

# The NEBLINE<sup>®</sup>

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
Lincoln

University of Nebraska—Lincoln Extension in Lancaster County  
“Helping Nebraskans enhance their lives through research-based education.”

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## In This Issue

- Farm Views . . . . . 2
- Urban Agriculture . . . 3
- Food & Fitness . . . . . 4
- Home & Family Living. 5
- Environmental Focus . 6
- Horticulture . . . . . 7
- 4-H & Youth. . . . . 8-9
- Community Focus . . 10
- Miscellaneous . . 11-12



**NEW THIS ISSUE:  
GREEN ACRES**  
First in a series of  
articles related to  
acreage enterprises.

— see page 3



**LAST CALL FOR 4-H  
SCHOLARSHIPS**  
More than \$8,000 in  
college scholarships are  
available to 4-H'ers!  
Applications are due  
Oct. 31.

— see page 8

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Post. Office  
Permit No. 537  
Lincoln, Nebraska

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Lancaster County 4-H Council  
University of Nebraska  
in Lancaster County  
444 Cherry Creek Road • Suite A  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68528-1507

## Community Food Programs Help Limited-Resource Families Eat Healthy

Maureen Burson  
UNL Extension Educator

Hunger and malnourishment are not limited to third-world countries. Currently, 180,000 Nebraskans suffer from food insecurity and do not know where their next meal will come from. Seventy-six thousand are children, enough to fill Memorial Stadium.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods.”

There are numerous reasons people may not be able to afford adequate food, including:

- Jobs which do not pay enough to meet basic needs
- Costs of child or elderly care
- Loss of income
- Medical emergencies
- Other changes in life circumstances

Money for groceries often becomes the “elastic” part of the income which tends to be spent for higher priority basic needs, such as rent and utilities.

Both federal supplemental and local emergency food programs are vital to sustain many families through tough times.

### Federal Supplemental Food Programs

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service has several nutrition assistance programs which provide limited-resource people access to food, a healthful diet and nutrition education.

#### • FOOD STAMPS

is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. Food stamp eligibility is based on income, family size, household resources and other factors. Households in Nebraska must have incomes below 133% of the poverty line to be eligible (for example, \$25,155 annually for a family of 4). On average, food stamp benefits provide 78 cents per meal per person. In July 2005, 117,625 Nebraskans benefited from food stamps.

- **WOMEN, INFANT, CHILDREN (WIC)** serves pregnant, breast-feeding, postpartum women, infants and children up to age five. Eligibility in-

cludes incomes up to 185% of the poverty line (for example, \$35,798 for a family of 4). Monthly WIC vouchers range from \$33–\$122.

- **SCHOOL LUNCH AND BREAKFAST PROGRAMS** are the largest child nutrition programs. Children of families eligible for Food Stamps and/or WIC are eligible for free or reduced breakfasts and lunches at school. Last year, 463,330 breakfasts and 1,777,713 lunches were served to limited-resource youth at Lincoln Public Schools.
- **SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM** is for school-aged youth at income-eligible community sites. The Lincoln-Lancaster Health Department coordinates this program locally at over 25 sites.
- **COMMODITY SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM** is for seniors over 60, pregnant or postpartum women, and children up to age 6.

### Dollar Value of Federal Programs to Lancaster County

These federal food programs add more than \$43,542,865 worth of healthy food to Lancaster County families and stretches our community's capacity to feed the hungry.

Additional food could be accessed if people eligible for these benefits would

apply. About 38 percent of those eligible for food stamps are not enrolled.

“It is critical families stay healthy by accessing supplemental food such as food stamps, WIC and commodity foods,” says

UNL Extension Specialist Dr. Wanda Koszewski. “Limited-resource families are more likely  
*see FOOD PROGRAMS on page 11*



A sample of the monthly healthy foods provided by the Women, Infants, Children (WIC) program.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For a list of the primary agencies which provide food assistance in Lancaster County, see page 10 of this issue or go to [www.lincoln-action.org](http://www.lincoln-action.org)

## NEP Teaches People How to Stretch Their Food Dollar



Nutrition Education Program staff member Heidi Schmitz (right) compares sugar content in popular beverages with a Head Start parent. Food choices affect families' physical and dental health for a lifetime.

The Nutrition Education Program (NEP) partners with numerous local agencies, coalitions and classrooms to teach:

- budgeting food dollars
- saving money through meal planning
- saving time by fixing quick and easy meals
- keeping food safe to eat
- feeding infants and children
- preparing nutritious snacks

Limited-income adults may participate in NEP classes or receive individualized lessons. This past year, NEP taught 1,166 adults responsible for feeding 4,171 total family members. NEP also reached 3,168 youth and 86 senior citizens.

“Nutrition education helps limited-resource families make wise food choices,” says Dr. Wanda Koszewski, UNL extension specialist and statewide coordinator of the Nutrition Education Program. “Nutrition has a direct impact on people's health, which in turn can improve productivity and quality of life while reducing illness and associated health care costs.”

NEP is part of University of Nebraska—Lincoln Extension. To find out if you qualify to participate, call 441-7180.

**University research shows for every dollar of NEP funding, there is a projected health care cost savings of \$2.07 to \$5.29.**

### Get Involved in the Fight Against Hunger

- ✓ If you qualify for federal supplemental food programs, please apply. Food Stamps local contact: Health and Human Services at 471-7000 or online at <http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/fia/fstamps.htm>. WIC local contact: Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at 441-6200 or Family Service at 441-8655.
- ✓ Encourage income-eligible families to participate in supplemental food programs. Ask if they need help filling out the applications.
- ✓ Donate your time and resources to non-profit agencies such as the Food Bank of Lincoln, Emergency Food Pantries System, Matt Talbot Kitchen, The Gathering Place Soup Kitchen, Salvation Army, Good Neighbor Center, Tabitha Meals on Wheels, People's City Mission and FoodNet.
- ✓ Teach a young parent or a child how to prepare healthy meals. Join a 4-H club or access 4-H foods manuals to teach your children at home. Phone: 441-7180. Web site: [lancaster.unl.edu/4h](http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h)
- ✓ Advocate for people who can't advocate for themselves through involvement with: Center for People in Need at 476-4357 or online at <http://centerforpeopleinneed.org> or Nebraska Appleseed at 438-8853 or online at <http://www.neappleseed.org>