



# MAPPING THE FOOD GAP: A STUDY OF FOOD INSECURITY IN BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA



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## Executive Summary

Dave Krepcho, President/CEO, Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida, reported to the 2011 Hunger Summit attendees that in 2006, 51,000 people received food in Brevard County and by 2010, the number had grown to 125,000. This statistic along with other data prompted a closer look at what is happening in Brevard County.

The goal of this project was to try to better understand the issues and needs. This study began in late 2011, and identified geographic areas and the populations that may be insufficiently served by the existing food distribution network to work toward reduction and even elimination of food insecurity. The information collected validates that the issue of food insecurity and hunger is complex. We have reported the data available regarding food insecurity and hunger and mapped information that *can* be mapped, and we encourage a deeper study beyond this report.

This study and its findings are thanks to a combined effort by the representatives of the Community Foundation for Brevard, Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida, United Way of Brevard, Congregations for Community Action, Harris Corporation, and the Space Coast Health Foundation with underwriting for the web site development work by The Urban Institute National Center for Charitable Statistics from the Schuler Family Fund of the Community Foundation for Brevard.

Children's food insecurity is closely tied to family income levels. In the 2011-2012 school year, the number of children qualifying for free and reduced lunch, a measure based largely on family income, was 32,306 or 45% of the 71,209 Brevard public school students-- an increase from 2010-2011 of just more than 2 percentage points or 1,426 children. Of the 32,306 children registered for the program; 20,777 are Pre-K through elementary school aged. Of the 110 public schools, 23 schools had 70% or more of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch in 2011-2012. The percentage of children enrolled in the program varied widely among public schools from a low program enrollment of 8% at Edgewood Jr/Sr High School in Merritt Island to a high of 96% at Endeavor Elementary in Cocoa.

Measuring food insecurity for the elderly is more difficult. Although the poverty rates for seniors in Brevard (as well as nationwide) are lower than for other age groups, other factors need to be considered. Besides lacking income or liquid assets to cover ordinary monthly food, occupancy, and living expenses, seniors are also at higher risk of having large out-of-pocket health care expenditures or mobility issues that may leave them with insufficient food.



The new link on the [www.connectbrevard.org](http://www.connectbrevard.org) web site maps 128 food pantries and a phone survey of the pantries provided additional insights. Most pantries are clustered along a north-south line running down the center of the county and most are on the public transit route. The heaviest concentrations of pantries are in Titusville, Melbourne, Palm Bay, and Cocoa. One zip code of Palm Bay has no pantries and indicators suggest high poverty rates. Only a small percentage of the food pantries regularly distribute fresh fruits and vegetables. Few pantries offer “wrap around services” to address issues creating the emergency food need.

While we mapped accessibility of food pantries to public transportation routes, we did not study other transportation issues, such as the ease of food distribution to the pantries or the challenges faced by recipients faced with limited pantry hours and locations. The food pantries themselves face transportation issues.

What happens next? Many new initiatives are already underway, launched soon after data for this report became available. Some of these initiatives are listed in this report. Florida Today has already covered the topic of food insecurity extensively in its community reporting this year. Congregations for Community Action has started convening meetings of food pantries – particularly the smaller, faith-based pantries– to promote communication, opportunities to learn from and work with each other, and to develop strategies for meeting the needs of underserved areas. Additional groups have indicated a plan to use the report in planning other services. And outreach and communication about this report’s findings will continue.

No one organization can alone solve the issues of food insecurity in Brevard County. Food insecurity touches every aspect of community services including homelessness, childhood obesity, health care and health management, elder care, education, family services, and even crime. The Hunger Alliance will continue to develop and launch strategies to address emergency food distribution in Brevard County. Yet, we encourage all organizations to consider how food insecurity impacts their clients and services and consider strategies with volunteers and donors to not only meet the emergency needs, but to begin to look upstream to address the root causes. Feeding America estimated that it will take nearly \$39 million dollars to meet the meal gap in Brevard in 2010 – and the numbers are still growing.<sup>i</sup>

In early 2013, Feeding America will begin work with Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida to conduct an extensive, on-the-ground study of its six-county service area. The last such report was produced in January 2010. For an extra cost, the outcomes can include additional interviews and analysis to produce a report of exclusively Brevard County. Our work concluded with a recommendation for just this kind of follow-up. In the meantime, we are encouraged by the focus of the many individuals and organizations using this study to address emergency food distribution needs in Brevard County.



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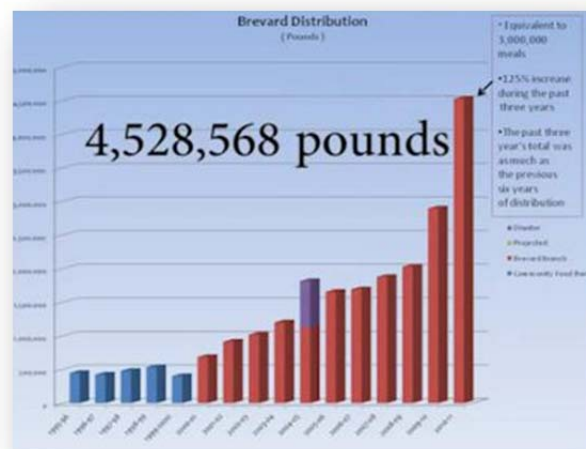
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## INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2011, United Way of Brevard convened community leaders for a Summit around the topic of Hunger. At the Hunger Summit, data was presented depicting indicators of growing food insecurity in Brevard County. Small group discussions were initiated to address the growing needs. Dave Krepcho, Director of Second Harvest Food Bank in Central Florida presented troubling statistics. In 2006, 51,000 people received food in Brevard County. By 2010, the number of people receiving food jumped to 125,000.<sup>ii</sup> He illustrated the yearly Second Harvest food distribution trend line for Brevard, in pounds, on the following chart.

**TABLE 1**



Source: Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida

Dave Krepcho concluded with his agency's goal to try to conduct a gap study – a map that illustrated the gap in geographic food distribution and in service, with the purpose to better understand demand and supply and inform distribution.

Also in the fall of 2011, the Community Foundation for Brevard in partnership with the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics launched Connect Brevard, a web site of all Brevard-registered nonprofits, population data, and other resources and tools available in Brevard County. A collaborative effort in the food gap study seemed a cost-effective and expedient solution. Second Harvest Food Bank and the Community Foundation leaders met and determined that the most efficient way to literally map the food gap was to build upon the Connect Brevard platform. A team of advisors assembled that included representatives of United Way, Congregations for Community Action, Harris Corporation, Second Harvest, the Community Foundation, and the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics. Space Coast Health Foundation joined the team later upon

volunteering to assist in the study with a survey of food pantries. Following several months of data collection, development work, and meetings, the sub-site of Connect Brevard now literally maps the data including the known food pantries, public transportation routes, and public schools. The site also provides the ability to overlay hundreds of community indicators such as poverty and SNAP/food stamp participation.

The following report summarizes the findings from our analysis of the data and the maps. The primary goal of the project was to provide more information about Brevard County's food insecurity and hunger issues. The goal included identifying geographic areas and the populations insufficiently served by the existing food distribution network to work toward reduction and even elimination of food insecurity. The information collected validated that the issue of food insecurity and hunger is complex. (See section Defining Food Insecurity and Hunger). Yet, the ability to now see the geographic relationships among risk indicators may help organizations translate the various reports into priorities for emergency relief and development.

Local data include food distribution programs and locations and community indicators that suggest *potential* food insecurity within zip codes or census tracts. Yet, the local data provides limited insight regarding household food availability, individual anxiety or perceptions about food access or quality, disrupted eating patterns or food intake, issues within existing distribution or resources, or the causes.

We use some state and national data to estimate – albeit with limited precision – answers to some of these questions, but much remains unknown about both the status of Brevard residents as well as answers to some more difficult questions – questions that require deeper research beyond the scope and resources available for this study. The answers from deeper research will inform solutions that move beyond emergency relief to development initiatives to address the cause.

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## DEFINING FOOD INSECURITY AND HUNGER

The terms hunger and food insecurity are often used interchangeably. In 2006, the US Department of Agriculture asked the Committee on National Statistics of the National Academies to help further define the issue and the language used. From the USDA website...

- **“Food insecurity** is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.
- **Hunger** is an individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity.”<sup>iii</sup>

The Census Bureau conducts the Current Population Survey (CPS) every month; once a year it includes a supplemental survey on food security completed by approximately fifty thousand households. The measure of household food security status falls within a range from "high food security to very low food security based on responses to survey questions. Table 2 summarizes the four categories:

**TABLE 2: USDA's revised labels describe ranges of food security<sup>iv</sup>**

General categories (old and new labels are the same)	Detailed categories		
	Old label	New label	Description of conditions in the household
Food security	Food security	<b>High food security</b>	No reported indications of food-access problems or limitations
		<b>Marginal food security</b>	One or two reported indications—typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake
Food insecurity	Food insecurity without hunger	<b>Low food security</b>	Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake
	Food insecurity with hunger	<b>Very low food security</b>	Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake

Placement on this continuum is determined by the household’s responses to a series of questions about behaviors and experiences associated with difficulty in meeting food needs over a period of 12 months. The questions cover a wide range of severity of food insecurity.<sup>v</sup>

Most of the data and information collected and discussed in this report relate to the issues of food insecurity. While a substantial proportion of people who are “food insecure” – especially those in the “very low food security” category – may have experienced hunger at some point in the year, we can only provide rough estimates based on state and national numbers on the magnitude of this problem in Brevard County.

### BREVARD INDICATORS OF NEED

Before looking at the individual indicators that suggest need, consider the most recent available data on food insecurity. Feeding America’s 2010 Hunger Study found that in Brevard, 16.4% of the population are food insecure or 88,660 people.<sup>vi</sup> The percentage compares with a Florida rate of 19.2% and a national rate of 16.1%. The child food insecurity rate is estimated to be substantially higher: 24.2% or 25,880 children in Brevard County, compared to 21.6% nationally and 28.4% in Florida. The rates have dropped nationally since 2009, but increased in Florida. In Brevard, the percentage of the total population increased in 2010, but the rate for children decreased.

**TABLE 3: FOOD INSECURITY RATE**

	Brevard		Florida		National			
	2010	2009	2010	2009	2010	2009		
Total Population	16.4%	88,660	16.0%	85,460	19.2%	17.1%	16.1%	16.6%
Children	24.2%	25,880	26.2%	28,760	28.4%	27.5%	21.6%	23.2%

*Source: Feeding America, Map The Meal Gap Study*

The Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS) Food Security Supplement asked specifically whether a household ‘was hungry but did not eat’ in the past twelve months. Applying the national percentage of responses from this question in the December 2010 CPS Food Security Supplement to Brevard County population statistics, we estimate that approximately 26,000 Brevard residents went hungry at some point during the twelve months leading up to the survey. Further, if the national percentages are similar to Brevard, we would expect approximately 9,000 of those 26,000 residents to have experienced hunger every month in 2010 while another 11,000 experienced hunger between three and eleven months of that year.



Two populations are particularly vulnerable to issues of food insecurity – children and the elderly. The advisory group collected and mapped data on each of these populations. Some of the information collected is reported in the following sections.

## CHILDREN

To determine areas of the county with higher risks of food insecurity among children, the study advisory group identified several indicators of need, including children enrolled in free and reduced lunch programs at schools, children benefitting from the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP -- formerly Food Stamps), homelessness, and poverty. The group collected the data available for each of these indicators and, where possible, mapped the data on the web site by zip code or census tract. The following summarizes some of the findings.

### *Free and Reduced Lunch Program*

Through a federal government program, schools offer free or reduced price lunch to children based on their household income. The program's assumption is that children of lower income households are more likely food insecure. The percentage of children enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program varied widely among public schools from a low program enrollment of 8.32% at Edgewood Jr/Sr High School in Merritt Island to a high of 96% at Endeavor Elementary in Cocoa.

From 2010 to the 2011 school year, the total number of public school children participating in the program increased slightly. More specifically, in the 2010-2011 school year, 30,880 public school children (or 43% of the 71,546 enrolled in public schools) qualified for the free and reduced school lunch program based on family income. In the 2011-2012 school year, the number of children qualifying was 32,306 or 45% of the 71,209 students - an increase of just more than 2 percentage points or 1,426 children. The most current qualifications for free and reduced lunch in the 2011-2012 year are listed in Table 4.



TABLE 4

**FLORIDA INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES  
FOR FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE SCHOOL MEALS**

*Effective From July 1, 2011 To June 30, 2012*

<b>FREE MEAL SCALE</b>			
<b>Household Size</b>	<b>Annual</b>	<b>Monthly</b>	<b>Weekly</b>
1	14,157	1,180	273
2	19,123	1,594	368
3	24,089	2,008	464
4	29,055	2,422	559
5	34,021	2,836	655
6	38,987	3,249	750
7	43,953	3,663	846
8	48,919	4,077	941
For each additional family member, add	4,966	414	96
<b>REDUCED-PRICE MEAL SCALE</b>			
<b>Household Size</b>	<b>Annual</b>	<b>Monthly</b>	<b>Weekly</b>
1	20,147	1,679	388
2	27,214	2,268	524
3	34,281	2,857	660
4	41,348	3,446	796
5	48,415	4,035	932
6	55,482	4,624	1,067
7	62,549	5,213	1,203
8	69,616	5,802	1,339
For each additional family member, add	7,067	589	136

### *Child Poverty*

The 2010 census reports that there are 107,590 children under the age of 18. According to the US Census Bureau, 2009 American Community Survey, 16.1% of Brevard's children under the age of 18 live in poverty. In the 2000 Census, this percentage was 13%, signaling a rising trend in child poverty.

Based on the 2009 American Community Survey, child poverty rates are highest (28.94%+) in the entire county area north of Port St. John; West of I-95 north of Viera; in Cocoa; in north Rockledge between Rt. 1 and I-95; the area surrounding the corner of Eau Gallie Blvd and Wickham; Indian River Bluff and south to Vista Grand and west to Dairy Road; Lund Gardens south to Malabar Rd SW. (See Graph 1)

### *Homelessness*

Another indicator of food insecurity is homelessness, a figure that has grown substantially in Brevard over the past few years. *Florida Today* reported in May 2011 that the number of homeless children more than doubled from 2009 to 2010, from 478 to 965. In 2011, the number grew to 1093. Forty-nine Brevard schools (45%) have 10 or more homeless students. A total of 88 schools (80%) have at least one homeless child. The HUD definition of the condition of homelessness has been modified over the past few years, which may account for some of the increase.<sup>vii</sup> Generally, the term refers to those without a regular dwelling.

### *Children Benefitting from SNAP - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*

The number of children registered as SNAP recipients is 27,558. In the 2002-2008 American Community Survey, the total number of SNAP recipients (food stamps) – including adults, was 48,595. In 2011, the number was 77,349. SNAP is further discussed later in this report, but mentioned here as an indicator of need. SNAP enrollment is collected by zip code; thus, it can be mapped and correlated with other geographic indicators.

### *Putting It All Together*

Of the 110 Brevard public schools reporting free and reduced lunch qualification data, 23 schools had 70% or more of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch in 2011-2012. These schools are reported in Table 5 comparing the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years and other indicators mentioned, underscoring a high risk of food insecurity among children in these schools.

**GRAPH 1: Child Poverty Rate**

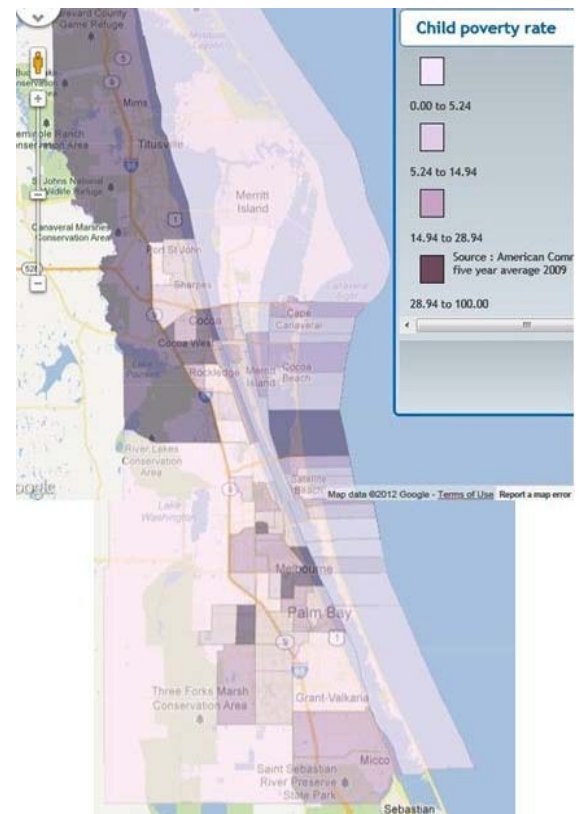


TABLE 5

Public School	Zip Code & City/Town	No. of students qualifying for Free & Reduced Lunch (FAR) (School Year)		% of students Free & Reduced Lunch		Number of children on SNAP in zip code	Pantry within 1 mile?	Public Transport Access within 1 mile?	No. of Home-less students	USDA Food Desert
		Year 2010-2011	Year 2011-2012	Year 2010-2011	Year 2011-2012					
Endeavor Elementary	32922 Cocoa	747	747	96%	96%	2446	Yes	Yes	16	Yes
Cambridge Elementary	32922 Cocoa	499	521	90%	92%	2446	Yes	Yes	47	Yes
Riverview Elementary	32780 Titusville	300	242	90%	90%	2177	Yes	Yes	13	Yes
Crosswinds Alternative	32922 Cocoa	9	8	82%	89%	2446	Yes	Yes		Yes
Riverdale Country	32907 Palm Bay	101	108	80%	86%	2770	Yes	Yes	4	partial
South Lake Elementary	32796 Titusville	322	342	82%	84%	1161	Yes	Yes	11	Yes
University Park	32901 Melbourne	441	480	81%	83%	1607	Yes	Yes	17	No
Palm Bay Elementary	32905 Palm Bay	659	713	80%	82%	3505	Yes	Yes	24	Yes
Fieldston	32780 Titusville	53	63	74%	82%	2177	Yes	Yes	3	Yes
Imagine Elementary	32904 Melbourne	398	308	69%	81%	753	No	No	5	No
Golfview Elementary	32955 Rockledge	505	555	78%	82%	1411	Yes	Yes	13	Partial
Riviera Elementary	32905 Palm Bay	510	599	79%	81%	3505	No	Yes	18	Partial
Horace Mann	32955 Rockledge	94	103	78%	80%	1411	Yes	Yes	3	Yes
Columbia Elementary	32909 Palm Bay	464	560	77%	79%	2210	No	Yes	23	No
John F. Turner, Sr. Elementary	32909 Palm Bay	519	576	77%	79%	2210	Yes	Yes	23	No
Saturn Elementary	32926 Cocoa	576	633	73%	78%	1374	No	Yes	29	Yes
Coquina Elementary	32780 Titusville	355	393	75%	76%	3871	Yes	Yes	7	Yes

Public School	Zip Code & City/Town	No. of students qualifying for Free & Reduced Lunch (FAR) (School Year)		% of students Free & Reduced Lunch		Number of children on SNAP in zip code	Pantry within 1 mile?	Public Transport Access within 1 mile?	No. of Homeless students	USDA Food Desert
		Year 2010-2011	Year 2011-2012	Year 2010-2011	Year 2011-2012					
Jupiter Elementary	32908 Palm Bay	567	598	75%	75%	1055	No	Yes	41	No
Mila Elementary	32953 Merritt Isl	361	394	72%	74%	1095	Yes	Yes	20	No
Discovery Elementary	32907 Palm Bay	497	550	67%	73%	2770	No	Yes	10	No
Harbor City Elementary	32935 Melbourne	299	323	69%	72%	2300	Yes	Yes	10	Yes
Roy Allen Elementary	32935 Melbourne	378	372	68%	72%	2300	Yes	Yes	24	Yes
Campus Charter	32927 Port St. John	90	94	63%	71%	1384	Yes	Yes		Yes

Free & Reduced Lunch Data Source: Florida Department of Education, Homeless Students and SNAP Recipients: United Way of Brevard: USDA

Of the 32,306 children on free and reduced lunch in Brevard Public Schools; 20,777 are Pre-K through elementary school aged; 4,715 are middle school students; and 6,814 are high school students. The number of elementary school children qualifying for the lunch program nearly doubles all other grades.

Schools with 55% or more of the students qualifying for free and reduced lunch are classified as Title I schools and eligible for federal funds to improve academic achievement. During the 2011-2012 school year, 47 schools had more than 55% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Of the 47 schools, 34 are elementary schools.

Table 6 cites additional indicators that may be contributing to household food insecurity found among the 47 schools where 55% of the student population qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

**Table 6**

Three (3) of the schools are not within one mile radius of public transportation or a food pantry.

*Heritage High, Palm Bay*

*Imagine Schools, Melbourne/West Melbourne*

*Westside Elementary, Palm Bay*

Fourteen (14) of these schools are not within a 1-mile radius of a food pantry:

*Clearlake Elementary, Cocoa*

*Cocoa High, Cocoa*

*Columbia, Palm Bay*

*Discovery, Palm Bay*

*Fairglen, Cocoa*

*Imagine, Melbourne/West Melbourne*

*Heritage, Palm Bay*

*Jupiter, Palm Bay*

*Odyssey, Palm Bay*

*Pinewood, Mims*

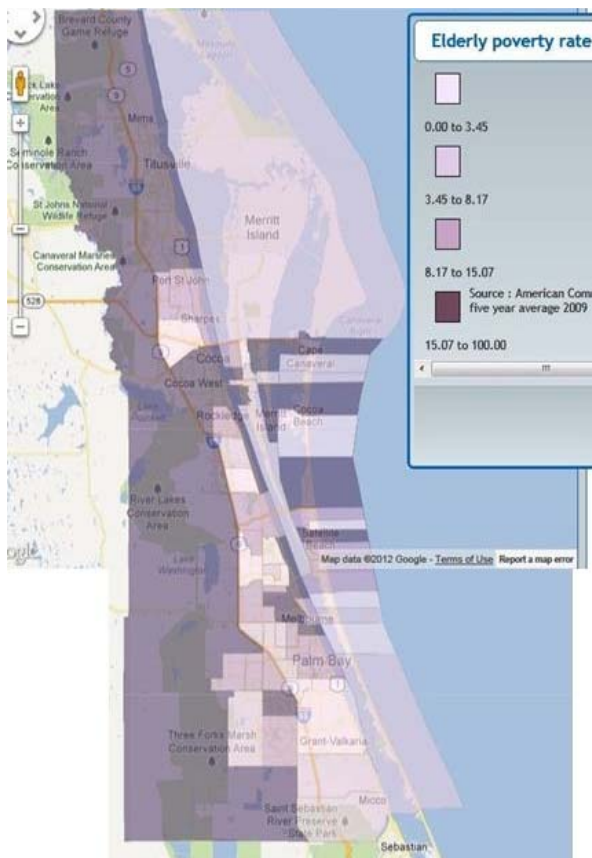
*Riviera, Palm Bay*

*Roy Allen, Melbourne*

*Saturn, Cocoa*

*Westside, Palm Bay*

*Eleven of the fourteen schools without a pantry within a one-mile radius are located in Palm Bay and Cocoa.*

**GRAPH 2: Brevard Elderly Poverty Rate**

## ELDERLY

Food insecurity among the elderly is not simply a function of wealth or income but also functional limitations, as the reports affirm.<sup>viii</sup>

The elderly in Brevard represent 20.4% of the population or 110,849 individuals. Most recent poverty statistics (ACS 2005-2009) cite 7,413 living in poverty or 6.7% of the elderly population.

### *Elderly Poverty*

Census tract mapping displays the highest rates of elderly poverty as 15.07% or greater (ACS 5 year average - 2009). At this definition the highest elderly poverty rates are nearly the entire area west of I-95 and there are very few – if any – known food pantries west of I-95. Most of this geographic area is undeveloped or conservation and wildlife preserves – but not all.

Other high poverty areas of elderly include significant portions of Cocoa Beach, Satellite Beach, east and west of Route 1 corridor from northern part of Brevard to Palm Bay. See GRAPH 2.

Feeding America and the USDA's research on hunger provides insight about food insecurity among the elderly. USDA's Household Food Security in the United States 2010, released in September 2011, found that 7.9 percent of households with seniors (2.3 million households) were food insecure and 8.9 percent of the elderly live below the poverty line (3.4 million people). Applying these figures in Brevard suggests that more than 6,500 Brevard seniors may be food insecure. In a separate study, the USDA found that elderly households are much less likely to receive help through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) than non-elderly households.<sup>ix</sup>

In another 2010 hunger study by Feeding America, the report cited that nationally, 30 percent of client households with seniors indicated that they have had to choose between food and medical care and 35 percent had to choose between food and paying for heat/utilities.<sup>x</sup>

The wide variations in study outcomes reflect that while food insecurity is typically associated with poverty, for the elderly, food insecurity strikes all socio-economic brackets. As the cost of remaining in homes and cost of living increases among those on fixed income, the income/expense gap is pressured. As individuals age, many also struggle with diminished interest and physical ability to prepare food and navigate transportation to stores or food distribution sites. Additionally, generational values are at play wherein many may be reluctant to seek assistance.

## FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Food is available in Brevard County to those who are food insecure through a variety of programs operated by federal, state, faith-based and secular organizations. These programs include food pantries, soup kitchens that serve prepared meals, school breakfast and the free and reduced lunch program (previously discussed), weekend and summer food programs for school-aged children, and the federal SNAP program offering financial support restricted to the purchase of food. Data and findings for each of these programs is summarized below.

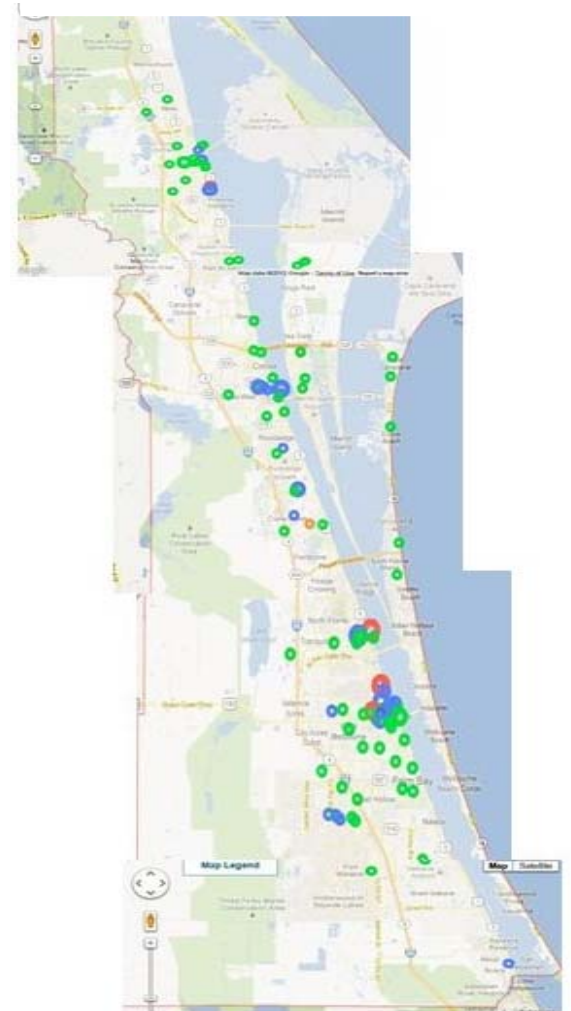


## FOOD PANTRIES

A *food pantry* is a physical location whereby individuals can pick up food (often canned and nonperishable foods) to take away and consume off-site. Nationwide, approximately five percent of people obtained food from food pantries in 2010. We don't have precise numbers for Brevard County but we do know that the county has 128 food pantries that collect, store, and distribute food. Eighty-one, or 63%, are congregations. Most/all of remaining pantries are part of secular nonprofit organizations such as the Women's Center and the Central Brevard Sharing Center. Many of the faith-based pantries are open only a limited number of hours or days per week. Some, for example, are only open two or three hours per week for food distribution.

Most pantries are clustered along a north-south line running down the center of the county and most are on the public transit route. The heaviest concentrations of pantries are in Titusville (24), Melbourne (30) and Palm Bay (16); Cocoa (19). These are also higher population centers. One zip code of Palm Bay (south west) has no pantries and indicators suggest higher poverty rates (SNAP/school free lunch data). (See Graph 3)

**GRAPH 3:** Brevard Food Pantries



The staff of Space Coast Health Foundation conducted a phone survey with results from 47 of the 128 pantries – most Second Harvest partners with Second Harvest supplying the food. Of the 47 participating in the survey, 16 pantries reported food distribution amounts in weight and these 16 pantries collectively distributed 1,445 tons of food in 2011. As a frame of reference, the average American eats nearly 2,000 pounds or 1 ton of food per year (USDA). Only 6 of the 44 pantries (14%) ever experienced running out of food. 12 of the 44 pantries report distributing fresh fruits and vegetables; another 18 distribute fresh fruit and vegetables on occasion based on cost and availability. About half of the current pantries surveyed could expand with additional space or equipment (freezers and refrigerators). Sources of financial support include church donations, thrift store proceeds, and United Way grants. Most of the responding pantries (82%) are staffed entirely by volunteers. Not all pantries count the number of volunteers that work in the pantry. Yet, more than 750 volunteers were reported by 22 of the pantries. Thirty seven (37) pantries



reported specific hours of operation, which averaged 10 hours per week. Of the 37 pantries, 20 pantry sites reported that they are open for distribution 5 hours or less per week.

Second Harvest Food Bank cites distributing in Brevard County more than 4 million pounds of food in 2011 or 2,000 tons of food.

Few distribution sites provide “wrap-around services”, i.e. services which go beyond emergency food relief and walk alongside the recipient and assist in developing strategies to eliminate the need for emergency food relief. But a few do. One example is Love INC. Those utilizing Love INC food pantries are flagged at the third visit for a call and home visit to determine the full scope of recipient issues resulting in the need for emergency food relief. Volunteers are assigned to work with the recipient after the third food pantry visit to eliminate or reduce reliance on emergency food distribution.

#### SOUP KITCHENS AND OTHER PROGRAMS OFFERING PREPARED MEALS

A *soup kitchen* is the term given to physical locations that offer a prepared meal to eat at the facility. Twenty one locations throughout Brevard serve a prepared meal daily. Fifteen of the sites are operated by Aging Matters and serve lunch to senior citizens through its program, Seniors at Lunch. An additional 6 organizations offer prepared meals to the public. All of the soup kitchens offer prepared meals at least five days per week.

Aging Matters, a nonprofit organization serving the elderly of Brevard County, cites that there are approximately 800 individuals receiving Meals on Wheels. Based on the poverty statistics, the number of elderly receiving these services appears low compared with risk factors.

Aging Matters’ Brevard Community Kitchen prepares and delivers meals - 459,921 meals in 2011 - supporting:

- Meals on Wheels
- Seniors at Lunch
- Seniors attending Adult Daycare Centers
- At-risk children received 12,582 lunches at Brevard County Parks and Recreation Summer Lunch program
- A partnership with United Way of Brevard and local corporations, with corporate employees delivering 2,219 meals on 36 Saturdays

Daily Bread, a nonprofit organization in Melbourne, provided an additional snapshot from an annual census conducted by the agency each June. In 2011, they interviewed 1,495 meal recipients during the survey week – an increase from 1,173 people served in the same week in

2010. 35% of those interviewed were new to Daily Bread since the prior year. Currently, they serve an average of 213 meals a day, 365 days a year or ~76,600 meals per year. In 2011, 60% of those served were homeless; 72% were males (1,076) and 8% served were children (115). Of the 115 children, 34 were homeless. Of the clients interviewed, 61% take a bus or walk, 15% bike and 24% arrive at the facility in a vehicle. Interesting to note, Daily Bread had a decrease in numbers served from 2010, which they attribute to the increased number of resources available for food.

### WEEKEND AND SUMMER FOOD PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

Children's backpack programs are gaining in community awareness and support. These programs discreetly provide food for children to take home from school for meals over the weekend. In the 2011-2012 school year, these programs existed in only 5 schools.

The USDA provides lunch for children during the summer – in 2012 called the Summer Break Spot. Brevard 211 is handling the marketing of and referral to the program. In 2012, the program is designed to serve all children – regardless of family income, 18 years old and younger at no charge. Brevard Public Schools is offering the program at 6 school locations where 50 percent or more of the children qualify for free and reduced lunch. Free breakfast is also available at these six school locations. In addition, another 15 sites are located at selected Department of Parks and Recreation locations. As a base of comparison, Orange County Public Schools has a student population approximately 2 ½ times larger than Brevard County and in 2012, will have 220 summer lunch locations compared to Brevard's 21 locations.<sup>xi</sup>

Previous year statistics suggest only a small percentage of qualifying students participate in summer feeding programs. This mirrors national trends. Reasons for low participation include lack of transportation, lack of awareness and lack of available programs.

### SNAP RECIPIENTS (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – replaced 'Food Stamps')

March 2011 figures report 77,349 SNAP recipients in Brevard County or approximately 14.2% of the County's 543,376 residents; 35.6% of the recipients are children. The number of SNAP recipients in Brevard County is slightly higher than the 2010 state average of 13.8%.<sup>xii</sup>

Feeding America cites that nationally, 48% of all SNAP participants are children (2009). The average benefit in Brevard is approximately \$100 per person per month. Basic income eligibility for the program is listed in Table 7. Income exclusions are not noted.

*“Households have to meet income tests unless all members are receiving TANF, SSI, or in some places general assistance. Most households must meet both the gross and net income tests, but a household with an elderly person or a person who is receiving certain types of disability payments only has to meet the net income test. Households, except those noted, that have income over the amounts listed below cannot get SNAP benefits.” – USDA<sup>xiii</sup>*

**TABLE 7: SNAP Eligibility Guide**  
(Oct. 1, 2011 through Sept. 30, 2012)

Household size	Gross monthly income (130 percent of poverty)	Net monthly income (100 percent of poverty)
1	\$1,180	\$ 908
2	1,594	1,226
3	2,008	1,545
4	2,422	1,863
5	2,836	2,181
6	3,249	2,500
7	3,663	2,818
8	4,077	3,136
Each additional member	+414	+319

Source: USDA

The zip codes with the top 10 highest SNAP recipient enrollments as of December 2011 are listed in Table 8. Melbourne, Palm Bay, and Cocoa zip codes have the highest number of SNAP recipients.

**TABLE 8: Top 10 SNAP Recipient Zip Codes**

Zip Code - Jurisdiction	Adult	Children	Total
32935- Melbourne (north of Lake Washington Road, south of Parkway)	4548	2295	6843
32907 – Palm bay	3918	2770	6688
32922 - Cocoa	4199	2439	6638
32780 - Titusville	3849	2177	6026
32909 – Palm Bay	3214	2202	5416
32905 – Palm bay	3500	1913	5413
32901 - Melbourne	3492	1603	5095
32926 - Cocoa	2483	1374	3857
32927 - Cocoa	2298	1384	3682
32955 - Rockledge	2216	1405	3621

## SNAP RECIPIENTS & PANTRIES

Commonly we hear comments and questions about the number of pantries, implying that perhaps we have too many. Given the wide variation in operational factors, this study did not attempt to answer that question. Instead, we compared indicators to perhaps identify zip codes wherein the number of pantries may be insufficient. In Brevard, there is an average of 604 SNAP recipients per pantry. If the average is considered an acceptable ratio, then the zip codes in Table 9 illustrate areas where the number of pantries may be below average.

**TABLE 9: THE RATIO OF PANTRIES TO SNAP RECIPIENTS PER ZIP CODE GREATER THAN AVERAGE OF 1 PANTRY PER 604 SNAP RECIPIENTS**

Zip Code/Town	Ratio Pantry/ SNAP Recipients	# of Schools Per Zip	#Schools w/ 30%+ FAR	#Schools w/ 50% FAR
32908 Palm Bay	0/2416	3	3	2
32754 Mims	1/2003	2	2	2
32926 Cocoa	1/1929	3	2	2
32927 Cocoa	1/1841	7	6	4
32952 Merritt Island	1/1571	4	3	0
32920 Cape Canaveral	1/1567	1	1	1
32907 Palm Bay	1/1338	5	5	4
32909 Palm Bay	1/1093	6	6	5
32931 Cocoa Beach	1/1007	3	1	0
32905 Palm Bay	1/903	4	4	4
32935 Melbourne	1/712	11	9	6
32903 Indialantic	0/576	3	0	0

## **NEW INITIATIVES**

Since the Hunger Summit and the work of this study, several organizations have met and continued discussion and planning. The preliminary maps developed by NCCS in this study have been used in many of the discussions. Several new initiatives are now underway to further address the issue of food insecurity in Brevard. These include:

- United Way of Brevard convened a Hunger Alliance of community leaders to develop strategies and activities to address hunger. The first goal of the Alliance is putting children's backpack programs in the top 20 schools of greatest need in the next two years. The United Way is funding the marketing and community outreach to encourage school adoption providing backpack programs for the top 20, high-need schools.

- The Community Foundation for Brevard has funded a grant to Congregations for Community Action to work specifically with smaller pantries and with congregations to improve coordination and service and to engage and develop neighborhood leaders to address the gaps.
- The Harris Corporation Charitable Fund of the Community Foundation is providing matching funds to expand the Second Harvest Food Bank facility in Brevard.
- The Community Foundation has identified additional resources to support food from Second Harvest for an emerging children's backpack program.
- Second Harvest Food Bank is contemplating a mobile unit to reach areas where pantries do not exist.
- United Way is considering the purchase of a truck to aid the northern pantries in acquiring and stocking food.

### THE WEB SITE AND OTHER INFORMATION RESOURCES

The original purpose of this study was to map the food gap in Brevard and the goal of mapping has been accomplished. The Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics converted a variety of the data presented herein to a visual map and database on [www.connectbrevard.org](http://www.connectbrevard.org).

The map includes the following data:

- Food pantries, soup kitchens, and summer feeding program sites for children.
- Brevard's Public Schools, school boundaries and one mile radii
- Bus routes and stops of public transportation and 1 mile radii
- Community Indicators – a significant list of data, generally by zip code or census tracts. Data includes Housing, Poverty, SNAP recipients, USDA Food Deserts – and much more.
- Congregations and other nonprofit organizations

The mapping tool enables users to identify the physical location of needs and services as well as other resource organizations that may be convened to solve issues within proximity. The map was used extensively to identify gaps cited in this report.

There are many other studies and reports available – many that were used in preparing this report. Specifically, the USDA also has extensive research and reports available on its website, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/>. Feeding America also collects and reports on food insecurity, <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>.



## FINAL THOUGHTS

This study and report was designed to compile and present data to better understand and inform the many organizations and individuals who invest time and resources in addressing the issues and needs of hunger and/or food insecurity in Brevard County. The new web site serves as a resource and tool for analysis, mapping and planning. The information is based on data available to the team from a variety of sources. Some information may be missing. As an example, we may not be aware of some organizations that provide food distribution for a discrete community and are unpublicized. Yet, the growing size of food distribution deserved mapping and reporting what we *do* know as a first step in planning for improved efficiency and effectiveness in serving the food insecurity needs.

Some of the new initiatives are already discovering that dialogue among food distributors is valuable to share best practices, find opportunities for collaboration and mutual support, and eliminate barriers to access for those in need. The current network of distribution is designed for emergency relief, yet many users of the network are chronically in need and the system does not adequately address longer-term strategies to reduce need and prolonged dependency among those who may be capable of self-sufficiency.

There is more to be learned. The significant and growing amount of food collected and distributed throughout the County coupled with increased rate of food insecurity in the total population suggests a worsening condition for Brevard County. The estimated funding needed to fully address the issue is staggering— estimated by Feeding America in the 2010 study as \$38 million dollars a year for Brevard County alone. Such estimates compel an equally important understanding of the demand side of this issue – which this study did *not* undertake. Additional study questions might include who are the recipients and what is driving the growth in food distribution? To what degree are residents food insecure – and by USDA definition, *hungry*? How can services be modified to address client conditions that result in food insecurity? What do we need to understand upstream about the root causes of food insecurity, and what solutions will help Brevard residents become more secure, more self-sufficient or less dependent on food support? Feeding America conducted such a study in 2008 for the five counties served by Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida. The study will be repeated in early 2013 and may serve as a good starting place to better understand the needs of those who are food insecure to create additional strategies beyond emergency assistance to eliminate/reduce chronic food insecurity.

As we ask these questions, we are mindful of the needs of children, those with disabilities, those with unexpected changes in income, and the elderly on fixed incomes who are victims of circumstances. While we work toward answers, it remains important to ensure that these individuals - who are in need - do not go hungry.



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<sup>i</sup> <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>

<sup>ii</sup> *Hunger in Central Florida*, Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida, 2011

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/labels.htm> (6/18/2012)

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/labels.htm> (6/18/2012)

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/measurement.htm#how>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>. The county estimates from Feeding America are based on a model developed using the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

<sup>vii</sup> [http://www.hudhre.info/documents/HEARTH\\_HomelessDefinition\\_FinalRule.pdf](http://www.hudhre.info/documents/HEARTH_HomelessDefinition_FinalRule.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-facts/senior-hunger.aspx>

<sup>ix</sup> <http://frac.org/initiatives/addressing-senior-hunger/seniors-and-snapfood-stamps/>

<sup>x</sup> <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-facts/senior-hunger.aspx>

<sup>xi</sup> Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida, 2012 Summer Food Service Program Report

<sup>xii</sup> <http://frac.org/reports-and-resources/reports-2/>

<sup>xiii</sup> [http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant\\_recipients/eligibility.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant_recipients/eligibility.htm) (6/18/2012)