



10/21/10

October Teleconference Minutes

2:30 pm to 3:00 pm

Participants

Vanessa Salinas, Alaska Food Coalition
Greer Gehler, Constituent Services Coordinator, Office of Senator Mark Begich
Eddie Ezelle, Food Pantry of Wasilla
Shodie Akin, State of Alaska, Child Nutrition
Chef Clay Randolph, Wasilla Area Seniors
Diana Straub, Wasilla Area Seniors
Sandra Kaplan, Wasilla Area Seniors
Brehan Kohl, State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
Abby Huggins, Nome Community Center
Lance Johnson, Nome Community Center
Robin Stilwell, Food Bank of Alaska
Linda Swarner, Kenai Peninsula Food Bank
Rachel Greenberg, Palmer Senior Center
Kathy McConkey, Copper River Native Association
Susannah Morgan, Food Bank of Alaska
Heather Harris, Alaska Parent and Youth Foundation

Member Update

Abby Huggins and Lance Johnson, Nome Community Center

The Nome food bank distributes Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) boxes to approximately 65 families per month. They have a lot of community support. Distribution is simple, but often challenging for off the road system agencies because of the cost of transportation. 3500 people live in Nome; they also serve 15 surrounding villages. Nome would like to help surrounding villages set up their own food pantries. Participation varies; approximately 150 residents utilize the food bank. Participation can be light during the summer months; it can be dependent on the success of subsistence harvests. This summer, participation did not decrease. This could be attributed to the high cost of fuel and rent with no increase in wages.

The Nome community is very supportive through volunteering and organizing food drives. A teen group recently collected approximately 500 pounds of canned and boxed food. Community members regularly sponsor fundraisers. A local radio station sponsored an on-air trivia contest about food; winners won food prizes for the food bank. The food bank is experiencing a decrease in food donations, Abby thought this was due to the high cost of shipping and the economy. Bypass mail or a decrease in shipping rates would help; food prices have increased significantly this year. Increases in fuel and rent prices bring people to the food bank. Lance mentioned he thought the food bank receives nonperishable food via by-pass mail.

Guest Speaker: Greer Gehler, Office of Senator Mark Begich

Regarding the high cost of transportation and mail in Rural Alaska, Senator Begich has supported and defended by-pass mail. The U.S. Rate Commission recently turned down a U.S.P.S (Post Office) request for a rate increase. For now, postage will not go up 7%, but U.S.P.S. will most likely challenge the ruling.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act: This is federal legislation that authorizes federal child nutrition and school meals programs for low income children, which is reviewed by Congress every five years. The current law expired in 2009. This year, the U.S. Senate passed the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 and the U.S. House of Representatives introduced a companion bill. The House bill is still in committee. Once it passes the House, it will go back to the Senate for a final vote.

Senator Murkowski has introduced an amendment in support of changing 170(e) 3, an IRS code that prohibits a tax deduction for food donated to Tribes. The amendment is stuck in the lame duck session, Congress will not be voting on this until the new Congress is sworn in next year. Senator Begich is prepared to champion this change.

SNAP/Food Stamps: In 2009 the American Recovery Reinvestment Act created an increase in SNAP benefits, a temporary increase that ends in 2013. Congress is working on trying to find a permanent solution to keep the increases.

If anyone wants an update on the Older Americans Act of 2012 that funds senior nutrition programs, or any other concerns, feel free to contact Ms. Gehler: greer_gehler@senate.begich.gov 907 258-9305 in Anchorage.

Wasilla Area Seniors Video Project

Chef Clay Randolph

National Meals on Wheels (MOW) is still trying to figure out a good time to come up, probably closer to March. Wasilla Area Seniors gave MOW two itineraries, one that include a rural area up north, and another that included a rural area in the south. Fairbanks, Nikiski and Valdez were some of the options.

School Meals Bill

Vanessa has been informed by state Senator Bill Weilechowski's office that he intends on introducing the School Meals Bill again next session, pending his re-election. Vanessa is updating fact sheets and research materials for next year, expect to see emails from her soon with sample resolutions and support material.

Annual AFC Meeting

The AFC Annual Meeting will take place in Juneau, February 6 – 8, 2010 At the Baranoff Hotel. We plan to host a legislative breakfast again, and visit all 60 legislators. Erin Walker-Tolles, State of Alaska Division of Public Assistance Chief of Policy will be our luncheon speaker on Monday.

Vanessa will be distributing travel scholarship applications to the AFC membership in the next few weeks. You must be a full dues paying member of the coalition to apply for a travel scholarship.

The AFC November Teleconference is Thursday, November 18. Our Guest Speaker will be Holly Croft, U.S. Representative Don Young's office and AFC Member Highlight will be from Lisa Scarborough with Love, Inc. Gateway Affiliate in Ketchikan.