

AmpleHarvest.org^(SM)

"Sharing your garden bounty with Neighbors in Need"

Hunger in America and a Solution in Your Own Back Yard

...from the Jewish Perspective

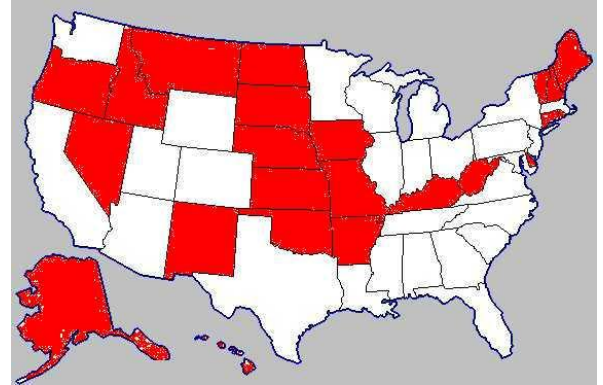
"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not be so thorough that you reap the field to its very edge, nor shall you glean the stray ears of your grain. These things you shall leave for the poor and the stranger" Leviticus 23:22

The Core Problem: Wasted Food- Our entire food system – farms, factories, stores, restaurants and home kitchens - wastes a lot of food... about a pound a person a day or a 100 billion pounds a year. The illustration below represents the food lost by a family of 4 in a month. This statistic does not include the food lost in back yard gardens around the country.



Its Impact: Hunger- America has 49 million “food insecure” people ... defined as people who are either hungry or who are at real risk of being hungry.

If 49 million is just another really big number to you, look at the map at the right. Forty nine million is equal to the combined populations of 23 of our 50 states. Newly recently USDA statistics now show one out of every four children under six year old now lives in a food insecure home.



The immediate impact of tens of millions of people being food insecure while America throws away vast amounts of food is that these people are forced to live on the cheapest calories they can get – often processed or fast food laden with fats, salts and sugars, which are contributing to many Americans being adequately fed (i.e. not starving) yet malnourished at the same time. This has a major impact on America's long term health care costs.

The Challenge: Food Distribution- Food insecure people often rely on local food pantries (also called food shelves, food closets, food cupboards or even food banks in some parts of the country) to help feed their families. Donated food and money from government and private sources typically flows first to Feeding America, then filters down to 202 regional food banks, and then is distributed on a monthly or bi-monthly basis to America's 30,000+ local food pantries. Even food locally donated in community food drives is usually routed to the regional food bank first and then days or weeks later, delivered to food local pantries. These delivery

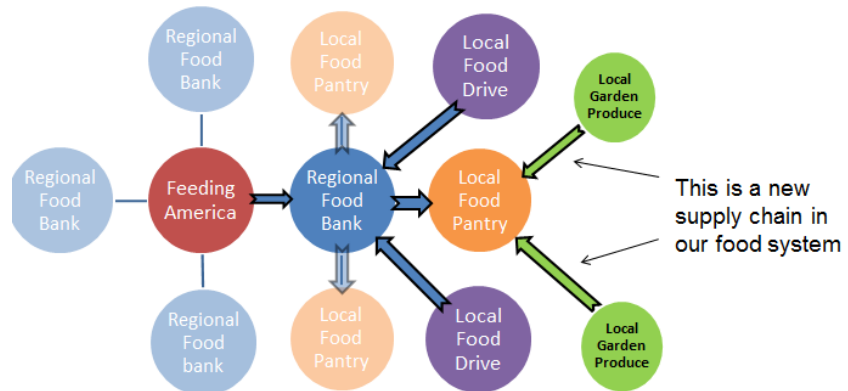


cycles preclude the delivery of fresh produce – forcing the pantries to provide clients only with canned or processed produce.

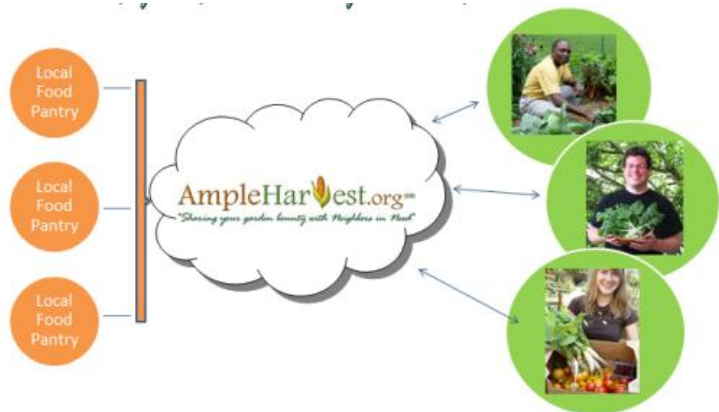
The Opportunity: Home Gardeners- America has 40+ million people who grow fruit, vegetables, herbs and nuts in home gardens... often far more than they can use, preserve or give to friends. While the rest is sometimes composted, it is more often left to rot in gardens or simply thrown in the trash. This is not just wasted food - it creates two significant environmental problems by adding to the waste stream while also causing the release of a pound of methane (a global warming gas twenty times worse than CO²) per pound of food as it decomposes.



An Idea: Local Food - Locally grown fruit, vegetable, herbs and nuts, if delivered directly to a neighborhood food pantry, would bypass the food banks 2 to 4 week delivery cycle and instead provide freshly harvested garden produce at no cost to the people in the community who need it most.



The Solution: AmpleHarvest.org - In May 2009, AmpleHarvest.org founder and CNN Hero Gary Oppenheimer created the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign... a national non-profit registry of food pantries enabling millions of gardeners (home and commercial) to be able to easily find a local food pantry eager for their excess garden produce. This opened the door for a free sustainable supply of locally grown, freshly harvested food to supplant canned produce, for increasing the variety of food available at the pantries, for introducing children to fresh food, for keeping produce out of landfills, and for enabling people to diminish hunger, malnutrition and systemic poverty in their own community – all without spending a dime. They simply reach into their backyards instead of their back pockets to help their neighbors in need.



Why It Works: Guiding Principals - A number of Jewish concepts contributed to the design of AmpleHarvest.org:

1. People helping their neighbors (Tzedakah)
2. The excess food from our gardens being set aside for the needy in our community (*Leviticus*)
3. The food pantries are encouraged to schedule the donation of the locally grown produce a few hours **before** the clients come in... this to prevent the possible humiliation that would result if one neighbor was donating food while another was there to receive some (Maimonides)
4. Excess food not thrown into trash dumps as it contributes to the waste stream and global warming. (Tikkun Olam)
5. Local gardeners eager to donate food usually don't know where to take it to, and local food pantries eager for the food don't know how to reach the growers. AmpleHarvest.org enables 40+ million home gardeners to easily find a local food pantry eager to accept it. (Shidduch)
6. ... And while not explicitly stated in AmpleHarvest.org, common growing techniques including crop rotation lend themselves towards the idea of letting the land rest periodically and letting any remaining crops be available to the needy (Shmita)

Not everyone in America has land for growing food, and not everyone has a green thumb. For those with no "land", they can grow herbs in kitchen windows, tomatoes in containers on their decks, etc. For those without a trace of green in their thumbs, AmpleHarvest.org has an iPhone app (and shortly, an Android app) to enable shoppers to buy store bought items for the pantries.. buying exactly what the pantries say they most need.

Making it work: The Individual - The AmpleHarvest.org Campaign is a whole new solution to diminishing hunger in America. It is the Google type device that enables individuals to solve the problem. AmpleHarvest.org can't grow, make or move food. **But you can!**

People of any age can help the needy in their community and help AmpleHarvest.org.

1. People should understand that 1 out of 6 Americans don't have enough food for their families. It is important for them to know that being hungry, while unfortunate, is nothing to be ashamed of. Indeed, it is likely someone they know lives in a food insecure home.



2. Growing food is part of their heritage as Jews and they should try to grow some food if at all possible. It could be a farm, a backyard garden or just herbs in a flower pot. For the children, simply planting the extra horse radish from the Passover Seder table in a flower pot will let them enjoy (if that is the word) the root a year later at the Seder.
3. Sharing, especially excess food, is the right thing to do. By way of example, many years ago, EVERYTHING we disposed of went in the trash... a terrible waste. Now much of that goes into recycling. Similarly, extra food – from a restaurant (ask for a doggie bag and offer it to someone on the street), from the supermarket (“dented food” cans can go to a local food drive) or from your backyard garden (find a local food pantry at www.AmpleHarvest.org and donate it) should never be wasted – especially while people in the community are hungry.
4. People can tell their friends (email, facebook, twitter, texting) nationwide about hunger and about AmpleHarvest.org. The more people know about their opportunity to diminish hunger, the less hunger there will be.
5. People can help gardeners in their own community learn about the opportunity to donate from their garden by printing the flier at www.AmpleHarvest.org/gardenshop and asking local gardenshops/nurseries to post it in conspicuous locations.
6. People can help more of the needy in their community get fresh locally grown produce by finding a local food pantry in their neighborhood (a synagogue, church, mosque, YMCA etc. are places to look), asking for the pantry manager and giving them the flier at www.AmpleHarvest.org/pantry. More than 3,000 food pantries are on AmpleHarvest.org today. We want 10,000 in three years.
7. Lastly, people can help diminish hunger in their community by asking their Rabbi to spend a Shabbat talking about it. They can visit www.AmpleHarvest.org/jewish to get more ideas and print out the synagogue flier at www.AmpleHarvest.org/synagogue



Unlike eliminating a disease which requires you to be a scientist or doctor, anyone can attack hunger. Fighting disease requires you to have a cure. Fighting hunger only requires you to care.

Resources:

Learn more about AmpleHarvest.org at www.AmpleHarvest.org/faq

Learn more about Hunger in America at www.AmpleHarvest.org/hunger

View the AmpleHarvest.org 2010 End of Year Report at www.AmpleHarvest.org/2010

Press/media resources are available at www.AmpleHarvest.org/media