

Food Security Coalition Quarterly meeting notes

April 29th, 5:30- 7:30 pm

FISH Food Bank, Hood River, OR

Present:

- Aden Cross, student
- Bridget Hinton, OSU Extension Service
- Caitlin Seyfried, Columbia Gorge Food Bank
- Hannah Brause, WSU Extension Service
- Ian Thomas, student
- Joel Pelayo, Gorge Grown Food Network, The Next Door Inc.
- Karen Hoffman, North Central Public Health District, WIC
- Kate Karlson, Gorge Grown Food Network
- Lauren Kraemer, OSU Extension Service
- Marianne Durkan, FISH Food Bank
- Mark Thomas, Providence Hospital
- Marquita Veloz, Mephibosheth Homeland Mission
- Monica Cuneo, OHSU/ Moore Institute
- Sarah Kellems, Hood River Shelter Services
- Sarah Kersten, OSU Extension Service
- Sarah Sullivan, Gorge Grown Food Network
- Sharon Thornberry: Columbia Gorge Food Bank
- Sidney Axtell, Spirit of Grace Church Garden and FISH Food Bank
- Suzanne Cross, Columbia Gorge Health Council
- Tracy Dugick, Mid-Columbia Medical Center
- Victor Veloz, Mephibosheth Homeland Mission
- *Liz Oberhausen, Gorge Grown Food Network (facilitator)*
- *Kiara Kashuba, Gorge Grown Food Network (note taker)*

Action items:

- Liz to put Terms and Acronyms sheet on the FSC website
- Let Sarah know if you'd like to join an ad hoc group on Land Access
- Let Liz know if you're interested in joining a Policy Workgroup

Upcoming events:

- May 17, 3pm: OSU Extension is celebrating their Japanese Heritage Garden
- Direct Service & Engagement workgroup meeting: May 15, 10-11:30 at The Next Door Inc. in The Dalles
- Health Equity Training: May 22 at The Next Door Inc.
- Plant Sale: May 11, 9-3, at The Next Door Inc., Hood River
- Mobile Markets are starting up again! Schedule here: <http://www.gorgegrown.com/mobilemarket/>
- Outdoor Hood River Farmers Market opens May 3; The Dalles Farmers Market opens June 1

Meeting objectives:

- Connections and networking with others working on food access and infrastructure in the Gorge; orient and connect people new to the Coalition
- Create shared understanding of the 'root causes' of food insecurity in the Gorge

- Lay the groundwork for identifying policy action items
- Update our Food Resource guide

Liz oriented the group by presenting on the structure, history, and mission and vision statements of the Food Security Coalition. The PowerPoint she used is available on our website if you'd like it as a resource to introduce the Coalition to others: www.gorgegrown.com/foodsecurity

Next, **each workgroup presented an update of their current work** to the group:

The **Steering Committee** has been busy defining what their role is, and gathering updates on organizations' Declarations of Commitment (DoCs).

The **Infrastructure Workgroup** has been focusing their efforts on farmland preservation and succession planning. This is especially important to our area, as a recent study stated that Hood River has the most expensive farmland in the whole state. The Infrastructure Workgroup will participate in a listening session with Solid Ground Consulting to talk about the possibility of an Oregon-wide land trust to preserve farmland. The workgroup also met with Columbia Land Trust to learn about their land trust model. The next step for this will to form an ad hoc group to dive into farmland preservation. Let Sarah Sullivan (Sullivan@gorgegrown.com) know if you'd like to join this group. The ad hoc group will take a field trip to Olympia WA on May 3 to see some innovative models of farmland preservation. The workgroup is also watching bills that relate (easements, beginning farmer support, tax credits for farmers). Also, there is an event on May 17, 3pm: OSU Extension is celebrating their Japanese Heritage Garden. Farmland access has so much to do with oppression, like how Japanese people were interned during WWII and this garden models the gardens they made in the camps.

The **Direct Service & Engagement Workgroup** has been talking about how to make meetings more community friendly: this evening meeting with dinner and childcare was an attempt at that so please share feedback! They are working on engaging new folks, and focusing on creating shared collaborative resources like the Food Resource Guide. Their next meeting is Wednesday, May 15, 10-11:30am at The Next Door Inc. in The Dalles, where we will focus on how we can help with the Community Health Assessment and brainstorm how to increase redemption for FDNP in Hood River county (the redemption rates were much lower than the state average last year).

Then, Suzanne Cross presented an **update on the Community Health Assessment (CHA)**. The CHA measures health and income related information in the Gorge, and the statistics drawn from the assessment are vital in securing grant funding for projects in our region. There are many organizations working collaboratively on the CHA to 1) gather data, and 2) distribute a consumer survey. We need 1,500 surveys to be hand-fielded in the community, with an oversampling of vulnerable populations who may be less likely to complete the mail-in surveys. CAC discussing how to do best do this. If anyone is interested in signing up to hand field surveys, let Suzanna Cross (Suzanne@gorgehealthcouncil.org) know. The Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) is also seeking 10 more Oregon Health Plan (OHP) consumers to sit on the council. The CAC meets on the 3rd Mondays of the month from 3-5pm, alternating between Hood River and The Dalles. Stipends offered for OHP consumer participation.

Next, we focused on the **root causes of food insecurity**, and how we might **engage with food security-related policy**, as a follow-up from the “What We Eat Matters” policy event that took place in The Dalles in March. We did a small group brainstorming activity where we answered the questions:

1. Why are people hungry/not getting enough nutrition in the Gorge?
For each answer that groups came up with for this question, they were invited to explore the deeper ‘why’ in that answer, to dig deeper into root causes. Each group was then asked to pick one root cause, and explore the following questions:
2. What information do we need about this cause in order to determine whether/ how we could impact it?
3. Is anyone in the Gorge already addressing this root cause?
4. Do you see ways that our group, or someone in it, could impact this root cause?

Our group identified these general root causes of hunger and food insecurity in our area:

- housing costs, enforcement around short-term rentals, lack of affordable housing
- lack of workforce development,
- stigma against poverty creates a stigma against utilizing assistance resources
- changing demographics (tech companies coming in) brings up housing and other costs
- inaccessible childcare costs/cost of raising a family,
- jobs not paying enough and wage inequity, minimum wage being too low to support families
- labor/farmworker exploitation/ farmworker minimum wage exemptions.
- Many of our systems value profit over people, and this is often seen as logical, and okay
- **See the poster notes document in the email this summary was sent in for the detailed notes from each group.**

Next, Lauren Kraemer presented about policy to the group. She discussed the difference between “big P Policy” (federal laws, government policy) and “little p policy” (protocols, organizational rules). As a group we may not have the capacity to fully engage with sweeping, nation-wide “big P” Policy, but we can mostly certainly start working with “little p” policy in our community. To learn more, visit Beav.es/ZqX

Next, **Sharon Thornberry presented on the Oregon Food Bank’s advocacy**, policy, and legislation work. They advance policies like Double Up Food Bucks, housing security, SNAP, and others. As individuals, we can make an impact on policy by voting with our wallets, calling our representatives, and making noise on social media- there is a lot of power in this. To learn more about OFB’s advocacy and policy work, visit <https://www.oregonfoodbank.org/our-work/public-policy/>

The Coalition is thinking about **creating a policy workgroup**. Let Liz know if you’d like to participate. So far Sharon Thornberry, Mark Thomas, Lauren Kraemer and Liz Oberhausen have expressed interest.

To end the meeting, we **reviewed the latest version of our Food Resource Guide**, now titled “Where to Find Free and Low-Cost Food in the Gorge.” The Guide has undergone a massive plain language translation, and will be translated into Spanish shortly. An updated copy of the guide is attached to this email.