here in the valley,** I think. We had on our list school cafeterias, thinking that kids would be eating at school cafeterias if the family budget was stretched. Not very many people surveyed bought at farmers markets. **Some bought food from Mobile Vendors,** though, and that will come up a little later as an issue. **But mostly Fast Food and Flea Markets/Swap Meets were the alternate places that people were getting food.**

The implications of much food being purchased at Fast Food and Flea Markets, we think, are that **people are cost and convenience driven.** The surging numbers of **cheap fast food restaurants in neighborhoods, which provide easy access, are replacing grocery stores in home meal preparation.**

A third of the meals for the people in this survey were eaten outside the home. We asked people directly how many meals they prepared at home the previous week and a third are eaten out of the home, so that is a significant thing also.

The implications and the health outcomes that are implied by this pattern of eating are **overweight and unfit children and adults because what people are eating is more and more driven by what they pick up outside the home at Fast Food restaurants or access at convenience/liquor stores.**

The implications of the data on flea markets was surprising. **The potential, though, for increased neighborhood vending of produce at local markets, new farmers markets, and mobile vending is really high.** We see that as an economic issue that people who are developing jobs need to take a look at. *People are looking for the convenience and closeness,*

and if there was more business that was actually accommodating them with good, healthy food, they indicate that they would buy it.

‘What are the main problems you had in getting the food that you want that is good for you?’ **Overwhelmingly folks said that food was too expensive.** Transportation was an issue that was named as well as **lack of variety, indicating that the places they had to buy food were limited and the foods lacked freshness.** There were others listed, as the report shows, but they were not huge. The part that we don’t have listed on here that we should is that *half say that they are able to get what they want.* This is something interesting, and there are other questions that elucidate that. It’s **because it’s the food they have access to and not necessarily the food they would eat if they had the world to choose from.** We have some other data, and another question actually about those who are saying they get what they want.

Doing the survey, **although we did some in the entire county, we focused on four low-income neighborhoods.** Jeremy, do you want to talk about those?

Jeremy Hofer, Fresno Metro Ministry Hunger & Nutrition Project: I’ll speak to the work that I did along with the **focus groups in each of these four low income areas.** We had at least **90 surveys from each area,** and clusters of volunteers to survey their own neighborhoods. The four areas were **Southeast Fresno, Southwest Fresno, Pinedale, and out in Coalinga.** They’re all low-income areas of the county and all high Latino demographics.

Pinedale is an interesting area because it’s an ‘island’ in north Fresno. There is a lot of retail around it, but there were reports that the **stores were hard to get to, especially if you don’t have a car.** It’s **across the freeway** so isolated from the retail area if you have to walk. There are local markets dotted right around Pinedale and there are some large markets there, too. There was some market closings. For some reason, **in this area of town people had the largest response of difficulty in getting the kinds of foods that they want,** so that would be something to look further into. Out of all of the areas, **this area had the most difficulty and also the lowest participation in federal programs.**

In ***Southeast Fresno*** we did a couple of focus groups. They named the **two flea markets that they go to as the Cherry Avenue Auction, which is south of the city, but also the Fresno Flea Market, which is right there at the Fresno Fairgrounds.** There is this interesting dynamic of on one corner you have these **two Big Box stores that everybody seems to go to, Food Maxx and FoodsCo.** There were closures last year of Vons and Save Mart in **two different areas of Southeast Fresno.** This map shows more. There are a lot of **community gardens in this area. One, there is more open land, and two, there is a higher percentage of Hmong people.** This area of town is where we got surveyed of our Hmong population. What isn’t shown here are the local markets. There are **a lot of ethnic, smaller local markets that are dotted throughout here.** There is Asia Supermarket. This shows where the two store closures happened.

The Focus groups and qualitative responses reported on these issues: Many of the Hmong said they **would like to be able to use their EBT cards at the flea market but they weren’t able to.** We also had reports from our Senior Nutrition Task Group that there is **difficulty getting food now because the Save Mart closed, which was right near a senior center, and so now they’re walking extra far to get to that one corner where there are two Big Box stores for retail.** Something that came out of focus groups is that when you don’t have a car and you need

to get to the grocery store **some of these people are walking down Kings Canyon for a mile and a half or two miles to get to the grocery store and then they bring the cart back.** One woman in our focus group lived near Ventura on the eastern side closer to the Vons and she always walked to the Vons; and then when the Vons closed she started walking down Kings Canyon to the FoodsCo because, again, it's cheaper there than to go to the convenience stores. **She's driven by price to get there.** The supermarkets are losing ground. The cost of labor is higher. In general, I think the overhead is higher at these supermarkets. One of the requests was can you help us replace the Vons there with another supermarket, so there are planning implications for where we should be putting food access points or supermarkets in our communities. In Southwest Fresno a lot more local markets are being used, but again, Food Maxx had the highest use there. More people visited the Food Maxx, and so there is some displacement. The two main stores are Louie Kee and Super Mercado Mexico. We had reports of people going from the southeast side of town to Super Mercado Mexico, which was interesting. It's kind of a regional store for people because it caters to the Latino ethnic group. I also thought it was interesting that it was the most diverse area of town. We had the most from all ethnicities. In Coalinga there are no big box stores there. Most people were going to R&N Market or Save Mart out there. The consumption of fast food there was really high, and that was surprising to me at first, but then when I read this quote that people need ready-made food out there because they do not have cooking facilities it kind of made sense that fast food in rural towns probably is going to be even higher than some areas inside of towns.

We did four focus groups, two in Southeast Fresno, one in Pinedale, and one in Coalinga. What made the focus groups so interesting was that these were the actual volunteers that were going out into their communities and surveying people, so they had already done at least 30 consumer surveys and had gone into about ten stores and so they had a picture of their communities that we couldn't have gotten if we had just gotten random people from the streets. These are people that had been thinking about food in their community. One of the comments was that this pushed them to go into stores that they normally didn't go into and that it really opened their eyes about the differences between the convenience stores versus supermarkets versus big box stores, so I thought it was a very effective technique.

Eddie Jessup: We have all the data to support all of these things, so we will be publishing the details of that. Overall, one in five people say they cannot get food they need in their neighborhoods, and this is a trend that is increasing. We found that Southeast Asians and African Americans reported higher difficulty getting the foods that they need in their neighborhoods, and one in three people without a car reported difficulty, which would make sense, but what we found ultimately in our transportation questions was that there is a huge number of people who do not have a car and are dependent either on folks to get a ride with them or public transportation or walking.

By ethnicity, these are the foods that folks said that they could not get in their neighborhood. The African American population particularly named seafood and meat, Southeast Asians named ethnic foods, Caucasians named fruits and vegetables and organic foods, and the Latinos talked overwhelmingly about not being able to get fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood. The Russian contingent talked about seafood and meat not being available in the quantities that they need.

As far as transportation issues, we asked how people got to the grocery store and we found that carpooling was huge. Eighteen percent, close to twenty percent, said that they had to get a ride with their neighbor. There are things about that that we also found out in terms of what people have to pay their neighbors to take them on trips, so it adds to the cost of people's being able to get food. The biking and walking were not very high, less than 10%. The public transportation is about 5% or 6% even though they don't have a way to go, and they talked about that in our qualitative data. Out in Coalinga they said that people have to walk over a freeway bridge and a river to get to the grocery store, and an older lady says her bones hurt when she has to walk and otherwise she has to rely on her neighbor. That is just an anecdotal story. The people in the southeast part of town and the southwest talked about sometimes having to walk an hour to get to the store or having to save money for a taxi, which is \$15, and many can't afford it. One issue is that folks can't carry a whole lot home with them and so it takes more trips to get what they need. Also, if they have to take a bus they have to wait 30 minutes during the week days or an hour on the weekends, so the round trip of going to the grocery store and back and the amount that people can carry getting on and off the bus is an issue.

Jeremy Hofer: Edie, I wanted to mention that this picture here, initially we had taken it because of the shopping cart to show that there are shopping carts all over town, but then as I was putting the picture in I noticed next to the shopping cart there's a guy working on his car. That's the other side of things. Okay, you have your own car, but how much money are people putting into their car to keep their car going? I think up to a quarter of what people are earning they're spending on their cars just so that they can get, among other things, the food that they need, so I thought that picture of the shopping cart next to a guy fixing his car was a good one.

Edie Jessup: One of the startling things out of the data is the under-use of federal nutrition programs. This is something that I'm sorry that the ENTA folks have left, but you can see that we asked actually two questions. First we asked if anyone had applied for public assistance, and we got real sketchy answers. A lot of folks didn't identify the programs that you see here, Food Stamps, WIC, Head Start, Summer Lunch, school programs, CalWORKs, so then we asked, if they had ever participated, in which programs did they participate. Out of this, 51% claimed that they had never participated in any of these public programs that would help them put food on the table, so that is a whole other area. We have some data on what that is about, and some are things that we know about such as people being afraid of their immigration status, and that is overwhelmingly one issue, but it means that that assistance to families is not being well used, and how we do our outreach and how we connect people up with these programs that would help them is something that I think has big implications for us. People surveyed were afraid to respond to the question. It was couched. We didn't ask it until later on in the survey. We didn't put it up front or anything like that, but particularly in the Hispanic community they did not want to talk about that at all. Many people have really bad information about welfare and food stamp eligibility. People are afraid, they don't want to talk to people about it, so there is a shame issue, and we did have people complaining about how they were treated. We asked them that question, as a matter of fact, and we have good data and statistics. It's a little uneven, but between folks who said that they were treated fairly and treated poorly it was a large number. You would want to say that they were treated well. Those who said that they were treated well were primarily refugees where they have community-based organizations that are assisting them with that whole

process, and it's very different for the Latino population, I believe, and something that we really have to pay some attention to. Certainly it was true also for the African American population that their feelings about how they were treated when they went to apply for things was there.

From the consumer surveys we found that people are buying their produce from flea markets. The main barriers to fresh food were not enough money, fast food is eaten, healthiest foods are not available, cultural foods are not available also. With the low-income families we found they're not participating in federal nutrition programs. This has big implications for outreach and a potential for bringing health and nutrition solutions to Fresno County through the federal nutrition programs, and a big effort put into that could change the enrollment of folks and they should have access to that until they have a living wage.

We did ask information about ethnic disparities. The data show that low-income Hispanics, Southeast Asians, African-Americans, and other immigrants are disproportionately living in areas where there are fewer options for healthy food. There is poor infrastructure. People named infrastructure in our qualitative data, meaning the streets, the trash, how buildings were taken care of, and concerns about violence in their neighborhoods were huge issues for them. The same populations suffer from chronic disease caused by poor diet according to CHIS studies and other studies that have been done that actually look at the Fresno area. We're one of the top three regions with the highest death by diabetes rate, and we have that number and information. The fact that people can't get to food that is healthy for them while they are being diagnosed with chronic health diseases is a huge issue. Some of the implications on the health disparities and lack of access, lack of choice is a big thing as supermarkets are closing. I want to say something about the supermarket closures before I forget it. There's a study over here that was done in Philadelphia. Supermarkets decide what they're going to do with their stores, whether they're going to put one in or whether they're going to take one out, by national statistics. I think that our survey is going to provide some information about the actual customers that potentially would be there for putting supermarkets back into the neighborhoods. This goes into our urban planning and the story that we tell about planning for our city. If stores are determining it on the basis of national statistics and demographics, we need to pull them back and have them take a look at what the demographics are and the situation actually is, so that is one of the big things that we need to look at. Cost-based decisions are leading to low-income people purchasing food with poor nutritional value, and the non-use of federal nutrition programs and health programs contributes to the problem. Part of that is because culturally and linguistically they are not addressing these issues with people in a way that communicates to them. I can give you anecdotally the photo novella that came out this last month after the Selma Flea Market distribution. The call center that was being used got 300 calls in four days about people wanting to know if they qualified and so forth, so how we communicate to different populations is as important as just having the information.

The retail survey was mostly to find out what kind of foods were in the stores in our neighborhoods. That data is still being looked at. What we did find is what Jeremy mentioned, that by doing the retail survey the people doing the consumer surveys found out a whole lot about their neighborhoods and about the cost of food and the kind of food that was available to them. The survey is in your packet.

Preliminary findings: It made a difference when people did the survey, whether it was in the morning when things were picked up and clean and there was stock on the shelves. If they did it later in the day they found that they could not find things that were on the shopping list that we had them look at. The cost was higher if it was a convenience store and there was a lack of fresh produce and a lack of things that are healthy for people that we're telling them about. Low-fat milk and skim milk is better for them. The dairy products in the convenience and local stores were 100% fat milk. People asked for delivery service, again, going to the transportation issue. There's a model for that with large grocery stores that we'll be bringing forward.

Some of the lessons learned: Using community-driven survey tools does not necessarily mean that what we have in our data is academically real, but I think it's more real. Some of the information that we have is really critical because it is people's perception and people's look at their own neighborhoods. It has local information implications. A big thing during the Community Food Assessment, I think, is using it as an organizing tool. The people who did the surveying are ready to go talk to the city fathers and mothers. They also have a whole different eye about what's available in other areas of the city that is different from their neighborhoods. The language barriers were a big thing for us to deal with. We sometimes did three-way language access. Someone in English, someone in Cambodian or Lao, and somebody in Hmong, and we had cross training. It was very interesting. It did work. We got surveys from a variety of different languages by utilizing folks who were multilingual, but we did do the surveys in eight languages, and that's a big deal. We did the training interview type survey. Group and team work worked best. If people knew that there were other people out there looking at their communities with them they were much more willing to do that and much more forthcoming with the information they shared with us. We'd like to do some more GeoMapping, and we feel like we really have uncovered and revealed very clearly with the statistical numbers some of the barriers that we need to address here locally. We'd like to see the full utilization of federal nutrition programs.

Our major recommendation for urban planning in Fresno City and County is to create a food policy council or food and built environment council, and we have been talking with the Department of Community Health. They are interested in umbrellaing that particular model of working on county planning and beginning to incorporate the access to food as a health issue in our urban planning. We would like to also look at the whole business of market choices for people, fresh food available in neighborhoods and local institutions and economic development, that there might be in terms of getting the farm to local grocery store and so forth.

We have mapped the community gardens that we're aware of. That is something that people talked about if they had access to land that they could grow their own fruits and vegetables. Access to land. The fish story doesn't work because people can't get to the water, and that is a problem when we use that as, well, teach them and they'll go do it, but if they can't get anywhere near the land to do the farming that they know how to do it doesn't work for them.

Heavy use of farmers markets and flea markets and getting them EBT access is something that we know that we can work on, and we are in the process of that. There is no scarcity of good science and urban planning know-how. We know how to do all of this so that we create livable communities. There's not a scarcity of the desire on the part of the folks that we surveyed for

good, healthy neighborhoods. They want that. There's no scarcity of ideas about how to do these things and the policy changes that cities and counties might do. There is great research and there are great success stories and best practices out there to change the environment people are living in food access wise. There is no scarcity of food. We have plenty of food and we have plenty of folks telling us about the health outcomes that we're seeing. We know what those are. We don't have to really re-study those again and again and again. We know that that is what is happening, and people really want to be healthy. So the response to that in some sort of way from a level that impacts everyone, not just that folks up north have a nice walkway around Woodward Park but that the folks in Southeast and Southwest Fresno also have a place that is safe and pretty and healthful for them, that not just folks up north who have cars can get to whatever market they want to but that we do something about our city to make it available and accessible to all of our friends.

In solving the community food access issues there is a scarcity, I think, of public policy and planning solutions here that would solve the decreasing markets and food choice and transportation issues. Those could be solved here. There also is a scarcity, I think, of commitment to re-engaging food entrepreneurs. We know folks trying to start farmers markets are having trouble with the city in terms of ordinances and difficulty getting through the process when people are saying bring me a market that I can buy in my own neighborhood. We know that there are blocks around mobile vending that could be improved and changed and small farmers could begin to open up new markets for themselves and people could be served by good, fresh local product. So we hope that you will join us in supporting a food policy council to address bringing good, healthy foods to our neighborhoods, and that will be the direction that we see this data going. Our intent is with all the data that we have and crunched into each of the city council and board of supervisors districts we are going to be taking them each a packet that shows them the overall scope of it and their specific district and hope to talk to them about their putting their abilities behind solving some of these issues. We have 15 minutes. I'd love to hear some comments. There will be a full-blown, heavy-duty report coming out from us by the end of the month most hopefully. You have in your packets just a taste of some of the details, but we have a great deal of information, and so this is the overview.

Participant question: Edie, thank you, and thanks to Metro Ministry for doing this. It's very needed. I have two questions. Are you going to repeat this in a year or so so we can see if there has been change?

Edie Jessup: I think that that is a very good question, and I think that my sense is that we need to do that and we need to keep the people who have already done this in their neighborhoods engaged in the process. Many of them said we will go with you to our city council and our board of supervisors and talk to them about the issues in our neighborhood. We're hoping to keep them engaged, and I think that redoing this, particularly if we can get the data GeoMapped a little bit, we could begin to see when stores go away and when stores are re-sited or where farmers markets and accesses change, so we would very much like to do that. I think it's critical that we do that because I think these are things that can be changed.

Participant question: My second question, I live in southeast Fresno. I live just outside Chestnut, Peach, Kings Canyon, Butler area where we have all those apartment complexes and

where you got a number of your surveys. I've shopped at those big box stores, and what's puzzling me, when we see by ethnicity where they feel they can't get the food, I understand we don't have a Russian population to speak of in that area, but there's definitely Hispanic, Asian, and African American in there. They're basically all shopping at the same store. Why are the African Americans saying we can't get meat and fish and the other ones are saying fish isn't a problem but fresh fruit is?

Eddie Jessup: We do have this data by area, and when you look at that, the African-American results are primarily Southwest rather than there, but still, it's that distance and what is available. Some places as a result of their food assessments have taken a look at the Food For Less down in the southern part of the city and taken a look at the Food For Less that's up in the northern part of the city and looked at differences in prices and differences in quality of food. With the retail surveys we found one issue for folks is that someone told us that it was dangerous. She had to go at night because it's when somebody was home with a car. She had to take her kids with her because her husband was actually working and they dropped him off at work and went to the store and it was dangerous for her kids in the big box store because everything is stacked up in the aisles at that time of day and it was dangerous for her. So the details as they're broken down by district will elucidate where the areas are a little bit better than the entire sample.

Participant comment: I also live in the Southeast Fresno area, so I'm familiar with the stores, and two of them you used in your survey were FoodsCo and Food Maxx, which are very popular stores. They're both owned by chains from out of the area. FoodsCo is owned by Ralph's Grocery in Los Angeles and Food Maxx is a division of Save Mart in Merced. They get their groceries and products out of the same warehouse, so you're really kind of limited for the most part to what those chains carry in all the rest of their chain, and that does hurt. There's not that much choice. I had another thing just maybe as a heads up alert. It's along way off, I think here, but I know at least in our neighborhood and so forth there's a predominance of shopping carts strung all over. You can't drive down any street without finding shopping carts abandoned. Before moving to Fresno I was in Orange County about 40 years and about nine or ten years ago we had a phenomenon similar to what's in progress here where we ended up with about three or four chains controlling that market, and when they do that they become very powerful politically. What happened in Orange County is that it got a law passed that it's illegal to take a shopping cart off the store's premises out of their parking lot and there were heavy fines.

Eddie Jessup: Yes, and Larry, that is occurring here already.

Participant comment: Well, I just wanted to alert. I don't know if anybody knows about that, but we really need to fight against that because that would be a real blow for the people that we're talking about.

Eddie Jessup: We have reports from our survey that we will put into it about folks having to leave their ID and \$5 with the store in order to take the cart off the premises. That's very intimidating to have to leave their ID. Of course, the store knows that folks are going to come back for their ID, but that is a very intimidating issue, and instead of our figuring out the transportation issues for folks so that people can get there and back and so forth...it's a big issue.

Participant question: I thought they had talked at one time that they were going to buy these carts and give them to low-income people or something. We had talked about that before. What I want to say, I like the WinCo. I think they have quality food. I always go to Peach and Ashlan to the WinCo. I like that store. The thing is, I'll be 71 this year, lived in Fresno all my life, was educated in Fresno, taught in Fresno, and in my days I lived at Belmont and First, and we had a little Armenian store right on Belmont. It's not there anymore. My mom was left widowed with three children. She had to stay at home, and they would always deliver food, leave it at the front of the door. We had vendors going up and down the street bringing us the vegetables. We always see our ice cream vendors and taco sellers up and down the streets. Where are the entrepreneurs? When we're talking about access we're talking about transportation. Why aren't we talking about trying to encourage entrepreneurs to get into the fresh fruit and sell it?

Jeremy Hofer: Yes, encouraging mobile vending is, I think, really important. It needs to be rooted in a business model of doing it and we need more support for that. I think that's one way that a food policy council could actually move some of the Small Business Council and some of these organizations that have entrepreneurial monies to actually push some of that money towards mobile vending and farmers markets. The whole farmers market piece has been really difficult because there are a lot of city and zoning ordinances that restrict certain markets from being out in certain areas.

Eddie Jessup: I want to say that out of community food assessments around the country by establishing a food policy council and a built environment council some major changes have occurred in these municipalities. They've brought supermarkets back in, they have developed this entrepreneurial thing, they've gotten fresh access to the small markets around, it has worked, and some of it is someone paying attention to the ordinances, to the zoning, to the blocks to this. I have to agree that the political power and the centralization in the world is a big issue and we have to talk about and learn about that. They finally build a big box store over on the west side, barely on the west side, and that was a big thing, but within a year they had sold it to another company and so there's all that churning of the expense and the cost and the investment in the community. In my neighborhood a block up the way they closed the Food For Less and a block down the other way they renovated a building and reopened one. That's crazy. It doesn't make any sense except that it's not about food, it's about money, and we really have to take a look at that.

Connie Schneider: Eddie, I'd like to congratulate you and Metro Ministry on a fabulous project, and it's quite an undertaking. The work that you've done, the information that you're providing to Fresno County can really be beneficial, and I hope that our community leaders will take advantage of this because it shows us the nutrition education needs that we have, the parenting needs, the information on how to help people understand their own finances, so fabulous job.

Eddie Jessup: Thank you.

Participant question: I just came up with another idea. We've got Radio Park. We have all these parks. Why can't we get farmers markets in those parks in those communities? That could be something that the food council could work with the city on.

Eddie Jessup: That's right. It's a logical thing.

Participant comment: Yeah, I mean, why not utilize Radio Park?

Participant question: I also echo Connie's words. Wonderful job. It was very informative. I learned a lot, and it's obvious you spent a lot of time and energy and dedication. You mentioned that although it's not completely academically sound it has local implications. Why did you decide to go the route you did and not have a representative population of the entire Fresno?

Eddie Jessup: A couple things, and there was really at the outset decision to do this community food assessment that involved the people looking at their own neighborhoods, and we felt like that was an organizing tool, as a matter of fact, and as a real look at what the neighborhood was that we would get much better information from folks who were looking at their own neighborhood. They would also learn some things as they were doing it, and many of them said, "Boy, I never thought about looking at that," so you begin to raise the consciousness of folks and they realize that they have the ability to see these things and the ability to ask for the kinds of things that they really need for their family's health. So we had a combination of an organizing tool and some really pretty good information. There are plenty of studies. CHIS is doing studies. There are plenty of studies that are occurring, but many of them are secondary data and I think that the other thing that you need to know is that this is primary data, which is never as spanking clean as folks would like. All the CHIS data we're basing so many things on, particularly the food insecurity data from CHIS, which is about 40% in Fresno County and which has been a big thing for us to look at, the problem with that data is it does not include farm workers, people who speak another language because you have to have a land line phone for them to interview you, you have to speak English for them to interview you, and so you don't get the richness and complexity, as a matter of fact. Even though that data is astounding and horrific, it still isn't getting to the group of people that we were able to get to, I think, with this data, so that's part of the reason. Part of the reason is to move things systemically so that we're not just saying that this family gets a bag of groceries and so that must solve their problem, because it doesn't. The complexity of why people are running out of food is real, and we can do some things about it at a systemic level so that everyone attains access to really basic, basic things. It's true not only of food but we need to be doing that about housing and healthcare also and then people might have a chance to be able to grow up and do something.

Jeremy Hofer: One of the other things on that was that the process by which the tool was developed is different than in an academic. It wasn't developed by a committee of Ph.D.s. It was developed by a committee around a table of community groups, of people in the community that were concerned about this issue, and so you have a different type of tool that yielded different results than if the tool had been a six-page academic survey tool, so there were some differences in the process as well.

Eddie Jessup: And we were able to ask the questions we wanted to ask. There was some information, I have to tell you, that we didn't get the information we were looking for. It just wasn't there, but a lot of it we did and so going back on those other things and looking at what they were, but this was stuff that people in the community wanted to find out about.

Connie Schneider: Edie, I seldom ever disagree with you, but I do have to disagree that it's not academically sound. I think that from my experience in research I have seen research come out from academic institutions that's not as solid as yours.

Edie Jessup: Well, thank you very much. So let's take it to town, folks. Let's take it to town. As I say, we will be publishing all the details of the data. We will put it up on our website, but we will also have it available in hard copy for you and probably it will be the end of the month when that is actually parsed.

Participant comment: I would just like to say that I was born here in Fresno, raised on the west side of the valley in Firebaugh, and still have most of my family in Firebaugh and Mendota. I can also say that I have been educated at Fresno State here in the valley and have done some post grad work, and this is the first study that I can say that I have even heard of to even come close to being real. I've read journals, I've read abstracts, I've read studies, I've read surveys, I've seen tables, I've seen charts, I've seen percentages, but what was in relation more closely to the Latino population I can speak for myself because I'm still very much routed. I live next to the senior citizens village. My mother works there, and so speaking from a more humble person-to-person aspect I can say that 99% of what you said I can vouch for as far as why the population doesn't participate in the food nutritional programs and the lack of access, people going to what we would call la ramate, which is a swap meet, the increase in that, is just nice to see it on paper. When you've been raised in the area and you've seen it go the way it's going, an educated person can perhaps spit out a survey in a way where it's seen more appropriately, but when you ask the people that have gone through the process then you can really say, wow, it's great to see it actually being put on paper when you've actually lived it, so I second the motion that Connie just said. Very accurate.

Edie Jessup: Well, thank you, and the credit goes to those 83 people who actually worked very hard to do these surveys. I'm just full of admiration and respect for their ability to do this and their ability to bring forward this information, and the comfort level of folks being surveyed was also apparent with this model of doing it. Thank you.

Participant comment: Edie, I just wanted to say that I was really thrilled about the process that you used, the model that you used, because it was an education process that helped them become their own advocates, and I think that that's something that can't be understated at all. A lot of times people think that a report is the end piece of paper, but a lot of times if you really look at an unconventional way of obtaining information for the report you can cause those people who are collecting that information to become advocates.

Edie Jessup: Thank you, and we have been written up in a journal piece because of that process. They looked at five food assessments and how they were being done. That happened about a year ago that they wrote that up while we were mid process, and so we have that good data because they did a lot of interviewing of us and looking at what we were doing and so forth, so we're very happy to have that process data pretty well addressed. I want to let you know that the new copy of Making Connections is hot off the press. They're \$7, and if your agency or you want to purchase one my friend Carmen is back there. This is the new edition and it's a must have from Fresno Metro Ministry.

I hope that you will join us in working on this because there's more to go and more to do. If you think of things that you'd like to know or that you'd like to see, give us a call and we'll be happy to do that. Thank you, and thank the USDA for funding this also.

➤ Fresno Community Food Assessment Process (Presented at the beginning of the Report at this Forum):

We have a lot of data, and I'm going to tell you a little bit about how we developed the survey. The objective that we had for this project came out of **25 people from Fresno who were trained to do Community Food Assessment, and from that there was a task group that was formed.** We began looking at different instruments other people had used to survey their communities and developed our own instrument. **The Community Food Assessment Task Group determined that we should assess by city council districts and county supervisorial districts so we would have somewhere to go with the results and that we involve local residents and community volunteers in the process.**

Community members are empowered to make food policy recommendations to their local officials and we want to work with you in creating an action plan from the data that we have collected from this assessment.

Slide of City and County Districts surveyed. It's very important that you realize and that we realize that the city and county have different functions, and so what recommendations we take to the city and the county have different kinds of emphasis. The county districts, of course, overlap into the city areas.

Slides of the names of people that were trained to do the Community Food Assessment and Community organizations who assisted in the CFA. We developed a training process and a packet of materials for those people that we trained. We developed a Training CD, so that those who were training new people to do the CFA survey had consistent explanation of the questions. We went over each question in the survey and talked about **why** it was a question and **what kind of answers** should be there. Eighty-four people is a lot of people to train, and to collect data from. They worked very hard in doing this survey and we are very proud of the fact that we have involved so many people. We also worked with a large number of community-based organizations, congregations, clubs, and neighborhood groups.

In the initial Community Food Assessment training by the Community Food Security Coalition trained 25 Fresno people about three years ago. The trainers were an **urban planner and medical anthropologist.** I want to tell you how important their perspective was in terms of catching my eye with **Community Food Assessment as a way to look at our communities because there were people talking about not only the planning issues, the access issues, and the transportation issues involved with food and where things are located, but you also had a medical anthropologist talking from that perspective in terms of what it means to people's health and what barriers to access can do to impeding good health.**

Survey tools. Were developed, tested and reviewed with people who might be doing the survey. Adjustments were made as we went along. We did focus groups to see if we were asking the questions that we needed to be asking. The task groups that Metro Ministry facilitates in the Hunger and Nutrition Project and in their health project informed this survey tremendously. Food Stamp Advocates, Child Nutrition (which worked the last couple of years on a school policy for Fresno Unified), Senior Nutrition, Community Garden Coalition and a

Food Resource group. California State University at Fresno on several occasions offered good help to us with this project. Early on we had some folks doing some surveying from their Medical GIS class: they presented to this Forum on utilizing this survey to find out people's access to food and how that related to diabetes, and whether they were able to get food that was good for their health.

As we did outreach and train the trainer, one of the big things we found in this is that we had **language issues**. We ended up doing this survey in **eight different languages**, which provided some good information and some challenges.

The volunteers and trainers were asked for a two-week commitment of 15 to 30 hours. One of the first things we asked them to do was to draw a picture of their neighborhood, and that was a very interesting way for them to begin to think about what it was they were looking at. It was helpful for folks to engage them in the project. We checked in with volunteers after the first couple days of their neighborhood project, so that if they had questions they could ask us or offer support to them in doing the survey. After they had finished doing the surveying, we asked them to do 20 surveys, we brought them back together so they could talk about their experience, what they had found out, so we have record of the qualitative data also. The training covered confidentiality. They were going to be interviewing people, and some of the questions that they were going to be asking were things that folks may feel sensitive about. We issued them cards that identified the project, so that the people they were interviewing, or storekeepers, particularly, could call us if they had questions about what the survey was about or if they had any concerns. Volunteers kept a time sheet so we knew how much time was spent on the project. We did have some stipends available through the USDA CFP grant for those who were trainers.

Consumer survey. The purpose was to find out **where people get food, how they get food that they need and want, what stores are most used by people, and how people felt about the way they get their food**. I want to acknowledge Dr. Connie Schneider for being a big help with the survey. We had our survey reviewed by two or three different evaluators from around the state, others were encouraging us to design the survey with little check-off boxes and not to do any qualitative data collection because research-wise that was the more accurate way to do things. Our CFA committee was really interested in finding out from people what their food access issues were, even though it might be harder for us to look at the data. Connie was very helpful to us in finding ways to ask questions so that we could later create the number data that we needed and at the same time we could find out from people what they wanted.

We had 866 surveys completed and there were 21 questions on each of the consumer surveys. As you can see, we asked where they shop, why they shop there, and we asked them what other places that they got food, the quality of food, problems in getting food, experience with public assistance programs, and we collected some demographics.

Output of the survey data. After we input all the data, Connie connected us with people and a software program that would crunch those numbers and crunch the qualitative data. I want to thank Dr. Marilyn Wilson who actually did that input, and Pouran Sohrabi, from the Fresno County Health Department who did the qualitative data.

So we had several outputs from our data, and that has led us to very complicated looks at things: *Output by entire sample, those who earned under \$20,000, those who did not have an automobile, by ethnicity, by city districts, county districts, and we have done a qualitative data output.*

The *Retail Survey* was a supplement to the consumer data, and we're looking for geo mapping patterns in that process and it is in process. Our GeoMapping is not complete. We thought that we could do some early GeoMapping, and we could except that it didn't have all the data and so now we are at that point of putting some of that on a GeoMap. Focus groups were conducted after the surveys, and our task groups participated.