

## **FOCUS ON HEALTH: Our goal — food security for all**

By Kevin Phipps

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March is National Nutrition Month, a nutrition education and information campaign created and observed since 1973 by the American Dietetic Association.

This campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. The theme of this year's National Nutrition Month is "Nutrition from the Ground Up." For tips on building a healthful diet from the ground up, not only during National Nutrition Month, but year-round, visit the ADA's Web site at <http://www.eatright.org> and click on "For the Public".

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in its report titled "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2009," estimated that more than 1 billion people (roughly a sixth of the world's population) are undernourished. This means that there are more hungry people in the world today than at any time in the last 40 years.

In the United States, 49 million people are "food insecure," meaning, that, at times, they lack access to enough food to support an active, healthy life. And 14.6 percent of American households do not have access at times to nutritious foods. In the "Land of Plenty," this seems inexcusable.

And lest we think that the food crisis is a global problem without local implications or relevance, there are 13,000 adults living in food-insecure households in Yolo County (roughly equivalent to twice the population of Winters). If food-insecure children are included, this figure could be at least doubled, if not tripled.

For 40 years, the Food Bank of Yolo County has pursued its mission to alleviate hunger. During times of economic downturn, demand for its services naturally increases. Under such conditions, the “safe” thing would be to maintain the status quo, turn inward and focus our resources on meeting basic program demands. But in 2009, the Yolo food bank was one of the first in the country to become an authorized vendor for WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children).

Partnering with WIC helps us to provide substantial quantities of nutritious food to people in need, and to couple that food with nutrition education. In addition to having access to our free food distribution, visitors to the WIC store can learn of cooking classes and nutrition education sessions hosted in our new demonstration kitchen, led by our moveable market and nutrition coordinator, chef Arturo Vargas.

Capitalizing on opportunities — at first mention that might sound like something more apropos to Wall Street than to a nonprofit seeking to meet the needs of the food-insecure.

But when the ultimate goal is enhancing the nutrition and combating the hunger faced by 20,000 Yolo County residents monthly, an organization must think outside the box. And we hope that you will partner with us, or with another agency of your choice seeking to meet the needs of the food-insecure. Working together, we can make a difference during this time of economic downturn and food crisis, and especially during March, National Nutrition Month.

— Kevin Phipps is the grant writer for the Food Bank of Yolo County