



Food & Nutrition Coalition Meeting Minutes September 13, 2017 8:30am – 10:00am

Attendees

Amy Klinkoski (No Kid Hungry), Angela Gillisse (Salvation Army), Austin Roelofs (Kids Food Basket), Brandy Arnold (Kids Food Basket), Colene Johnson, Emily Schichtel (United Way), Heather Hughesian (211), Jane McGookey (Feed West MI), Jim Holkeboer (Eastern Ave Christian Ref. Church), Kate Vanderwal (United Church Outreach Ministry), Kelly Hagemeyer (YMCA), Kristi Ayers (Community Action Agency), Wende Randall (ENTF), Bree Butler (ENTF), Shay Krick (Feeding America West MI), Heidi Vanderlaan (Streams of Hope)

I. Introductions: Emily Schichtel

- Minutes August 9, 2017

Motion to approve: Angela

Seconded: Jim

Motion passed, no amendments

II. Migrant Legal Aid: Teresa Hendricks

Migrant Legal Aid (MLA) is a non-profit funded organization that aims to provide legal assistance to Migrant and seasonal farmworkers, including undocumented workers. MLA advocates for legislation and policies that support Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers and opposes adverse policies. Priority areas include; women, children, employment, benefits, conditions, civil rights, and housing.

The majority of issues that MLA helps with has to do with wages. Most documented migrant workers make minimum wage unless on a special visa. There has been a growing number of issues around housing problems and increased domestic and worker violence.

Most common problems include:

Wages: Workers are frequently not paid for all hours and illegal deductions are taken out of their paycheck. Families are grouped together to be paid and the end of the season brings a common bonus scam that just aims to cheat workers out of their pay.

Health: The most common health issues include pesticide rash, ladder falls, and other work-related injuries. There has been a documented case of a crop duster knowingly spraying migrant workers three times consecutively resulting in all workers needing hospital care with long term repercussions.

Field Sanitation: There are supposed to be handwashing stations within reach for workers dealing with pesticides but too frequently these are not available. Low availability of drinking water and no bathrooms are other big issues. Women frequently suffer from UTIs due to bathrooms that are far from the site.

Housing: Decent housing for migrant workers and their families is a problem. Issues include decrepit structures, bed bug infestations, no electricity or running water, and more.

There are 900 on average licensed Migrant Camps in the state of Michigan, this number does not include unlicensed migrant camps of which there are many. Amongst the licensed camps there are about 4,000 living units which is considered capacity for 23,000 people. Michigan is the number one producer of 6 different crops in the country, and there are 51,000 farms in the entire state of Michigan.



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45 types of crops must be hand harvested in Michigan and the market value of those crops is 11.2 billion. The Michigan Migrant population is about 94,000. MLA states that they mainly see migrant workers that actively migrate come from Florida and Texas. Workers from Texas are mainly documented permanent residents, workers from Florida sometimes are not documented. Migrant workers are usually unaware of services offered to them, including MLA, and usually feel fear of retaliation from immigration laws.

Labor Trafficking in Michigan is a problem and most often targets undocumented workers. These workers are held captive, starved, robbed, beaten, amongst other atrocities while their paychecks are stolen from them.

Guest workers are borrowed labor from other countries. They usually make \$12.75 an hour, but are held at farms against their will long term.

Migrant Legal Aid has currently filed a suit with Monsanto and a class action suit against blueberry farmers. The Blueberry Star Case 2011 – 2016, ABC documented a special about this. They found it is common for children under 12 to work, mainly due to forced production standards. After this Meijer, Walmart, and Kroger dropped that grower. Meijer now works with Migrant Legal Aid to prevent embarrassments in the future.

The Fair Food Project

The Retailer Fair Food MI Pledge is a partnership between Migrant Legal Aid, food produces, and retailers for jointly monitoring vendors/employers for fair and ethical treatment of farmworkers. This allows for active dispute resolution between everyone involved and timely resolution of emergent issues.

Spartan Nash is the only group to officially take the fair food pledge and take action. There are 150 stores who have signed the pledge through Spartan Nash. Spartan Nash has 81 independent grocers who have met with MLA and as a result, all 81 signed the pledge as well. The pledge is limited to Michigan and covers Michigan grown produce.

III. Exploring Forces in the Food System and Feedback Loops (Workshop): Connie Bellows & DeDe Esque

So far groups have considered voices in the food system that need to be heard and discussed topics around the food system and identify the challenge. Groups are currently still in phase 1 – Gaining Clarity. Review of Last Month:

Our Challenge: Elevate Justice and equity in the local food system through good food practices (fair, affordable, healthy, green) to ensure equal access to good food for all residents of Kent County.

Groups covered the first step of the mapping process. The results of last month illuminated the themes:

- 1) Access/Poverty/Racism/Culture
- 2) Activism/Advocacy
- 3) Corporate Interests / \$\$
- 4) Education
- 5) Policy



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6) Silos/Collaboration

Themes 3 through 5 will be covered today with number 6 being saved until the October Meeting. The groups then separated and reviewed their theme and its upstream causes and downstream factors.

- What are the things that lead to X (the theme for your group aka upstream Causes)
- What are the things the X cases to happen (downstream Effects)

IV. Next Meeting/Adjourn: Emily Schichtel

Next meeting will be on Wednesday, October 11, 8:30-10:30am. Meetings will now go until 10:30am.