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Excerpts and Summary of the 31th Hunger and Nutrition Forum

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**MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
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The following is a summary of the reports made at the forum compiled by Edie Jessup and Carey Berend.

Focus: Gleaning Fresno's Bounty

Edie Jessup, Hunger & Nutrition Project, Fresno Metro Ministry: Welcomed participants and reviewed the Packet for the Day for the 31st Community Hunger & Nutrition Forum.

Edie Jessup: I just returned from Sacramento. I'm on the Joint Steering Committee for the State Department of Health Nutrition Network and I was at their meeting which was focused for the first time on statewide food security. I just want to report to you that we had three legislators at the meeting, Darrell **Steinberg** is carrying AB 231 the food-stamp-related changes that will allow food stamps to be used more readily by folks in our community. On the back table we have his bill, and you can take a look at it. It has several elements to it. One of them is to eliminate the finger-imaging requirement. Another is to establish transitional food stamp benefits for CalWORKS leavers. As we know, there are probably about 4,000 families that are 'timing out' of welfare in Fresno County this year, and this bill would allow them to continue to receive food stamps after dropping off of the cash supplement for their families without having to reapply. Another provision would be to cut down food stamp face-to-face interviews so that the counties would be allowed to take application information over the phone if people can't get in the office. At this time it takes about three trips to the food stamp office, two or three, anyway to get signed up for food stamps. If people are working it's very difficult trying to decide: "Do I take off work to go to the food stamp office, or not get food stamps. And then, forever and ever, AB231 brings back allowing folks that are hungry to own reliable cars. Trying to get that through the legislature and the Governor has been difficult. Right now if you have a car that's worth more than \$4,650 then you cannot get food stamps.

Johnie Belford, Employment & Temporary Assistance; But they can have another \$2,000 worth of property which could be applied to the car value.

Edie Jessup: This is probably the second or third year this issue has come back as a legislative bill. On the back table there is more information about this, and if you or your agency want to sign on to supporting these bills through California Food Policy Advocates, there is information about that also.

Henry Lopez, the new contact at Fresno County on EBT, talked a little bit about the Electronic Benefits Transfer/Food Stamp Card. And we do have an EBT action team that is quite active, and we're in good touch with our friends at the county and continuing to work with them so that the food stamp card, the Electronic Benefits Transfer which will roll out in Fresno in June, will work well for people.

One of the big issues for EBT, which is one of the reasons that the gleaning program today is so important, is that the State has not really figured out how to make the EBT Food Stamp Card work at farmers' markets and at produce stands. There is a big summit on this at the state level still trying to figure this out and see if it can work so that people can use their food stamps to buy fresh produce, which would be very nice. I have more information on that for folks, too.

This project is looking at the county budget cuts and what it's looking like for folks on a whole lot of levels, and I think that the thing that I want to bring to your attention is always the context that we're working in here in Fresno County. We just had the report that our new *official* unemployment rate is at 17%, and that means it's probably double that in reality. You have to realize that that 17% is three times the national unemployment level and the state unemployment level, and we're starting off here in Fresno County with cuts that are truly untenable because we have cut and cut and cut, and we have a really huge problem here. We meet with the county staff regularly. You're all welcome to our Food Stamp Advocacy meetings once a month. They're on the last Thursday of the month.

The last time we talked to Fresno County, one of the issues was that in order to adapt to budget cuts that have occurred previously, they are really at a very slim staffing level in the Food Stamp office. Out of 50 some total Eligibility Worker slots, Fresno County already has 12 unfilled positions. The caseload in Fresno County is twice that of other counties. And so we're starting out looking at cuts to our county staff that affect poor people tremendously. It's worse here than other places. I know that there are hard decisions that Fresno County has to make. We are advocating for the fact that we need funding in a way that is different than other counties and we need to stand up for Fresno County because of the need to not cut more of the Employment & Temporary Assistance staff. So, I guess on county budget woes, that it is a really, really serious, serious problem if we don't provide a safety net with adequate staff to help our many low income neighbors in Fresno County.

I would like to introduce the PAR (Plant a Row) for the Hungry folks to talk to us about the context for this meeting today and what they have been doing. Dianne Hanzlicek, Laurie Labbitt, and Sandy Dralle. Then, if you all will introduce **Joni Diserns** from San Jose Valley Harvest.

Dianne Hanzlicek, *Plant a Row for the Hungry*: Hi. I'm Dianne Hanzlicek. I used to work for Community Food Bank for three years. While I was working there the director, **Todd Norgard**, became aware of the program *Plant a Row For the Hungry*. I was a Master Gardener at the time and it seemed a logical pairing to get the Master Gardeners from UCExtension involved in *Plant a Row For the Hungry*, and we are now coordinating this program locally together. PAR has been active locally since 1999. We started the first year with 3000 pounds of fresh produced donated from backyard gardeners and distributed through the Community Food Bank

Network. This year that just ended in January 2003, we had gleaned **13 tons of Citrus**. For those of you who aren't familiar with *Plant a Row*, it's a nationwide program that was founded by the Garden Writer's Association of America and the Home and Garden channel. It seems a logical pairing. It **encourages home vegetable gardeners to plant an extra row in their garden and donate it to a local food pantry**. The Community Food Bank has 180 partner agencies. If someone is interested in *Plant a Row*, we send a packet that has free seeds, a list of agencies where they can take their produce directly, and a little reporting slip so that we can collect the number of pounds per year. We notify the national *Plant a Row* about how many pounds of produce are donated.

Our principal focus with *Plant a Row* is to rescue fruit and vegetables that would ordinarily go to waste. We have gotten so many calls from people who have one or two acres or 100 trees that they cannot possibly pick, so we try to **find volunteers** that would be able to go out to these locations and pick the produce. In large gleanings, we take the produce directly to the Community Food Bank and they distribute it to their agencies. **In Fresno County it's clear there is a great need for food. One in three people are food insecure. It seems especially obscene in this area that's the breadbasket of the world, and many of the people that need assistance with food are directly involved in the food-growing industry.** Thank you so much.

Laurie Labbitt, *Plant a Row for the Hungry*: Well, to know how I found **Joni** you have to go back to a foggy, cold morning on January 4, 2003, when a number of us in this room were out in an orchard of 124 trees, having picked oranges for several hours. The Community Food Bank truck is mired in the mud, my husband is trying to pull it out with our car. We finally leave and say "Somebody is going to have to come tow this truck to the Food Bank with all the tons of oranges that we have picked on it." And we look at each other and say "Someone must know how to do this better than we know how to do it!" So that's what started my quest.

As Dianne said, *PAR* is a nationwide program, so when I had a chance I e-mailed the national director of *Plant a Row For the Hungry* and said "Who can you direct us to that knows how to glean and how to connect with food banks, and they referred me to San Jose. I then e-mailed the woman at the San Jose Mercury News who does *Plant a Row For the Hungry* figures there, and she said, "Well we are so fortunate in our area because we have a wonderful food bank and here's their name and number, and we also have a foundation called Village Harvest, and here's **Joni Desiern's** number. You might want to contact her." So that's the history behind today.

We've spent a couple of hours with **Joni** this morning, and I'd say we were both impressed and really excited at the potential for using what she's developed on a part-time basis, a volunteer basis, in San Jose. So **Joni**, without further ado...Oh, she has roots here in the Valley. Even though she grew up in Hawaii she visited cousins yesterday in Kerman and has already been to get almonds and kumquats this morning, so she is well versed in this area, too. So **Joni**, we're glad to have you here.

Joni Diserns, Village Harvest, San Jose: Thank you so much. I'm so happy to be here because our program started at Village Harvest with the premise that we didn't understand why there was so much scarcity and why we had so many hungry in a land of pure abundance. At least that's the genesis in Santa Clara County. It used to be known as the 'Valley of Hearts Delight' where it was just orchards as far as people could see. Although we've generally gotten out of agriculture (except for the southern parts of our county) and we're mostly very suburban and we've very much turned into Silicon Valley. But the land cannot help but be as fertile as it is, and when people plant trees, and they plant oranges and plums and apricots, even neglected trees produce a tremendous amount of fruit, and we're discovering that a lot of that was going to waste. In a place where we estimate from backyard trees alone that **four million pounds of**

fruit were going to the landfills, how could we have hungry at the same time? So our premise is very similar to what you had talked about as well, and that's why I'm very excited to be here today. I think that some of the challenges and some of the premises are very similar between Santa Clara County and Fresno.

So these are the four basic questions that I thought we'd talk about. What and who is Village Harvest? How did we get started? We're really not that old. This is our first really full operational year. We've been in the experimental stage for the last two. A little bit about how we're doing our *Harvesting for the Hungry* project and where are we going in terms of the next stages.

Village Harvest is basically a nonprofit suburban harvesting cooperative for the hungry. Our challenge is that since we've moved out of agriculture but we're still growing fruit, **how do we do harvesting on a single-tree by single-tree basis versus going into farms and doing it on an acre-by-acre basis, and we've had to figure out how to do that very efficiently and productively in order to be able to figure out how do we get as much food as possible.** So we're focusing on four major things. 1) Harvesting the overabundance in our own backyards, 2) Homeowner education, 3) Volunteer education about how to grow and how to sustain this abundant resource that we have, preserving both in terms of the trees and the resources as well as 4) Food preservation knowledge and educating people about what can be done with this abundance that comes in at certain times of the year, how to extend the useful life of that food. And we're also really doing a lot to build community in our own backyards.

Laurie mentioned that I grew up in Hawaii. Hawaii has deep agricultural roots but yet has this very high cost of living, very similar to what we have in the Bay Area. Palo Alto and Hawaii often get compared in terms of the cost of living there, and yet Hawaii doesn't have the benefit of high-tech jobs, so the way that people get by is through community. If someone has an overabundance – in Hawaii it would be mangos – then everyone is there to help them out to figure out how do we harvest this, and we share it all amongst each other. So growing up none of these things would go to waste, and then I moved to the Bay Area. And you see all of these trees dropping fruit, and it was very hard for me to understand how this waste might happen. And so by building community and getting people connected we're actually starting to make some of the available food much more accessible.

Village Harvest is a completely volunteer-run organization. I have the title of Executive Director, which is really very much overblown. I'm a volunteer as well, and I do everything from set the business plans for the organization all the way down to bottle washing when I have to participate in our preserving events. We have about 125+ regular volunteers. Actually, that number has just grown to about 200. **We are a California public benefit corporation and our expenses up to this point have been fairly minimal. They're largely offset with individual contributions and through the money that we get from selling the preserves from the fruit that we harvest from the things that can't be eaten during the fresh season. We're structured as a cooperative, but all the different individuals and community organizations that benefit from our activities all come on board as partners in making this happen, and they bring their resources and what they can provide along the way.** These are just some of the people that work with us: the Second Harvest Food Bank. We have a local organization that is interested in sustainable sources of food, local food, food security issues, and they are a wonderful partner. InVision and Mountain View Community Services are some of our local agencies that we partner with and they provide certain resources. We have a number of organizations that provide volunteers, provide education sources, expertise, and the California Rare Fruit Growers are actually a very good example of that.

So we know, like you know, that hunger is often a problem not of supply but really of distribution. We were sort of surprised to find out that the average amount of pounds that we get from a backyard tree is 300. You are closer to agriculture than we are. We were

just astounded to find that out, to find out that when people tell us “Well, I just have one tree”, and we think, “Yeah, but that’s 300 pounds”. **If you think about this as food servings of fruit a day for an individual that’s pretty close to 300 people that could be fed off of that tree, and that’s way more than a single family can generally consume even if they love oranges or they love peaches or nectarines in that fresh season.** So based upon those numbers and the number of single-family homes and the average number of fruit trees that we find per block, and that’s pretty well calibrated with what the cities are telling us about how much food is going into the landfills, that **there is about 4 million pounds easily. That’s a very low estimate of the amount of food that’s going to waste in Santa Clara County, and that 4 million number actually ends up being exactly the amount of produce that we would love to be able to have in addition to what we are already distributing through our Second Harvest Food Bank system into the Santa Clara Valley.**

So it’s all a matter of ‘how do we get to that?’ How do we get to that food? Our problem is that in the single-family homes **a lot of our homeowners are older, they’re physically unable to be able to harvest that fruit, or in the cases of people having multiple trees, two or three trees, they’re looking at 500, 600, 700 pounds.** That’s really hard to ask a homeowner to be able to harvest themselves and bring it to a food bank. **We just need to build community around these people with these wonderful resources** to figure out how to make that happen. We also have people in high-tech jobs that are working 50, 60, 70 hours a week. The time off that they have they want to spend with their families. It’s not something that they really want to be doing, having to figure out how to harvest their food.

The other dynamic for the people that are still in agriculture is that increasingly they are unable to pay for the labor to harvest their fields and still sell their crops at a profit, so they are finding that it’s more economical for them to actually just go ahead and donate their crops, receive the tax break that they get from that, and it ends up being more financially to their advantage. So Santa Clara Valley used to be called the Valley of Hearts Delight, and the same kind of soil fertility and environmental conditions and weather conditions that gave root to the ability to grow all of this fruit and orchards in abundance – and we used to grow everything from cherries to apricots to wheat to pumpkins to all of these different crops very much as you do here – those same conditions lead to still being able to grow fruit today.

Now that Santa Clara Valley is now Silicon Valley...this is a new development that’s coming up in Palo Alto, and **Palo Alto City Council has actually started to encourage new development to plant edibles in their landscaping because they’re realizing that with all the water and all the energy that goes into maintaining landscaping, especially around businesses, that we could be growing food.** We just need to figure out how to do that. So this particular development is very unique. I don’t know if you can tell in the slide, but where they have the **little trees are cherry trees, and they have them all the way around the building, so there are about 50 trees planted in that complex.** The City and Developers are looking to this landscaping to be a community resource, and we’re working with them to figure out how to **make sure that when the cherries come in that that can be harvested.**

So that’s the history of our valley. **Village Harvest really started off with just a very small project between the master gardeners and the 4H clubs where the 4H clubs wanted to do food preservation.** At that time we were practicing learning about food preservations by buying strawberries and buying blueberries and it was really hard for them to be spending \$70, \$100 worth of buying this produce and then end up with something that may or may not be edible in the end. And so 4H came to the master gardeners looking for people who had extra fruit, extra tomatoes, extra cucumbers that they could practice on, and when they talked to me about this we had this discussion about, well, **food preservation in principle is really about extending the useful life of what you have in abundance during the fresh season.** Let’s just look around at what we have in our valley to say ‘what can we just take, what can we glean

from your neighbors, from your own backyard?' **And so we started a program that just looked at preserving local foods, and in this process people started to find out that we had 4H clubs going out and gleaning backyard fruit in order to run the preservation project, and people started to call, and we gathered a list of 10, 20, it got up to about 50 names before we started to realize that there's a resource here that is obviously untapped, and it's a shame that all of this is going to waste.** What do we do with that? *And we took it on as our responsibility to figure out what to do.* So in 2001 we teamed up with another community agency and we said in just this neighborhood, in the Palo Alto community, **is there something that we can do to just get access to all of that fruit and make it available for the food pantries in the Palo Alto area.** And we just ran some experiments in doing that, and we learned as we went about how to make that happen, and **we just did 5000 pounds in that little community, but it made a huge difference for the hungry.** With that people started to find out about it, and then we started to move to other communities. We moved to Willow Glen, we moved to Mountain View, we moved to other towns in the Santa Clara Valley area. So last year was all about figuring out, so now we have this little recipe that works. Can we take it to other communities? Then can we figure out how to do this on weekends, can we figure out how to do it on weekdays, can we take advantage of the different resources that are provided to us, trucks and volunteers at these different times? So in 2002 that's what we did. We kind of experimented with that. And now we have these different recipes that work for us in these different communities. Now we're basically committing to say, okay, we're going to do this on a regular basis in these communities. We're recruiting homeowners; we're recruiting volunteers and running those projects on a regular basis to get to this year, which is really what we think of as our first full operational year.

So along the way we didn't really say that we had any specific goals. We just wanted to answer the questions that people had thrown out at us. There were questions from people who were dubious that there were **enough homeowners that were really willing to participate and that we could get enough volunteers**, but from the beginning that has never been an issue. And then we had to answer the question **can we efficiently harvest one tree at a time going from home to home**, and we're still working on that, and we're figuring out how to be more and more efficient as we go from year to year. In an event last year we would average 1500 pounds in a half-day event with about 20 volunteers. Right now we're averaging more like 3000 pounds, and that's just a matter of just figuring out how to do the **project coordination and the scheduling better so that we're focusing our volunteer time in a much more concentrated area**, and we're going to work on the **equipment improvements**, all of these kinds of things. And then the questions around **is the distribution system able to handle what we can pull in.** As we've run up against limits at every point we've just said, okay, is that a real limit? Have we actually served the need or is there still another distribution issue or another issue that we need to face, and we just keep moving it that way.

So right now we're running seven events a month. We have regular harvesting events that happen with the Second Harvest Food Bank. They have a team that runs every Tuesday. We have small community group... communities that were set up to do weekend projects. We've scaled harvesting. It has to be 2, 4, or 6 hours depending upon the nature of the volunteers, and we have committed to basically being able to cover most of Santa Clara County, all the cities in it, on an either monthly or quarterly basis, and we're continuing to pilot additional configurations.

So this is a lot of detail, but that's basically all the different projects that we're working on doing. We have two major gleaning projects inside of Santa Clara Valley. **We have Village Harvest, and then we have the Second Harvest Food Bank Gleaning Project. We do all of the backyard trees, and we try to concentrate on people who have more than 150 pounds of fruit or people who are physically unable to harvest their fruit. We do backyard orchards anywhere from 12 to 50 trees except for the oranges and the apples, which**

Second Harvest Food Bank does. And then we do all of the summer fruit orchards of any size, which includes all of the stone fruits and some of the more unusual fruit like persimmons and things like that. And that was basically just filling that gap of saying anything that the Second Harvest Food Bank Gleaning Program is not covering we will figure out how to do because we wanted to be able to offer service to all of the homeowners where they could just have **one number that they would call no matter what kind of fruit they had and no matter when it came into season, we would figure out how to put it to good use, and that was just part of the principles by which we were founded.** So in 2002 we did 30+ gleaning events, about 100 volunteers, about 150 homes in that time frame. We're now up to about 300-and-something in our database. And those are our poundage totals that we did from the different years, so we're currently on track to double what we did in 2002, maybe even triple that.

This is what it takes for us to do an event: an **event coordinator** – that's usually me, but we have about four other people who are also getting trained on doing this, and we're looking to actually hire an event coordinator to work a few hours a week. We need a **community partner** because really we were focusing on being a coordinator between all of these different groups, and our **community partners often bring in volunteers**, they bring in **particular resources**, like maybe they might have *insurance* for the volunteers, they might be able to provide *parking lots* or places that we can meet, I mean, just all of the things that are required. We need a **distribution partner**, especially on the weekends. This is a large issue with us. The distribution partners are agencies and not always open, so we need to figure out how we work with them to get the fruit so that they can distribute it. Having homeowners, harvesting volunteers, equipment, trucks, harvesting equipment, boxes and bins, and it's kind of funny what kind of things run into problems, like boxes for us are a perennial problem.

Participant question: Do the homeowners provide boxes?

Joni Diserns: Very rarely do they provide us boxes, because they have a problem with that too. So we just harvest the fruit, and then it needs to somehow get to the needy, to the people who can use it.

Participant question: Do you distribute the food to other programs that feed the needy?

Joni Diserns: Uh huh. People with brown bag programs or soup kitchens and things like that. You know, Village Harvest doesn't help them to do distribute food directly to people. We're just **supplying a source of food**. And we couldn't...it's going that extra mile that we're not able to do.

So just some pictures. This is our **Second Harvest Food Bank team. Their process is harvest a tree, we load all the fruit up into bins, and that gets weighed and then sorted and distributed by our food bank. The fruit that we harvest generally goes out within two days.** This is a big difference, you know, if you look at that versus what our **weekend teams** look like, kind of a ragtag group of people that get together. **We get boxes and bins from wherever we can and we're working out of smaller trucks, usually things that are either volunteered or donated by different agencies or volunteers.** But no matter how we do it, it's still a lot of fruit. This is an example of just one tree that this woman had in this backyard that was just full of these incredible naval oranges. With all the reflected heat that she has from that concrete on that one tree it's just incredibly sweet, and she also has these little bushes of Meyer lemons, and so volunteers attacked the tree, and 20 minutes later it's stripped and there's 275 pounds of fruit.

So one of our challenges is because we are trying to be a one-stop service for all the homeowners, we don't want to differentiate between people with apples versus people with plums, **we've had to figure out what to do with all this rare fruit that's grown.** *We have one orchard full of French plums, and we went and looked for the people who still knew how to harvest **French plums**, which is a particular harvesting procedure, and it ends up being a great community event for little children, and we get the schools out there because the way it's harvested is the trees are shaken and it falls to the ground and it gets gathered off the floor, so we have the adults shaking the trees and the kids picking it up off the ground.* We've had to figure out what to do with **figs** because the Second Harvest Food Bank didn't want to deal with figs, so we had to figure out, okay, so who can use figs and how do we get it distributed. Same thing with **persimmons**. We have a lot of persimmons that are grown in our valley and not a lot of people who knew what to do with it, so then we had to follow through with how to **educate people on how to use persimmons and how to dry it and how to preserve it for the future.**

On top of the **harvesting for the hunger events we also have a lot of backyard orchard education.** We're helping to educate homeowners as well as volunteers, and we're emphasizing a lot of **IPM, a lot less toxic ways of being able to care for their fruit. The cities love this because it's less toxics that are going into our wastewater and into our streams as well as preventing nitrogen pollution. The volunteers love it because they get in touch more with the seasons about what's available in different time frames, and we also do preserving events as well.**

Another one of our principles in moving forward is that **everyone had to win in this cooperative, and so everyone who's been involved gets something in return.** The homeowners get incredible **tax donations.** They're basically growing money on trees. The **hungry are receiving tree-ripened fruit.** It's not only delicious; it's also nutritious as well. The **food banks get a year-round supply of produce.** The **agencies get a lot of food delivered right to their doorstep,** and it just goes on and on. The volunteers just have come out to us in droves. They just love having this **outdoor activity that they get to see quick results on.** If they weren't there then that 2000 or 3000 pounds of fruit wouldn't have been harvested, wouldn't be available, and for three hours, four hours on a weekend morning that's an incredible thing to be able to walk away with. And we're also finding that we're **saving a lot of trees** in the process as well. **People tell us if you're here every year then we will keep this in orchards, we will keep this backyard tree, because otherwise we would basically take it down.**

So a big part of what we do, again, is the homeowner education. A lot of people just don't realize that what they have is valuable, edible, and usable. That's really been a key, and the **people who answer our phones spend a lot of time with homeowners helping to explain how what they have is usable, and yes, even lemons too.** We learned a lot about working with the public. We had to really work on our **homeowner databases.** With 300 people and trying to do all these events, having a strong homeowner database has been really one of the fundamental things that has made us successful. Working out **the issues about agencies not being open when volunteers are available** has been another thing we've had to work through. We've done the summer fruit season. We're still working on it. It's not our favorite time of the year. We get a lot of fruit ripening all in the same 20 minutes, and it's basically low on yields compared to apples and oranges, and so it's something that we're continuing to figure out how we do process improvements around. **We learned last year that we actually maxed out our distribution capacity at the food bank in the peak summer months, so we were actually pulling in food and it couldn't go out. It was just sitting there.** So that's an issue that we're working on. And a lot of volunteerism that we're getting is just incredible, just incredible.

So that's where we're going. **So our basic vision is just communities feeding their own from the overabundance in their own backyard.** And we have our goals. Basically all we're trying to do is start small, keep scaling, see if we can get to that 4 million pounds.

Participant question: Could you talk some about the preserving food? How you do it, how you go about it, what types of preservation?

Joni Diserns: Well, we have **preserving education**. We've been focusing on the types of fruit like figs and like persimmons that are really **hard to consume in the amount of quantities that they come in during the fresh season, and so we have things up on our website that people can access about recipes and things like that that they can do**. The preserving projects that we do, we have a **jamming team that meets every month**, and they take a particular fruit and they turn that into jams and jellies, and that gets sold to help to fund our project.

Participant question: Where do you do the fruit preserving?

Joni Diserns: We have a couple of **local organizations that have donated the use of their commercial kitchens to us**, and we do that.

Participant question: How do you reach your homeowners? What do you do as an outreach?

Joni Diserns: Actually, very little. Most of what we do is **word of mouth**, and we'll build a relationship with a homeowner in a particular area, and they're **so pleased with the fact that they can contribute to their community and the service that we're providing that they tell all of their friends, and then we sign up whole blocks or whole neighborhoods**, and that's actually our most effective way of doing things. If we know that we're going to be...in Palo Alto when we moved from doing once a quarter to every other month to once a month then we'll actually put a **press release** out to the local paper, and they've been very supportive in including our work in their papers, and then we'll get homeowners that way. But we're not trying to over-promise, overemphasize, grow faster than we can accommodate, and that's been really important to us.

Participant question: Yes, I have three questions regarding your volunteers. **One, where do you get your volunteers? What was your outreach for that? And two, are they trained how to harvest without harming the trees? And three, do you have to provide any insurance coverage for injury for climbing the trees or falling off ladders or anything of that sort?**

Joni Diserns: Our volunteers come from two places. One is from these articles that run, and our **press has been extremely supportive of our projects**, and they've been writing articles and so forth, and **people read about this and they just call us and say 'How can I help?'** And that's how we get everything done, not just the harvesting, but building our databases, building our websites, everything. You know, people volunteer their skills and what they know how to do, their connections, that's how everything happens. **It's an amazing community-building event. About 50 of the volunteers in our database represent organizations that are already in place, and they have groups of people who want to volunteer on a regular basis**, so we often partner with them in order to make certain projects happen. So that was the first question. **Second question: training. At the beginning of every project we do a little 10, 15-minute training on how to use the equipment, how to tell what's ripe, what kind of fruit people are going to be harvesting, how to make sure that they're safe, how to make sure that they're not damaging the trees.** And then about the insurance, **between the Second Harvest Food Bank and the other community groups that we work with they have volunteer insurance that is already in place, so we leverage that.**

Joni Diserns: The community organizations or our food bank have volunteer insurance. They have volunteer insurance that covers people to a certain extent. It's not going to pay for everything if someone gets seriously injured, and fortunately we haven't, but it does cover them to a certain extent. **And the homeowners and the property owners are protected by the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act, which waives them of all responsibility of any injury or things happening as a result of people eating their food.**

Participant question: Has the Good Samaritan Act worked?

Joni Diserns: Yes, it's very important because that's doing what it was intended to do, which is to free people up from the worry of having gleaners on their property. Any other questions?

Participant question: On the Good Samaritan Act is there a sheet or a form that you give them so they can be able to verify that without question?

Joni Diserns: They're on the back of a lot of our receipts so that they can go and look at it, and we've recently also put a link up on our website so that people can look at it that way as well.

Participant question: How on the donation that they make is it made to what nonprofit organization so they can get the tax deduction? Is it yours?

Joni Diserns: We have the ability to give receipts, but often we don't because we're just a part of this distribution cycle, and the people who are really distributing the fruit and getting the benefit are the food banks or the agencies. **So in order to keep the paperwork simple usually the agencies or the food bank will allow us to distribute their receipts in the process, and they get the food without having to do a whole lot of work.**

Participant question: Is it normal that homeowners would want a tax-deductible receipt, or is it frequent that they would want that?

Joni Diserns: They all appreciate getting one. A lot of them will actually say that they don't need one, they're just so happy to contribute. So I guess it's mixed, and yet the receipts end up being a really wonderful form of feedback to the homeowners to reinforce this behavior that they're contributing, because when they get a receipt that has 550 pounds of fruit on it or 700 or...one of our homeowners has 1400 pounds of fruit coming off of her one grapefruit tree. It's just mind boggling, and you think about what that means in terms of contribution that they've made to the society. Even if they don't have the ability to write it off, that receipt ends up being our way of recognizing their contribution.

Participant comment: So we should encourage ourselves in giving them a receipt whether they want a deduction or not.

Joni Diserns: Yeah, we do.

Participant question: How do you calculate the in-kind value of the donation?

Joni Discerns: We don't. We just estimate poundage, and basically it's set up that nonprofit organizations are just supposed to list what it is that people contribute, and it's **between the taxpayer and their taxman how they decide to value that.** I've seen some numbers about

what corporations are allowed to take as contributions. I've seen numbers as high as \$1.67 per pound that corporations are allowed to take for a contribution of fresh produce. That strikes me as being really high, so we don't get involved in that.

Participant question: So the donor could just use the fair market value, which would be what you would pay for it if you went to the grocery store?

Joni Diserns: They could if they feel like they can justify that with their tax people. We do say that this is backyard fruit on the receipt, and the assumption would be that backyard fruit would be valued differently than farm-grade produce. I don't have a feeling for how to do that.

Participant question: Something we forgot to ask you, what about verifying that the fruit hasn't been sprayed or something like that? Do you ask for verification on that?

Joni Diserns: That ends up being a very hard thing to do because homeowners don't realize that when they're spraying 20 feet away that there's this over-spray that happens that goes everywhere. **We have the benefit of knowing that most of the trees that we're gleaning are neglected trees, and people call us and tell us they're organic and it's not organic by design.** So we kind of count on that in terms of the neglected tree part. **And also with the Bill Emerson Act that they're not responsible for what happens as a result of people eating their fruit then we can deal with the over-spray issues and so forth.**

Participant question: I have a follow-up on that because we've been doing some gleaning here. **Do you go out ahead of time and check out the trees? We did have some trees that had some really bad problems and kind of said, you know, no we don't want to do those. Do you do that? Do you check it out ahead of time?**

Joni Diserns: If we do an orchard we'll **check the orchard out to see what the conditions are,** the conditions of the trees, kind of get a sense of how much poundage we're going to pull in just to know what kind of equipment and how many volunteers and what kind of trucks to pull out. **If it's a single homeowner then we walk them through a process of asking them about the condition of their trees, and we basically have to trust them, and then we have a homeowner rating system, so basically if this person over-exaggerates by a great deal or is really hard to work with we will rate them accordingly, and it's in our database and we will decide whether or not we can come back based upon that.**

Edie Jessup: Joni, thank you so much. I really appreciate not only your presentation but all that you've done in terms of preparing this. This is very wonderful to hear, particularly because PAR has worked over the last couple of years laying the foundation, and we're very much hoping to launch into some kind of gleaning operation. Again, on Tuesday the 25th right after Senior Nutrition meeting 12:30 to 1:30 at Fresno Metro Ministry we're going to convene and take a look at what kinds of things we might do here in Fresno, and different responses we might make to creating a Gleaning Project.

Before we round this up I would like to take about five or ten minutes, just at your table, and if amongst yourselves you could come up with a couple things that you could contribute to our thinking on Gleaning. **Information we need to get or kinds of gleaning issues that we might have or ways we might be able to use it and mold it into things that we're already doing.** . Do you think that there's enough energy and so forth and ways that we can begin to use this information and get more produce to folks here in Fresno City and County? And then you can also leave some comments on your forum evaluation. We've heard from **Joni** about

how Village Harvest is doing gleaning. If you'd look at some things here in Fresno that might contribute to making this work, or agencies that need to be brought into this process, or ways that we need to think about, or some different ideas also. We'll just have a real quick report back in about five minutes and then we'll wrap up and then see you again next month. I hope for more gleaning fun on the 25th.

Table #1 Gail Kennerson: Okay, we thought here that **collaborations** here in the Valley might be a challenge for a project like this. We also thought **outreach** would be an issue because, you know, you have 500 homes in a neighborhood in the Bay Area, but out here homes can be as much as 100 acres apart, so sprawl would be an issue. We also thought when you have an overabundance of fresh foods you could take that and pair with **local bakeries to get baked goods out of some of those fresh foods as well as preserving them**. And then we said something about available distribution, commodity distribution. The distribution might be...because we don't have all the same resources out here as they have in the Bay Area.

Table #2: We talked about here in the Fresno area **education and getting volunteers and homeowners**, and being able to **answer basic questions and getting a core group of possibly four or five individuals going here in the Fresno area to get something of this type implemented**. Concerning harvesting, we talked about volunteers. We should concern ourselves with the **more youthful, possibly the college students, start getting people to be climbing up and down ladders**. You know, there's liability there if you fall off a ladder, so you might want to get on the campus here and talk to them and get the word out there what's going on, contacting **local groups like churches with bulletin boards**, put a blurb in the bulletin, things of this type. One of the questions that we did have was more of a question concerning **the food banks and the distribution of the product here. Do they, in fact, go to areas like Firebaugh and Mendota and Coalinga where there's not one fruit tree around versus if you're in Reedley where there's tons of food over there? Do the food banks, in fact, equally distribute the product here to that side of the county?**

Eddie Jessup: They do.

Table #3: We talked about **preserving food as an issue to explore locally and the fact that dehydration and canning are more energy efficient than freezing**. The resources for that might be **4H and UC Cooperative Extension**. **The Second Harvest Food Bank in the San Jose area reimburses people for processing costs. That might be something to encourage our local food bank to do. To teach low-income people how to can when their gleaned tomatoes or other things that ripen in the summertime, and then to teach people to eat seasonally**. The people who do the community gardens tend to eat those products seasonally, so that's another way teaching people to eat nutritious foods in the proper season and then they're not so expensive to purchase.

Table #4: Well, we kind of got off on something else, but **getting the fresh fruit and vegetables to the local neighborhoods, especially the ones that have transportation problems, I think, would be basically where we were going with all of this**. I know from personal experience it would be good to have a central place that we can direct people who have these trees because I get calls almost daily about some tree that needs to be harvested, and I don't have the resources to do it or I don't know what to tell these people where to go.

Eddie Jessup: Tell them about Plant a Row. Use the brochure. Call those folks. Great!

Table #5: We talked about **cold storage** being an issue depending on what you get and the agencies that are accepting the donations if they would...like we mentioned the Poverello House. **Would Poverello maybe store things for other people to distribute? And talking about different organizations, we talked about Okay Produce and that they give donations of people to work for, and I know that the Garden of the Sun has done some things in the past in getting rid of the stuff that they've got to people that need it.** And one of the things we thought would be a thing that we'd need to work on is **identifying the existing distribution sites.** **Publicity** sounds like it would be a big issue, and it's hard to get publicity. I mean, Fresno, it's like it's hard to get recognized. And then contacting media and churches, those kinds of things, to get involved.

Eddie Jessup: Thank you. I really appreciate your thought put into this. I think that **Joni's** roadmap on this is something that we will be able to use as a starter place with the folks who have been doing it on a smaller scale here and looking at where we go.

I want to mention a couple other things. You mentioned the payment. **There is kind of a model of contracting with folks, \$.04 on the pound or whatever, so that there is some funding for farmers at an eventual stage where at the end of their harvest they might be able to, you know, there is some funding I've identified that will do that kind of thing, so we'll talk about that.** The other thing is Dan has talked about and I'm going to talk with him before this happens about the notion of **mobile vendors** and how that whole process might play into this. **In Los Angeles they have such a thing, and in Los Angeles there's also a precedent for taking food stamps with these, so there may be a little business incubator out of this that might earn some money for the distribution of the other part.**

Community gardens were mentioned. I think that's another piece of the puzzle here, because I believe you got some contributions from some of the community gardens this year also. The other pieces might be **thinking about EOC because they're all over the county and they have some transportation as a way of moving things around.**

We need to clarify **what role or not the Community Food Bank** might have in this. And I'm really glad to hear the thought about the **seasonal nature of what this is and what we could educate Fresno about in terms of what we have every season here.**

Marian Mosely: I'm sure I'm the senior citizen here, but I recall – and this all brought it to my mind – it was about 50 years ago. I used to go out to Pinedale and they had a **cannery**, and it was open to the community and you took your produce on the day...somebody had lots of tomatoes, and I used to go out there, and tomatoes are tough, they're tough to dry, you have to be careful if you can them, but out there at this cannery you went out and you prepared the tomatoes and you put them in the cans and then they came out the other end and then you went home with your canned tomatoes that were perfectly fresh, and I think we paid something like a nickel a can or two cents a can or something. Is anybody here old enough to have heard about that or utilized it?

Participant comment: I remember that there was. I thought it was California Extension.

Eddie Jessup: Extension may have done that.

Marian Mosley: Yeah. It might have been, but I remember I canned peaches, I canned tomatoes. Let's look into that. It's something, now that I think about it, **that would be a great thing for people for preservation.**

Eddie Jessup: I want to thank you all for being here today. I thank **Joni** for coming all the way from San Jose, and, yes, Henry has an announcement.

Henry Lopez, Fresno County E&TA: I'm with Fresno County and I'm going to be actively involved in **the EBT conversion from food stamps over to the debit cards. They just put me on board a couple of days ago** and there's still a lot I need to get familiar with, but **if you have any questions or concerns feel free to contact Edie or myself directly, and I'm more than happy to help you. My telephone number is 253-9240**, and I did bring some posters in some various languages here concerning EBT, so if someone is interested in them. And I have some pamphlets here also. There are a number of things that are going on, and there's going to be a lot of anxiety, concerns over this transition here, but rest assured, we're going to get the word out there and the transition will in fact happen smoothly, so I just wanted to throw that out. Henry Lopez, and that's my telephone number. It's 253-9240. Feel free to call me or Edie. We'll be talking some more.

Edie Jessup: Yes, and Fresno Metro Ministry convenes a meeting with the County on Food Stamps and EBT once a month, and you are all welcome to be involved in making Food Stamps and EBT successful.

Henry Lopez: Right. And I do have your 12-point questionnaire (on the status of Fresno county EBT plans sent to the County by the EBT Action TEAM) here, and we're looking at a March 27 target date, but I'll aggressively follow up on that, okay?

Edie Jessup: Excellent. Thank you so much Henry. Thanks to all of you for participating today, and we look forward to a Fresno Gleaners group out of our work today.