

2013 EXCELLENCE IN FOOD BANKING AWARD NOMINATION

1. Discuss your SNAP program activities in the following strategic pillar: Awareness

-One key internal goal of our outreach staff this year was to try and reach people before they were at the point of needing to access food at an emergency food pantry. Thus we brainstormed places where people might be who are in potential economic crisis – Employment Security Centers, family support groups for medically needy children, Alzheimer’s support groups, Hospices, recent victims of fire, etc. – and either made presentations or began outreach with each of these groups. Understanding that churches and schools are the last infrastructures still intact in rural communities, we sent letters to churches with offers to provide information and outreach assistance to their congregations and we sent outreach brochures out in every MANNAPack/Backpack in the early spring as school year was drawing to a close.

2. Discuss your SNAP program activities in the following strategic pillar: Advocacy

Our advocacy has been focused on protecting SNAP. Through our state DHHS office, USDA provided a breakdown of redeemed SNAP benefits by county which we published in our annual report, in newsletters, and used extensively with the media. We began collecting publishing, and promoting stories of people who had accessed the program including a woman who was on the SNAP Program for 10 months as she looked for work as a Certified Nursing Assistant. With \$20 worth of SNAP benefits she purchased seed for and grew 12 different kinds of vegetables and herbs in a community garden. We continually highlighted the connection between SNAP participation and unemployment (NC has some of the highest in the nation). We discussed the long term consequences of cuts to SNAP on a region-wide public affairs radio program. We also heavily promoted the SNAP client demographic information from USDA highlighting the percentage of children and seniors on the program.

3. Discuss your SNAP program activities in the following strategic pillar: Access

-Our goal has been to use outreach that culturally and community appropriate in the most efficient way possible. This last year we gave out bananas and applications to people who spent all night waiting in lines for free dental clinics, we handed out vegetable seeds with our toll-free number for application assistance at senior centers, we provide postage for people to mail in applications to their county DSS offices after we assisted them over the phone, and we went on local radio shows (often after the Shop and Swap) to discuss benefits for seniors. We worked collaboratively with other non-profits to provide multiple resources for people visiting pantries. We are currently working with a GPS specialist who is overlaying county level data and census block information to help us identify low-income areas of counties with little participation in the SNAP program so that we can best target our outreach efforts.

4. What were the goals of your SNAP program this past year (i.e. start-up, scale up, geographic expansions, targeting underserved populations).

-Goals for our SNAP outreach program last year included expanding the number of MANNA partner pantries participating in FNS outreach, expanding the number of specially trained MANNA volunteers who could assist with outreach, expanding the number of community volunteers trained to do outreach, and developing new networks within counties in which we could provide outreach. We also began more targeted outreach with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) once we realized very few were participating in the Food Distribution on an Indian Reservation Program.

2013 EXCELLENCE IN FOOD BANKING AWARD NOMINATION, P. 2

- 5. Describe how your program model helped you meet the stated goals of your SNAP Program. Please include details such as volunteer utilization, access point recruitment, key partnerships, and a style of outreach in your narrative:**

MANNA restructured Programs staff roles creating “hybrid” workers who could do both agency relations and SNAP outreach. The job restructure puts more “muscle” behind SNAP outreach. MANNA’s Volunteer Coordinator now regularly screen volunteer applicants for suitability to do outreach so that we always have 4-6 specially trained volunteers in the field working in multiple counties and pantries alongside MANNA staff. MANNA Outreach Staff trained Foster Grandparents and Senior Companion volunteers (who are themselves all below 200% of poverty) to screen their clients for potential eligibility and provided application assistance training. In reaching EBCI members, the first step outreach staff took was discussing barriers to participation in the SNAP Program at the local level. We learned there were huge misconceptions about the program and concerns about physical safety in the county seat where the DSS office is located. We are beginning to work with EBCI community leaders to address these issues.