

This is Maggie Kraft from the Area 1 Agency on Aging with a Community Comment on KINS.

One of my favorite topics is food. Unfortunately, I have bad news. Food insecurity among seniors has been on the rise across the country, especially in California where ^{almost 18%} 17.9% report daily food insecurity, compared to the national average of 15.3%. The State of Senior Hunger in America 2012 Report noted that the number of seniors experiencing hunger increased by 44% from 2001 to 2012.

The majority of these seniors live on fixed incomes such as social security. Many have medication and health care costs associated with at least one chronic ailment.

According to the US Senate Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging's 2011 report, 50% of diseases impacting older Americans are directly connected to lack of appropriate nutrition. Persistent hunger & malnutrition lead to multiple chronic diseases, diminishing quality of life or even shortening of life. Billions of dollars are spent on Medicare, Medicaid and nursing home care because seniors lack the nutrition they require to live healthfully.

In 2011 Food for People conducted a survey at local food pantries. 75% of the seniors in the survey reported either very low or low food security!! This means that food intake of one or more household members was reduced and their eating patterns were disrupted at times during the year because the household had insufficient money and other resources to acquire adequate food.

28% reported that they or someone in their household has diabetes. This makes the lack of consistent access to nutritious food all the more disturbing. The survey was recently updated and re-administered countywide. We should have the results in a few months.

Too many local seniors are living in isolation with no family or caregivers to assist them. Most worked hard all their lives yet have little retirement income or other resources. Food for People sponsors a number of programs to help these seniors, and always needs more volunteer drivers to deliver food to the homebound.

When you see the Food for People Holiday Spirit Food and Fund Drive containers throughout the county, you know what to do. All food stays in the community in which it is donated to help local people in need.

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