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NEWSLETTER

Fall 2002 Volume 7 Number 3



Educating About Corporations...

By Robert Hinkley

Many of this year's high school and college graduates will be taking jobs in the corporate world, expecting to spend a large portion of their lives there for the next 40 or more years. Even those who do not join the corporate world will have dozens of interactions with corporations everyday. Yet, no one takes the time to teach young adults about corporations. Very few can explain where corporations come from, their purpose in our society or what causes their behavior. The basic high school curriculum should be changed to remedy this oversight.

The first thing students should learn is that, even though corporations can only act through people (their management and employees), corporations behave differently than people. Thomas Jefferson once said, "[h]uman beings are endowed with a sense of right and wrong...The moral sense, or conscience is as much a part of man as his leg or arm. It is given to all human beings to a stronger or weaker degree...It can be strengthened with exercise."

Corporations are not similarly endowed. Corporate behavior is not the result of people acting according to their consciences, but according to rules imposed by the corporate system. Larry Mitchell, a professor of law at George Washington University, has said that these roles result from three rules that govern the behavior of people in corporations. These rules can be summarized as follows: (i) maximize profits for stockholders, (ii) do not steal from the corporation and (iii) do not break the law.

The first rule, maximize profits, gives the corporation a purpose. This rule to pursue the private interests of

About this issue...

This final issue of 2002 has two important themes—corporations and responsibility.

Robert Hinkley (page 1), a corporate lawyer and a former partner at one of the most prestigious law firms in New York City, is concerned with educating students about corporations and the "rules imposed by the corporate system."

The role of corporations continues in an article by Mark Maier (page 3). He takes a hard look at the corporate influence on high school economics classes. His concern is with who supplies information about our economic system to students and how it is presented. Maier has solutions for what needs to be done to "level the playing field."

This issue "kicks off" an on-going theme of "responsibility." (See page 9 for the meaning of the word.) We asked people how they viewed their responsibility to end hunger. Kelly Hayes, teacher, (page 7) shares a personal awakening she had through one of her students. She learned that hunger exists not elsewhere but right in her classroom.

Two food banks demonstrate how their concepts of their roles in ending hunger have changed. Lisa Enzer, (page 8) combines her background as a teacher and a professional performing artist to engage young people in learning about the root causes of hunger and initiating change in their community. Kim Thomas of the Oregon Food Bank shares her experiences as the food bank moves from "charity to change." No longer do we need solely to "donate a can of food"; we also need to educate ourselves about the root causes of hunger. These food banks think "outside the box", and are bringing change to those they serve.

In the Winter 2003 issue, we will present others who tell about their responsibility to end hunger.

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stockholders is not balanced by any rule to promote or protect the public interest. There is no obligation to preserve the environment, no obligation to respect human rights or the dignity of employees, and no obligation not to endanger the public health or safety or any other element of the public interest.

The second and third rules are actually a collection of rules that establish minimally acceptable corporate behavior. The “do not steal” rules govern the behavior of employees vis-a-vis the corporation. The “obey the law” rules govern corporate behavior vis-a-vis the rest of the world.

Corporate managers tend to hold the “obey the law” rules in much lesser regard than the maximize profits rule. This is because compliance with these rules is viewed as imposing costs that reduce profits. Evidence of how little regard corporations have for these rules can be seen in the millions of dollars they spend every year lobbying our elected representatives to get the rules changed to their benefit (and sometimes the rest of the world’s detriment).

People living in community do more than just obey the law. Every day they engage in behavior that reflects their conscience and their inherent desires to cooperate with other people and contribute to society.

Nothing in the corporate rules requires corporations to behave in a similar manner. Corporate behavior, especially in large corporations with widespread operations, tends to reflect the view that doing more than obeying the law involves costs that are to be avoided.

The foregoing explains why corporations do things that individuals, acting on their own, would hardly consider. Examples of behavior that do not violate the law but show a lack of conscience, morality or sense of right and wrong, include (i) polluting the environment, (ii) treating employees like numbers, (iii) paying less than living wages, and (iv) selling products that are known to kill or make sick hundreds of thousands of people every year.

The second thing young adults should know about corporations is that the maximize profit rule is nothing more than a law enacted by our state legislatures. In other words, corporations behave the way they do because of a law our elected representatives have passed on our behalf. This law can be modified anytime we are ready to change it.

Including a course on corporations in the high school curriculum will better prepare future generations to deal with one of the world’s most prominent institutions. It will also help them begin to think more critically about the current corporate system. Some day this may lead to change in the rules that will make corporate behavior more closely reflect the behavior of conscious human beings; behavior where the pursuit of corporate profit does not come at the expense of the environment, human rights, the public safety, the dignity of employees or the welfare of our communities. That day will bear witness to the value of education.

Robert Hinkley has been a corporate lawyer for 24 years and is a former partner at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP. In June 2000, he resigned from his firm in order to devote more time to advance his idea that the corporate law should be changed to promote corporate social responsibility and the obligations of citizenship. He currently resides in Brooklin, Maine. His e-mail address is rhinkley@media2.hypernet.com.

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Corporate Influence On High School Economics Classes... **by Mark Maier**

Every year, over one million high-school students, about half of all graduates, take an economics course—usually in their senior year. Thirteen states, including California, New York, Texas, and Florida, require economics for high-school graduation. Course content varies between states, ranging from “Free Enterprise” in Louisiana to a consumer education option in Illinois. Most people are not aware of how decisions about these courses are made, but corporate foundations, particularly those with an extreme conservative bent, have paid close attention. Textbooks, classroom activities, websites, and new national standards depend increasingly on corporate donors whose ideological influence often goes unrecognized. With national economics testing due to begin in 2005, economics course content is likely to swing even further toward a “free-market” ideology.

A CORPORATE CURRICULUM

When high-school economics courses were first introduced in many states during the 1970s and 1980s, publishers filled the textbook void. At the same time, corporations and nonprofit organizations, often working together, stepped in with a wide range of supplementary readings, classroom activities and, in recent years, websites.

Some of these materials are blatantly self-serving corporate promotions. For example, the McDonald's video, *Great Breaks: Taking Charge of Your Future*, shows the “importance of the skills and discipline learned through one's first job.” Seemingly more credible materials are offered through privately-funded, nonprofit organizations such as Junior Achievement, which claims to reach four million U.S. students every year with its “free enterprise message of hope and opportunity.” Junior Achievement offers a kindergarten through 12th-grade economics curriculum with a high-school economics course taught by business executives. UPS, Exxon-Mobil, Goldman Sachs, and New York Life Insurance are among the corporations that have provided large grants to Junior Achievement. Kraft Foods is the largest single provider of volunteer economics instructors.

The Foundation for Teaching Economics (FTE), a nonprofit organization endorsed by Junior Achievement, also offers classroom activities. In 2001, more than 2,000 teachers participated in FTE's week-long teacher training workshops thanks to foundation and corporate funding, including support from two of the largest donors to right-wing causes, the Coors family and Richard Scaiffe (heir to the Mellon oil and banking fortune). The FTE offers internships for teachers, primarily at conservative think tanks such as the Cato Institute and the National Taxpayers Union. It also uses an “Economics of Water and the Environment” curriculum funded by Coca-Cola and written by the Political Economy Research Center, a Montana-based research organization that has led opposition to the Endangered Species Act and the Superfund. The FTE's environmental workshops want teachers to reject “old myths” that “only government is big enough to solve environmental problems,” in favor of “new understandings” that “clearly defined property rights and market transactions can provide environmental quality.”

Through FTE programs, students and teachers-in-training receive a one-sided, pro-market message that does little to encourage a critical analysis of today's important economic policy issues. FTE materials support the group's mission of training teachers to “understand the value of free markets at work,” while consistently opposing government intervention when markets cause problems such as growing economic inequality or environmental destruction. The FTE assesses the effectiveness of its programs on the basis of how much teachers changed their “understanding of government's role.”

The group most influential in pre-college economics is the National Council on Economic Education (NCEE), the largest provider of curriculum materials for use in kindergarten through 12th grade. The NCEE has successfully urged states to incorporate economics into their social studies curricula and to establish separate economics courses as well. It also created a network of councils in all 50 states as well

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as more than 200 affiliated university centers for training primary and secondary school teachers.

Although the NCEE has worked in partnership with Junior Achievement and the FTE, its course materials are less overt in promoting the corporate agenda. However, it receives generous support from corporations such as State Farm Insurance, International Paper, NASDAQ, and UPS. The NCEE's website is well stocked with lesson plans, current events articles, and a growing list of publications. These classroom materials actively engage students in cooperative group projects with clever titles such as "Great Economic Mysteries" and "Hey, Mom! What's for Breakfast?"

On occasion, the conflict of interest between the subject matter and the funding source is obvious. For example, the NCEE's Stock Market Game curriculum is sponsored by the Securities Industry Association, a trade group representing banks, brokers, and mutual fund companies. Teacher instructions and student activities give the mistaken impression of equal ownership of stocks across income groups, and downplay negative consequences such as stock market bubbles. (See Mark Maier, "Teaching About Stocks-For Fun and Propaganda," D&S, March/April 2001.)

Usually, however, corporate influence is more subtle, noticeable in what is left out of the curriculum. For example, Bank of America pitched in over \$3 million for the NCEE's Financial Fitness for Life, attractive teaching materials coauthored by accomplished but decidedly conservative economics educator Mark Schug. The first lesson plan tempts students, "How to Really Be a Millionaire," based on the content of two bestsellers, *Getting Rich in America* and *The Millionaire Next Door*. The "millionaire" approach reinforces unrealistic expectations among many youth. A recent poll by Junior Achievement found that nearly one quarter of teens believe they will have \$1 million in assets by age 40, while 15% think they will earn more than \$1 million a year. Aside from being unlikely (the actual proportion of current million-dollar earners is about one in a thousand), the curriculum downplays the impact of inheritance and the earnings of corporate executives, both important starting points for understanding the U.S. economy.

A more complete curriculum would ask students to think critically about the "me first" approach endorsed by Financial Fitness for Life. In addition to warning against credit scams, a personal finance course should examine why there is pervasive consumerism and unnecessary advertising in the U.S. economy. The curriculum should introduce students to empirical facts about income and wealth distribution, pointing out the role of race, sex, unionization, and executive compensation-information ignored entirely in "*How to Really be a Millionaire*" and in Lesson Six of Financial Fitness for Life, "Why some jobs pay more than others."

Other NCEE materials repeatedly teach about the benefits of markets, and the problems associated with government intervention. Debates usually feature situations in which students and non-economist teachers are already likely to favor government intervention such as pollution abatement and reducing male-female wage differences. In these activities, students read an eloquent argument for free-market solutions that is likely to challenge their pro-government interventionist predilections. Equally strong arguments critical of market outcomes would not only make the lessons less one-sided, but would also prepare students to understand current policy debates about discrimination, environmental regulation, and workers' rights.

STANDARDS TAKE OVER

In 1994, Congress mandated development of national economic standards, and the U.S. Department of Education designated the NCEE to lead the effort. In 1997, with assistance from the FTE, AT&T, and others, the NCEE produced the Voluntary National Content Standards, a list of 20 standards and accompanying teaching strategies for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. The economics standards were published with little fanfare, a remarkable non-event in comparison with other disciplines in which standards evoked furious debate. The standards reflect the free-market bias shared by most economists, tempered with a nod toward occasional federal government intervention to prevent unemployment or inflation.

Consider Standard #13: "Income for most people is determined by the market value of the productive resources they

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sell. What workers earn depends primarily on the market value of what they produce and how productive they are.” The standard reflects the majority viewpoint among economists but is contradicted by historical facts. The standard's narrow focus on paid work leaves out wealth, a major source of U.S. economic inequality, and focuses on market transactions, which devalue unpaid household labor. The standard also attributes people's incomes to productivity, whereas real-world studies show that incomes are affected by racism, sexism, and workers' bargaining power. Practically the only published criticism of this bias came from the journal *Feminist Economics*, where economists outside the mainstream of the AEA pointed out that the standards' focus on free-market principles causes the curriculum to overlook issues of gender, race, class, the environment, and unequal development between rich and poor countries. Although the standards are voluntary, they affect most published classroom materials.

Junior Achievement keys all publications and website activities to the standards. The content of future textbooks is also likely to be influenced by the standards, because textbooks must meet requirements in populous states where most sales will occur. One best-selling author reports rewriting his high-school economics textbook when Texas requested a more 'balanced' (read: less favorable) approach to labor unions.

As a result of mergers, there are now only four dominant publishers of pre-college economics textbooks; McGraw-Hill alone publishes four of the top 11 books. In 1999, BusinessWeek, a McGraw-Hill subsidiary and major contributor to the NCEE, published a 20-page supplement on NCEE's programs in its 70th anniversary issue. The NCEE is careful not to promote any one publisher's book, but as more schools require economics courses and textbooks, McGraw-Hill's support for the NCEE will clearly benefit the publisher's bottom line.

TESTING ON THE WAY

The existence of national standards makes it easier to include economics in future nationwide testing. Over half the states already include some economics content in their required social studies tests. Economics is also one of the fastest growing Advanced Placement (AP) test subjects. And, in 2005, the congressionally mandated National Assessment of Education Progress will begin testing 12th graders in economics, giving extensive media attention to the subject in the “Nation's Report Card” already distributed for reading, writing, math, science, and history. Under debate is whether the test's content should focus on the economics curriculum as reflected in the NCEE standards or on practical consumer finance topics taught in some states and favored by some teachers as more appropriate for pre-college students. Most likely, the NCEE standards-and their pro-market bias-will win out because they are already the basis for some state tests, and because the NCEE curriculum is used so widely, even in states like California that have not adopted the standards.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR ECONOMICS EDUCATION?

Most economists and many (although certainly not all) historians and other social studies teachers differ in their

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approaches to economic education. Standard #5, for example, states that “When individuals, regions, and nations specialize in what they can produce at the lowest cost and then trade with others, both production and consumption increase.” As Pomona College economist Cecilia Conrad points out, “A historian is likely to ask, 'Whose production and whose consumption?' The economics standard suggests that everyone always gains from trade, but there are historical examples where the distribution of benefits from trade is unequal.” For example, suppose a high-school teacher wanted to analyze the World Trade Organization (WTO) in class. The national standards begin with a theoretical argument favoring free trade. But a teacher with a history or social studies background would be likely to ask why WTO rules protect patents, but not the environment or workers' rights. Although national testing may push instructors toward the NCEE's ideologically driven standards, teachers can challenge students to reflect critically on the choices they will face in the real world. Corporate-sponsored resources provide a wide range of attractive, ready-to-go classroom handouts, so teachers strapped for course materials may want to use them as a starting point. The one-sided materials in *Financial Fitness for Life* might be used in combination with sources recommended by the PBS program *Affluenza* (www.pbs.org/kcts/affluenza/). Also, students might be asked to assess the authors' biases in Junior Achievement and FTE materials.

Moreover, teachers can adopt alternatives to the “free market” curriculum. Unfortunately, only a few left-of-center organizations are producing curriculum materials for high-school economics courses, and none receive the kind of funding available to the NCEE, FTE, or Junior Achievement. Nonetheless, teachers can obtain many thoughtful lesson ideas for little or no cost. United for a Fair Economy (www.ufenet.org) sells books and workshop kits; Rethinking Schools (www.rethinkingschools.org) offers classroom activities, including some for lower grades; the Center for Economic Conversion (www.conversion.org) offers a full curriculum on sustainable economics; and other materials are available from the Human Rights Resource Center (www.hrusa.org).

However, the corporations and foundations that support course materials from Junior Achievement, the FTE, and the NCEE have deep pockets. High-school economics courses already follow a largely-unrecognized conservative ideology, and without careful attention from teachers, economists, and interested citizens, students are likely to receive increasingly one-sided indoctrination in the "free market" point of view.

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Largest Companies in the World by 2001 Revenue (in millions \$)

Company	Country of Origin	2001 Revenue ¹	Compared to Country Economies*
1. Wal-Mart	US	219,812	(approx size Sweden)
2. ExxonMobil	US	191,581	(larger than Turkey)
3. General Motors	US	177,260	(larger than Denmark)
4. Ford Motor	US	162,412	(larger than Poland)
5. Daimler-Chrysler	Germany	149,608	(larger than Norway)
6. Royal Dutch/Shell	Netherlands/Britain	149,146	(ditto)
7. BP	Britain	148,602	(ditto)
8. Enron**	US	138,718	(larger than South Africa)
9. Mitsubishi	Japan	126,629	(larger than Finland)
10. General Electric	US	125,913	(larger than Greece)

¹ Drafton, George, Report on Corporations. * GDP, 2000 World Development Report. ** now declared bankrupt
Reprinted with permission from New Internationalist Magazine, July 2002, Issue #347, page 18.



Music and Social Action: Can A Song Make A Difference?... **by Kelly Hayes**

"Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect."

Chief Seattle speaks of the interdependence of all living things in this quote. The life we have created in all its societal complexity demands that we look to the well being of each strand in the web of life. As a member of this society, I am emotionally moved by the state of my fellow people, but as a teacher I am compelled to act.

Matt, a fourth grader in my classroom, was tired all the time. He was more than quiet—he was withdrawn. He came to school each day wearing the same dirty clothes and expressionless, glassy, unfocused stare. His attendance was excellent as this child depended on free breakfast and lunch at school to nourish him physically. Sitting with him one Maine winter afternoon, I learned that he was living without heat and running water. The teacher in me desperately wanted to spark social/emotional and intellectual growth, but I knew that I would not be successful in promoting that growth if his most basic needs were not being met. This child suffered from physical, emotional and cognitive hungers. I knew that caring was not enough. I visited this young man's home and was witness to poverty and neglect like I had never imagined. The ceiling sagged from the load of the heavy snow, cardboard covered the spaces where windows once were, a mattress lay in the middle of the living room floor where mom and her three sons slept each night, a bucket acted as a toilet. I was struck by the realization that this kind of poverty was not something that existed only in distant continents, but is right here in our cities, our towns, our villages. To walk away from this child and his family would have been to walk away from all that I knew as right. Resources were utilized, the home condemned and the family supported. No longer did I stand witness to a child who lacked the ability to grow, but instead I witnessed a transformation in a child that only hope could cause.

As I enter my classroom I know I cannot tackle this problem one child at a time. The issues are big and overwhelming, I'm faced with a choice, inaction or action. I choose to use a curriculum called *Finding Solutions To Hunger, Kids Can Make A Difference*, to promote awareness of the staggering facts that surround inequality, hunger and poverty. By using this curriculum, I create a cognitive hook needed to hang future wonderings, decisions, and actions of tomorrows leaders. Hearing that 35,000 children in the world, under the age of five, die each day from hunger-related issues intrudes upon young peoples naive sense of the world. In considering that 25% of the homeless in our country are children...that every year 500,000 children in the world go blind from lack of vitamin A...that nearly 1.3 billion people (over a fifth of the world's population) live below the international poverty line of \$1 per day. A further 1.6 billion (another quarter of the world's population) survive on \$1-2 per day...my students become angry, the kind of anger that inspires people to work toward making change. The curriculum is powerful and should be used in every classroom in our nation. The learnings are empowering and my students become ambassadors. They write to government officials, survey community members, assist in soup kitchens, organize programs that educate the community about issues related to hunger and poverty. They take their astonishment and anger and use it to strengthen the web. Information, just the facts alone, give them the inspiration to work toward change, to become keepers of the web in their own right.

I cannot save children one at a time, but I can work toward transforming their thinking and influencing the personal capacity of my students, our future world leaders. By having my students grapple with moral issues I can recruit them as true partners in the effort to make a better world. They struggle with the hard questions: Why do we live in a world that chooses to allow hunger to exist? What role and responsibility do I have to my fellow citizens to provoke and promote change? What exactly is the power of one?

Kelly Hayes is a fourth grade teacher in Gorham, Maine. She may be reached at kelly_keene@gorham.k12.me.us



Talking 'Bout A New Generation...

by Lisa Enzer

The paradox of my work as a Community Service Coordinator for The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, often hits me when I am requested to speak to students about hunger issues, relate the details of student led service activities, and if possible motivate future actions and commitment to social justice. There I stand, within the institutions that too frequently reflect, model and promote the fundamental inequities of our society, trying not to reveal my inner conflict. Although the discrepancies in this situation are frustrating I remind myself that my voice might be one of the few students hear at school, talking about issues of class structure, poverty, and wealth in America. This dilemma challenges me to bring The Food Bank's mission, "...to work with our community to end hunger...", forward in ways that will be immediately acceptable in schools and that potentially lay the groundwork for intensive future contact with the students. In this article, I describe The Food Bank's Youth Against Hunger Program (YAH!), discuss techniques that empower students to become activists, and present how a new kind of social currency is being created through service learning.

The crux of YAH! is to create a context for students to better comprehend the issues surrounding hunger in our region and to develop community service projects to help eliminate hunger. The theoretical part of the program includes learning and reflecting about income distribution, the food system, community food security, governmental policy, and personal prejudices. Now that's a mouthful for a class to swallow over a school year, though I rarely meet with the same group more than twice in a term. Guest talks and YAH! workshops are tailored both for specific grade levels, K-12, and to connect with school curricula if possible. Teachers are always encouraged to utilize YAH! resources, as well as to deliver lessons themselves in the most effective manner for their groups.

The practical aspect of the program is to have students become agents of change by participating in the community as public educators and by performing community service. Frequently, YAH! collaborations result in events such as hunger banquets, Empty Bowls sales, food drives, plant or pie sales. These events have an obvious agenda; they raise awareness about hunger and generate resources to address the short-term problem. If all has gone according to plan, the students are instrumental in making the projects a success. Also they gain transferable skills as anti-hunger advocates through these projects, such as practice in organizing, public relations and public speaking. The less obvious agenda is to teach students about activism and provide them with models of implementing positive social change. To do this, and get invited back to the school, I turn to the arts.

Most methods I use to encourage students to take ownership in a project evolve from my experience with creative arts in learning. Structures adapted from educational theater can create a forum of ideas and interplay between the students, staff and myself. One technique, *Mantle of the Expert*, assumes each individual is or will become an expert in the field - they all know about hunger and its solutions- and can enter into a relevant discussion about the issues. When gaps in the dialogue develop I can provide guidance, information, or suggestions about source material. In this way students are valued for what they already sense and know, or can deduce, and their group membership is acknowledged. If we are seeking to build an active citizenship with community service, then teachers can help students become versed in practicing 'dialogue' and in designing solutions to hunger by shifting the responsibility of leadership to the class.

Recognizing and honoring the student's 'inner life' is another way I approach the challenges of collaborating with the schools. When we struggle against the edifice of an unjust society the scale of the complexities often overwhelm us. That is why and when I turn to expressive forms as a means of imbuing a sense of humanity and history into the work of social justice. "Empty Bowls" is a project where students create their own ceramic bowls to raise funds for hunger relief. A high school sophomore who participated in an Empty Bowls project told me recently that she felt the process had finally brought something 'humane' into her school culture. She said that her bowl, lopsided as it was, would

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move through the world carrying her faith that she was making a difference.

Within my YAH! presentations, I talk about the power of the creative process and the participants' innate abilities, as forces that counterbalance the inhumanity that exists. We can share poems, journals, drawings, and films dealing with the issues to find our deeper connections to others who share our journey. Art arises, not from perfect harmony and acceptance, but from the struggle to find meaning. Therefore, I strongly encourage the students to do this work from their hearts, not because it is a charitable act, but because it is path to understanding their position in relation

to an unjust society. The collective energy generated by expressive projects that reflect, resist, defy, or comment on the status quo move students towards constructive social action.



Massachusetts high school students display their handmade bowls during an Empty Bowls sale in a downtown Springfield mall

Young people crave real experiences, dialogue about serious issues, and performing activities that are central to life. Every step of learning about social justice – whether it is organizing a plant sale, serving at a meal site, holding a poetry reading benefit, to rallying against budget cuts at the statehouse – develops a new form of ‘social currency’ that makes informed and inspired community activists. Social currency is a way of describing a long-range accumulation of shared terminology, understanding of issues, thoughts and deeds that contribute to justice and that follow the arc of a lifetime. The direct service that students perform in tandem with gathering and evaluating the information about the issues of hunger and poverty contribute to a whole individual and to a holistic society. Through thoughtful and creative methods, YAH! affirms students’ experiences in making social change happen in ways that build authentic commitment to activism.

A generation of young people who measure their worth to their communities through service is the new social currency.

Lisa Enzer, has been the Community Service Coordinator at The Food Bank of Western Mass for four years and a professional performing artist and teacher for 25 years. She has a M.Ed. from Lesley University in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialization in Creative Arts in Learning. She can be contacted at lisae@foodbankwma.org or 413-247-9738.

Resources:

[The Underground History of American Education](#), by John Taylor Gatto. Oxford Village Press, 2000/2001.

[Structuring Drama Work](#), by Jonothan Neelands, edited by Tony Goode. Cambridge University Press, 1991.

[Top ten Myths in Education](#). “Myth 7: Public Schools Are Not Permitted to Teach Values”. by Larry Frase & William Streshly. Scarecrow Press, 2000.

[www. FairEconomy.org](http://www.FairEconomy.org) (United for A Fair Economy) spotlights the dangers of the increasing income gap, wage and wealth inequity in the U.S., and provides popular education resources on economics.

re·spon·si·bil·i·ty  (ri spon' sə bil' i t"), *n.*, *pl.* **-ties.**

1. the state or fact of being responsible.
2. an instance of being responsible: *The responsibility for this mess is yours!*
3. a particular burden of obligation upon one who is responsible: *the responsibilities of authority.*
4. a person or thing for which one is responsible: *A child is a responsibility to its parents.*
5. reliability or dependability, esp. in meeting debts or payments.



The New Frontier for Food Banks: Addressing the ROOT Causes of Hunger...

by Kim Thomas

Over the past 12 years of doing education and advocacy work for Oregon Food Bank, I still start my presentations the same way: “What does hunger look like to you?” The responses have remained fairly consistent over time: babies with distended bellies, usually from a Third World country. After a little more prompting to think about the United States, some mention homeless men digging through trash dumpsters.

Recently, however, as Oregon stagnates in recession with the highest unemployment rate in the nation as well as the highest hunger rate, I’m hearing some new responses without much prompting: single moms with young children; people working for minimum wage; children struggling in a classroom because they haven’t eaten breakfast.

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Julianne Rana-Program Coordinator World Hunger Year (WHY)

Maybe it’s just current economic circumstances making the broader message more obvious to listeners. But I suspect it’s also been twelve years of broad-based advocacy work by Oregon Food Bank and its partners that finally is taking root. When a broadcast or print reporter asks a staff or board member of the Food Bank what we need to do about hunger, the response is no longer, “donate a can of food.” The response is layered and sometimes complex: “donate food and money to food banks, but also educate yourselves about the underlying conditions that cause people to be hungry: low wages, high housing costs, cutbacks in key government safety-net programs, even—gosh forbid—inequitable tax policies.

What’s been the response to Oregon Food Bank’s broader message? Have donations dropped? Has the proverbial food bank sky fallen? This past winter, Oregon Food Bank moved into its new \$11.5 million statewide facility. During the capital campaign for a new warehouse, the organization’s three full-time policy advocates spent 99 percent of their time *not* on bringing resources into the Food Bank Network for the capital campaign, but on root issues like food stamp outreach, highlighting the negative consequences of welfare reform, and challenging the state’s Department of Human Services to remove barriers and improve customer relations with low-income clients.

At Oregon Food Bank’s official open house this past April, hundreds of Oregonians wandered through the facility, amazed by the amount of space (94,000 total square feet) in the warehouse. They were equally impressed by the fundraising effort that secured support from local, state and federal governments, private corporations and foundations, and, most important, thousands of individuals, to make this a truly community-supported facility.

What amazed me, however, was the number of people who told me that the size of the facility was both

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impressive and scary. People were concerned at what 94,000 square feet meant in terms of the size of the hunger problem in Oregon. Frankly, the advocates on staff were ambivalent when the idea of a new, much larger facility was proposed. Does this mean we're giving up, we wondered? Are we institutionalizing the emergency response when the root causes remain unchecked? Yet many visitors during the open house (who were also donors) told me one reason they liked giving to Oregon Food Bank is that they know we're not only addressing the immediate need for emergency food, but we're committing resources to address the root causes. They actually feel more comfortable investing in an organization that's trying to make permanent change.

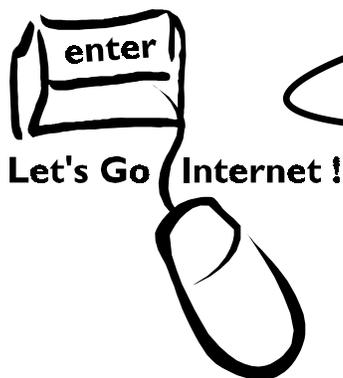
Does that mean everyone is happy with our public policy and political work? No. Some members of the general public and some donors would rather we "stick to what we do well," which, they believe, is moving donated food. But I believe they are in the minority. In fact, other regional food banks in our state are starting to hear the same thing from their donors: "as hunger increases in our state, what are you doing to address the causes?"

Hunger in and of itself is not political or controversial. In concept, almost everyone would say that no one should go hungry in America. But moving into the real solutions to hunger is political—not partisan, but political. The answers concern resources (both public and private), how those resources are distributed and shared, and who deserves help and who doesn't.

The best way to move into the more political solutions is to build a road map—something I believe Oregon Food Bank has done exceptionally well. Oregon Food Bank's strong mission statement is combined with a five-year strategic plan, a comprehensive statement of board-adopted public policy priorities, and staff work plans designed to carry out the strategic plan and policy priorities. Oregon Food Bank's mission is "to eliminate hunger and its root causes because no one should be hungry." All our work evolves from and revolves around that mission, and I believe our donors and all Oregonians are stronger for it.

Kim Thomas, is the Public Policy Manager at the Oregon Food Bank. She may be reached at kthomas@oregonfoodbank.org

Visit the KIDS Updated Web Site



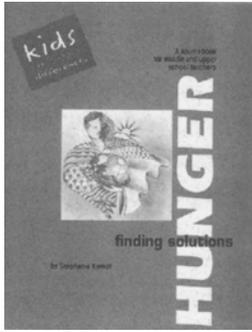
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