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NEWSLETTER

Winter 2001 VOLUME 6 NUMBER 1

KIDS and Values

by Tim Kasser, Ph.D.

I recently became aware of the KIDS program at a consultation in New York City where a group of people were discussing the many ways in which our culture undermines children's well-being. The media portrayals of sex and violence and the constant glorification of consumption and materialism were the primary topics of our conversation, as were ideas about how to swim against the polluted stream of these cultural messages. Jane Levine, co-founder of KIDS, was one of the participants, and shared with us the excellent work this program is doing regarding issues of poverty and hunger.

From what Jane said, it was clear to me that KIDS does much more than work to eliminate poverty and hunger: It also teaches kids values which are too rarely encouraged in contemporary America. This is an area of special interest to me, for during the last several years my colleagues and I have been conducting empirical research about people's values. What I find exciting about the KIDS program is that it encourages a set of values which research shows: a) provide an antidote to the self-centeredness and materialism of consumer culture; and b) are associated with enhanced personal well-being.

KIDS aims to help children know that they can make a difference, that they can help others, and that their actions are one's which can benefit the world. In my research (e.g., Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Kasser, 1994), we call these "community feeling" or "helpfulness" values; others (e.g., Cohen & Cohen, 1996; Schwartz, 1994) have called these "conventional" or "benevolence" values, agreeing that they involve a focus on

About this issue...

Before we start on what's in this issue, please turn to page 11 for a very special offer on the KIDS Teacher Guide. Also, take a moment to be introduced to the current members of the KIDS Advisory Board (page 2). Please e-mail us if you wish to see more complete bios.

Tim Kasser (page 1) discusses his research about people's values. He explains that values encouraged by the KIDS program, such as concern for others and a desire to improve the world, provide an antidote to the consumer culture and improve the quality of young people's lives.

Frank Lingo (page 6) describes how children are inducted into the consumer culture. We are pleased that Lingo, a columnist for the Kansas City Star, allowed us reprint his imaginative and thought provoking article, *Fun with Duk and Jin*. Also on page 6, are reactions from a middle school teacher and her students to the column. Then for another glimpse of the consumer culture, Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman (page 8) take us inside "the wonderful world of Coca-Cola" to look at how a corporation "subtly" subverts the Library of Congress.

Carol Easley Allen (page 5) challenges us to really look at poverty and the poor. In doing so, she tells us that we must do something about poverty and not just try to make the poor well.

It is always a happy day for us when Joan Dye Gussow graces our pages. Be prepared to have your mind stretched as she asks, *Will we destroy the environment trying to grow food for everyone?* (page 3).

Alison Harmon (page 10) writes about a resource for educators she developed that would be useful for teaching youth about where their food comes from. It dispels the belief that many students have that food comes from the grocery store.

If you have a moment (and the inclination), please drop us a line and give us your comments about this issue.

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improving the state of the world. One of the clear findings emerging from all of these research projects is that individuals who are primarily oriented towards such community feeling values place less importance on materialistic, self-centered values. That is, to the extent kids care strongly about helping others and improving the state of the world, they are less likely to “buy into” the consumer values of desiring personal wealth, possessions, and popularity, and of having the “right” image. In my mind, this is one of the really beneficial effects of programs such as KIDS: It swims against the cultural stream of values.

KIDS Advisory Board

Jennifer Chapin-Songwriter, singer, former teacher. Member of the Board of Directors of World Hunger Year (WHY).

Jane Darby, Teacher (NYC)

Marta Flanagan-Minister (Unitarian Universalist)

Joan Dye Gussow-Professor Emeritus, Teachers College, Columbia University, author.

Andrew Steven Halperin-Attorney

Stephanie Kempf-Author (Finding Solutions to Hunger:), teacher

Olivia Ifill-Lynch-Educator, Founder and principal of The School for Academic and Athletic Excellence

A second interesting fact we know about people who strongly value helping the world and improving the lives of others is that they are happier and better adjusted than individuals who care about other, more materialistic values. Across several studies of adolescents and young adults, my colleagues and I have shown that individuals oriented towards community feeling and helpfulness report greater self-actualization and vitality, less depression and anxiety, fewer behavior disorders, and less narcissistic tendencies (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Kasser, 1994). Similar results have been reported by other investigators (e.g., Cohen & Cohen, 1996). There are a variety of reasons adolescents who value helping others might be more psychologically healthy, but we believe one important reason is that it provides them with experiences which satisfy their needs to be connected to others and to feel competent and effective.

So when we think of the KIDS program, we can recognize that it does good work in at least three regards. First, it helps to solve problems of hunger and poverty, laudable goals in their own right. Second, by helping kids see the importance of helping others, it encourages a value system at odds with the consumer culture in which we live. Finally, the types of values encouraged by KIDS may actually help improve the quality of its participants’ lives, making teens happier and better adjusted. What more could one ask?

References:

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Teaching Tolerance Magazine:

KIDS Can Make a Difference will be mentioned as a resource for students and teachers studying hunger in the January 2000 issue of *Teaching Tolerance* magazine. Information about KIDS materials and Web site will be provided in sidebars accompanying a feature article about a California high school hunger project that led students from being indifferent about poverty and hunger in their community to becoming social activists.

Teaching Tolerance is a nationally acclaimed educational journal distributed free to more than 500,000 educators nationwide. Its mission is to provide ideas and strategies to help K-12 teachers promote interracial and intercultural understanding in the classroom. For more information about the magazine, as well as excellent video-and-text kits and other materials, which are also free of charge, visit www.teachingtolerance.org or fax a request to (334) 264-3121.

Will We Destroy the Environment Trying to Grow Food for Everyone?

by Joan Dye Gussow, Ed.D.

Once we have decided that hunger must be ended, we need to ask ourselves whether our planet can handle the demand. Can this finite globe we live on feed us all while maintaining the environmental services it now provides: a productive ocean, clean air and water, a stable climate, nutrient recycling, soil generation, pollination of crops, and so on? Can we produce enough to feed a growing population without irreversible damage to the land, the water, the air? This is the question I asked myself many years ago, when I first became concerned about population growth, food and sustainability.

In the long run, the answer is obvious—and gloomy. The planet we live on is finite and much of it is ocean or desert. Some of the rest is rock or ice. A relatively small portion of its surface can support regular yearly food production. Yet each minute there are almost 150 more humans on the planet who need to eat every day. It would take only four generations of a family where every descendant had 10 children to produce a town of 10,000. Such a rate of human increase would quickly exceed the capacity for food production on a finite earth. Luckily that is not how the world's population is presently growing.

When I first studied this question, rates of population growth were so rapid that official forecasts predicted 15 billion people by the year 2000. As we entered the 21st century, however, the actual population was not 15 billion but just over 6 billion. No one knows exactly why, but the rate of population growth is rapidly slowing. The total population is still growing, however, and is forecast to top out at around 10 billion. We need to feed the people who are now alive, and their children's children. Can we do that without serious damage to the environment?

There are surely lots of reasons to worry about the health of the planet: topsoil is eroding, forests are being cut down, stocks of ocean fish are declining, soil and water are being contaminated with farm chemicals, groundwater is being pumped faster than it can replenish itself, the climate itself is changing. Some people blame this damage on growing populations of poor people: as they search for new places to grow food, so we are told, peasants are burning forests and moving up hillsides where the soil erodes when it is plowed, ground water is being overpumped—the list of problems seems endless. It looks as if too many hungry people are putting intolerable stresses on the natural environment. Won't these stresses inevitably become more serious as we try to produce more and more food? The answer is yes, and no.

It is evident that if the human population keeps growing by over 200,000 a day, people will eventually outrun the earth's food producing capacity. At present, however, there is more than enough food in the world to make everyone fat. And while much of it is now produced in a manner that stresses the environment, it does not need to be.

More than 25 years ago, when concerns were being raised about our ability to feed a growing population, a remarkable environmentalist named Barbara Ward wrote eloquently about the war between fear and hope that

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KIDS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE[®] NEWSLETTER **A PROGRAM OF WORLD HUNGER YEAR (WHY)**

Published by:

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troubled those who wanted to help. She spoke optimistically, as I have, about high but falling birth rates, and celebrated the rising productivity of certain crops. Then she considered soberly the apparent impossibility of increasing food production fast enough without harm to the environment. Her conclusion, it could be done: with labor-intensive farming practices, research that aids small farmers, the use of solar energy on the farm, the recycling of organic materials to reduce the need for outside fertilizer, weeding and insect control that make use of people rather than chemicals. All of these techniques—what we would now call organic or sustainable agriculture—modified and applied in a way that took account of traditional farmer wisdom in every part of the world—could feed us and our children's children as well.

It could be done, Ward argued. But would we do it? “The profound moral issue,” she wrote, “is that all the situations that do exist demand from us an end to many of our favorite bad habits. . . . The kind of research and technology needed for ecologically sane, labour-intensive farms and for decentralized towns and markets is small, patient, interconnected, respectful of fragilities, temperate in energy use. It is not the big bang-bang stuff. It does not 'break through,' it connects.”

Twenty-five years later, we're still too fond of the big bang stuff, but if we wish to feed the world and save the planet at the same time, Ward tells us, we must give up our drive toward “bigger” and work toward “better”; we must help support small-scale farming that gives poor people the tools to feed themselves and increase their productivity, thereby improving life in the countryside and reducing rather than increasing the growing gap between rich and poor.

Such an understanding tells us how we can help the planet while we help others feed themselves. Students can begin tracking down where and how their own food is grown and then work to make their own diets more sustainable. Currently we are one of the world's largest food importers, eating foods shipped from around the planet. If we begin instead to eat fresh foods produced as close to home as possible, we can help support our local farmers, reduce the use of fossil fuel and other resources for processing, packaging and transport and thereby reduce our demand on the planet. Eating a fresh local apple is more earth-friendly than drinking apple juice shipped from China!

A good way to find local farmers, and to learn when local fruits and vegetables are in season is to shop at farmers' markets. Your state's organic farming association might help you find a farmer who could come to the classroom and explain how organic agriculture uses the earth in a sustainable way. All of us can help save the planet by choosing our foods more thoughtfully.

Joan Dye Gussow is the Mary Swartz Rose Professor Emerita of Nutrition and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University (NYC) where she formerly headed the Nutrition Education Department. She is author, co-author or editor of a number of articles and several books. Her latest book, This Organic Life: Confessions of a Suburban Homesteader, will be published by Chelsea Green Publishing Company and will be released May 1, 2001. She is a member of the KIDS Advisory Board. Joan Dye Gussow may be contacted at jeg30@columbia.edu.



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Attitudes On Poverty Can Affect Individual Health

by Carol Easley Allen, Ph.D., R.N.

In spite of the booming U.S. economy, poverty remains a pressing problem. Poverty is implicated in disproportionate morbidity and mortality rates, lack of access to health care and many other social ills.

While most health professionals are aware of this situation, we often fail to recognize that our attitudes toward poverty and the poor reflect prevailing social views. For example, many people ascribe to the poor both the power to lift themselves out of poverty and the perversity not to do so. Thus, the poor are often blamed for their situation. Such attitudes have a powerful utility that is practical as well as intellectual, informing positions on public policy and, more importantly, how poor people are treated.

The typical picture of a poor person is that of an inner city minority resident, often one that is threatening. Yet a more accurate portrait is that of a white child, under the age of 6, living with a single mother and one sibling, probably in a rural community in the South. At risk of a variety of health problems, this child and her family are very likely to run out of money by the end of each month in spite of income supports. All state and federal programs combined will not lift this family above the poverty line.

Minority elderly are also at risk because of poverty. Thirty-three percent of elderly African Americans live in poverty, the highest rate for all groups, while only 10 percent of the white elderly do. The rate of poverty for Hispanics is only slightly lower than that for African Americans, approximately 30 percent. Poverty status is associated with increased risk and severity of disease among the elderly.

Other groups at health risk due to poverty include American Indians and Alaska Natives, the disabled immigrants and the children of migrant farm workers to name a few. A global perspective adds millions to this number, with those most vulnerable—e.g., women, children and the elderly—most at risk.

I find it difficult to contemplate a solution. Since spending some time with Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, I have been sobered by reflecting on my privileged situation. By an accident of birth I am well-fed, well-educated, well-housed and well-insured. I believe there are sufficient global resources to provide better living for many, but this might mean that I will have less. I believe that the only reasonable way to address health disparities among the poor is to do something about poverty, rather than simply attempting to make the poor well. Again, this might mean that I would have less.

How comfortable am I with the notion of less? How much am I willing to do about poverty? What are you prepared to do?

Reprinted with permission from The Nation's Health (newspaper of the APHA), August 2000, Vol. XXX, No. 7, page 3. Carol Easley Allen, Ph.D., R.N. is the president of APHA. She may be contacted at carol.allen@apha.org.

U.S. Mayors Report on Hunger & Homelessness in America's Cities (December 14, 2000)...

According to the findings, officials in the survey cities estimate that past year requests for emergency food increased by an average of 17 percent, with 83 percent of the cities registering an increase. Requests for food assistance by families with children increased by an average of 16 percent. Requests for emergency food assistance by elderly persons increased by an average 9 percent during the last year, with 75 percent of the cities reporting an increase.

Sixty-two percent of the people requesting emergency food assistance were members of families—children and their parents. *Thirty-two percent of the adults requesting food assistance were employed.*

The Mayor's report of 25 cities is available in its entirety at www.usmayors.org.

Fun with Duk and Jin

See Dick buy.
See Dick jump.
See Dick jump like Mike when he wears Nikes.
See Jane run.
See Jane run like Ms. Jones when she wears Nikes.
See Dick and Jane dream.

See Duk work.
See Duk stack shoes on ships for squat.
See Jin sew.
See Jin sew for a dollar a day.
See Duk and Jin's nightmare.

See Tiger make millions.
See Nike make billions
See moms spend a hundred on two-buck shoes.
See kids stuck on status.
See kids forgetting fun.

See kids watch TV in school.
See junk-food ads on school TV.
See exclusive deals for pop in schools.
See kids get fat and dumb.
See companies get rich.

See kids watch TV at home.
See kids love talking frogs.
See kids think beer is fun.
See parents not notice.
See Bud cultivate customers.

See the people of Philip Morris.
See them finally retire Joe Camel.
See a generation think Joe was cool.
See 3,000 American kids start smoking today.
See what you can do about it.

See Philip Morris around the world.
See African billboards of smoking white Americans.
See Marlboro sponsor concerts.
See Marlboro pass out free cigarettes.
See, the first one's free, kid.

See an average t-shirt.
See Tommy print "Tommy" on it.
See it triple in price.
See Tommy laugh all the way to the bank.
See focus on fashion defy reason.

See violence in movies and video games.
See ads for them on shows kids watch.
See Congress and candidates harrumph.
See them take money from movie-makers.
See Congress and candidates cave.

See our children's unformed minds.
See our children's trusting hearts.
See their minds get manipulated.
See their hearts taught to fear.
See us lose our children.

Frank Lingo's column appears on alternate Tuesdays in the Kansas City Star. Reprinted with author's permission. He may be reached at franklingo@earthlink.net.

Reactions to Frank Lingo's article from a teacher and her students:

Dear Frank,

Your editorial appeared in the Kansas City Star last week and was assigned to middle school students as a take-home assignment. Each student discussed it with their parents and wrote a reaction in class the next day. While it is true that their beliefs do not always match their actions, they are more aware of the struggling lives of the young workers in other countries after our discussion.—Mary Van Dyke, gifted program teacher, Atchison Middle School (Atchison, KS)

The Real American Society

I liked your article entitled "Fun with Duk and Jin." It really shows what today's society is about. Duk and Jin don't really have much fun though. They work all day for almost nothing then go home to nothing. Then the next morning they get up early for nothing. but your article says so much more. You talk about the Budweiser frogs, Joe Camel,

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and Tommy. My favorite line was “See Tiger make millions. See Nike make billions” I also liked the section commenting on Tommy. People pay three times as much for something because it has his name on it. I think it's ridiculous. Maybe people who read your article will realize how stupid they are being. You have a wonderful way of expressing your opinion and I hope that you continue to do that in wonderful ways.—*Justin*

Modern Stupidity

I think your article shows many of the flaws in modern society. Kids in sweatshops, cigarette companies advertising towards children, and many other things that people do to take advantage of kids. Your article shows problems with the children too. It shows that some kids are not active and literally getting fat and dumb. It shows that they pay much more money for a shirt with a word on it than one that doesn't.—*Hank*

Happenings in the World

I think that you did a very good job when writing this article. It really said what is going on in the world today. My favorite lines were the lines about Tommy. It told the truth. I myself buy some Tommy clothes and I don't really know why I like them so much because all the guy did was write his name on a bunch of clothes. My mom also buys me some Nike tennis shoes. I am guilty of some of the things that this article stated, but one thing that I know I will never be guilty of is smoking. I know like your article said that many kids will start smoking every day and I think that is sad because cigarettes can kill people, Tommy clothes won't. Our school has pop and candy machines in it also just like your article stated. After school though is when it is the most packed. Many teachers don't care if kids eat candy in class so there are tons of candy being passed around and that is kind of what your article talked about. I think that if everyone wasn't as worried about fashion then the kids might get a better education and some might not even smoke because it wouldn't matter if they did it to look cool. Well I thought that your article was very good and it kind of made me open my eyes a little. —*Sarah*

The Real Story

Your article was very true about Nike and Tommy products. I think just because a t-shirt has Tommy written on it doesn't mean it has to cost so much more, and that Nike shoes don't make you jump higher or run faster. I realize that some people go to work everyday and work really hard and get paid little money. People need to start noticing that all they are trying to do is get your money. —*Taylor*

Going With The Flow

I am very impressed with your article. Overall, I think that the article was very true. There are Nike shoes that sell for \$100 that are actually \$2 shoes and that regular t-shirts with “Tommy” printed on them and then sell for \$50 makes me realize that a lot of things in our world today are just a scam to get money. My favorite line was when you talked about how if you don't get the right thing, you don't really fit in. That is more of my description of the line “See kids stuck on status.” That line is very true. If you don't do the right thing, like I said, you don't fit in at all. The article was very true and if anybody that read this was smart, they wouldn't buy any more Nike, Tommy, cigarettes or drug products. —*Claire*

Frank Lingo' response to class:

Dear Mary and Kids:

Thanks very much for your thoughtful comments. You guys really got the message! Most grown-ups aren't as smart as kids—as you know. Keep up the independent thinking!

See kids think.

See kids care.

See hope rise.

See action follow.

See columnist smile.

The Real Thing: Democracy as a Contact Sport

by Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman

A couple weeks ago, we received an invitation to attend an event at the Library of Congress. Coca-Cola was about to make an “historic contribution” to the Library of Congress, and the Library, and Coca-Cola, were inviting reporters to cover the event. We accepted the invitation.

We learned from the morning papers that the “historic contribution” was a complete set of 20,000 television commercials pushing Coca-Cola into the American digestive system.

Remember the one where the kid hands Pittsburgh Steeler Mean Joe Greene his bottle of Coke, and in return, Mean Joe tosses the kid his football jersey? Or what about on a hilltop in Italy where the folks start singing “I’d like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company”?

The event was at the Great Hall of the Thomas Jefferson Building – named after the Thomas Jefferson who, in 1816, wrote: “I hope we shall crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength, and bid defiance to the laws our country.”

Anyway, we pull up at the appointed hour (7:15 p.m. on November 29, 2000) at the Thomas Jefferson building, and there’s a traffic jam created by stretch limousines blocking the entrance.

In addition to lowly reporters, the 400 or so guests included ambassadors, members of Congress, corporate chieftains and other dignitaries. Good thing we dressed up.

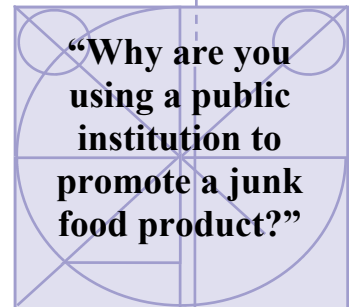
The Main Hall is this absolutely stunning room, with marble staircases. A string quartet is playing. Waiters are serving Coke in classic bottles. The food is fabulous—lamb chops, trout, Peking duck. We rub shoulders with the Ambassador from Burma.

The “aristocracy of our monied corporations,” as Jefferson put it, had taken over the place, and Coca-Cola wanted to make sure that everybody knew it.

After all, Coke could have just donated the ads to the Library and left it at that. But this wasn’t about Coke’s largesse. It was about public relations—whether the public would view the company as a racist company (Coke had just agreed to pay \$192.5 million to settle allegations that it routinely discriminated against black employees in pay, promotions and performance evaluations) or a junk food pusher (consuming large quantities of sugared Coca-Cola has led to ours being one of the most overweight generations in history)—or instead, a generous contributor to the Library of Congress.

James Billington, the Librarian of Congress, was called on to deliver good things to Coke, and he did. He turned over the keys of the Main Hall to Coke, and Coke decked the place out with its logo, stitched in red beside the logo of the Library of Congress. Television sets were placed throughout the hall, the better for the Ambassadors and members of the Democratic Leadership Council to check out the commercials.

Billington was selling the soul of the library to one of the world’s most powerful corporations. In addition to the ads, Coke was establishing a fellowship at the Library for the study of “culture and communication”—one fellow will receive \$20,000 a year for the next five years.



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Gary Ruskin, director of Commercial Alert, was outside the event, protesting. “It is not the proper role of the taxpayer-financed Library of Congress to help promote junk food like Coca-Cola to a nation that is suffering skyrocketing levels of obesity,” Ruskin said. “It is crass commercialism for James Billington to degrade Jefferson's library and founding ideals into a huckster's backdrop.”

But without shame, Billington introduced Doug Daft, the president of Coca-Cola, who said that “Coca-Cola has become an integral part of people's lives by helping to tell these stories.” Nothing about profits. Nothing about overweight kids. Nothing about racism.



After Daft spoke, the room went dark, and the ads ran on the television screens. Nostalgia swept the room. When the ads were finished, the lights went back on and the crowd cheered.

About 80 high school students, dressed in Coca-Cola red sweaters, filled the marble staircases and sang—want to buy the world a Coke.” Again, the crowd cheered. Doug Daft, standing downstairs, came back to the microphone to continue his statement. We were upstairs at this point, and we looked down at him and asked, in a loud voice—“Why are you using a public library to promote a junk food product?”

The room went quiet. Library of Congress police charged up the marble staircase. Doug Daft put his hand to his ear and shouted back to us: “What did you say?”

In a louder voice, we shouted back: “Why are you using a public institution to promote a junk food product?”

The next thing we know, we are on the ground. The Library of Congress police had tackled us. Again, the crowd cheered—not for our question, but for the tackle.

We were dragged downstairs, past the Ambassador from Burma, and hauled outside, where police officers from the District of Columbia were waiting for us.

Out of the Thomas Jefferson building came running a man from Coke. “This is a private event,” the man from Coke told the police. “I'm from Coca-Cola.”

At first, the police wanted nothing to do with the man from Coke. But the man from Coke insisted. They huddled.

Apparently, the man from Coke didn't want us arrested for asking an obvious question. Apparently, the man from Coke didn't want a public trial. The man from Coke was standing up for our First Amendment rights to ask his boss a question.

The police said we were to leave the grounds. And we weren't to come back.

Ever.

Russell Mokhiber is editor of the Washington, D.C.-based Corporate Crime Reporter. Robert Weissman is editor of the Washington, D.C.-based Multinational Monitor. They are co-authors of Corporate Predators: The Hunt for MegaProfits and the Attack on Democracy (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1999). Focus on the Corporation is distributed to individuals on the listserve corp-focus@lists.essential.org. To subscribe to corp-focus, send an e-mail message to corp-focus-request@lists.essential.org with the text: subscribe They may be reached at russell@essential.org or rob@essential.org.

Building Youth Awareness about the Food System: Putting Research to Work for Educators

by Alison Harmon

One of my goals as a graduate student in nutrition was to create a resource for educators that would be useful for teaching and reminding youth about where their food comes from in experiential ways. I began my research for developing such a resource by gathering information from several exceptional teenagers. In one-on-one interviews, they described in detail the food experiences they were having at home, in school, and in their communities. These experiences have not only taught them about where food comes from, but allowed them to develop an awareness about food and the system that provides it that would impress the most well-informed food system professionals. The information they provided was complemented by a survey of food and nutrition educators and a review of existing literature, to develop a comprehensive food system questionnaire for high school students. The questionnaire was a survey of knowledge and attitudes about the food system as well as a survey of youth experiences which I suspected could be associated with awareness.

According to my research, the strongest experiences for building awareness about the food system happen at home. Youth who are involved in growing food for the family, food shopping, food preservation and food preparation are more knowledgeable than their peers about all aspects of the food system, and have attitudes that are more supportive of sustaining the local food system. Experiences outside the home that appear to have a positive influence include gardening in any setting, and activities typical of involvement in community-based groups such as scouting, 4-H, and youth groups.

School experiences appear to be less influential, although this could represent untapped potential. Improving school-based education about food will require educators to recognize that food is very much a part of environmental science, social studies, agriculture, health, and nutrition. Not surprisingly, television viewing appears to have a negative effect on knowledge about all aspects of the food system. Educators need to create alternatives to television, but also explore ways to effectively use the media to convey positive food messages.

Knowing that experiences youth have at home with their families are some of the best for building awareness makes me even more distraught that families are preparing fewer foods at home, and eating together less frequently. As much as I would like to see this trend reverse, part of the purpose of developing a resource for educators was to illuminate the experiences I found to be most beneficial and provide suggestions for incorporating them into other settings including school and community-based youth groups. Survey results indicate that food system lessons and curricula need to emphasize all the interconnections among food, agriculture, natural resources, food processing, food marketing, and the choices we make as consumers. In addition, young people need to be encouraged to consider and evaluate alternatives, to make choices, and to understand the implications of their decisions. But most importantly, activities that directly involve youth in the food system will be the most effective.

The Food System: Building Youth Awareness through Involvement is a guidebook for educators, parents and community leaders. It serves as an introduction to the concept of the food system by providing background on each food system sector (production, processing, distribution, retail and food access, consumption, inputs, and outputs). The Guidebook provides recommendations for developing curricula, specific activity ideas, thought-provoking questions, and resources for gathering additional information. Activities are provided for use in the classroom, in non-formal club or youth group settings, and for families at home

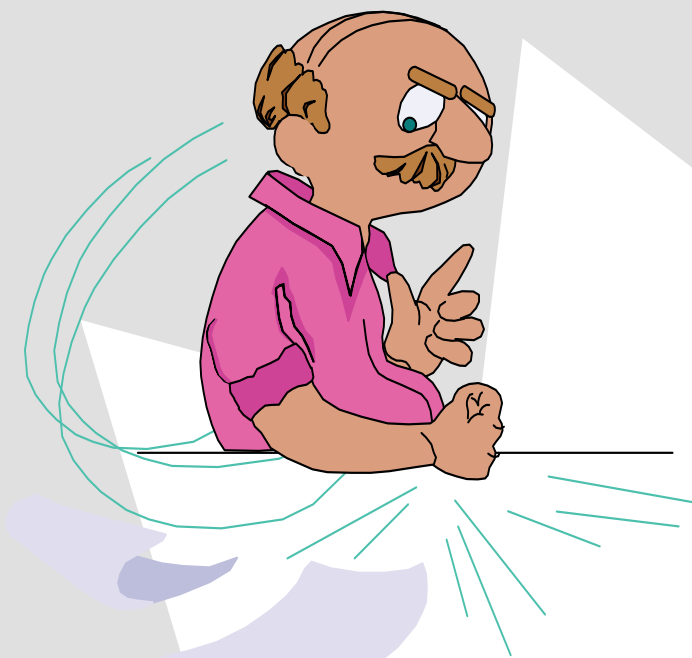
Although each chapter of this guidebook focuses on a different part of the food system, there are several themes that run throughout the guide. Historical aspects of the food system are emphasized, as well as how the food system is shaped by economics, politics, society and culture, technological change, and environmental constraints. Sustainability is a major focus. Activities and suggestions emphasize interactive hands-on learning, and building critical thinking skills for making informed food decisions. Participants often must sort through complex issues and make trade-offs. In addition, participants are provided opportunities for examining and expressing their individual

(Continued on page 11)

values. Lastly, suggestions for becoming aware and getting involved highlight the importance of developing a sense of place and citizenship, and recognizing that the local community provides a classroom full of underutilized resources for learning.

*Alison Harmon is a Senior Extension Associate in the Food Science Department at Penn State University. If you have questions or comments about the Guidebook *The Food System: Building Youth Awareness through Involvement*, please contact the author, Alison Harmon at 203A Borland Laboratory, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802, Phone: (814) 863-7782, or E-mail: ALH139@psu.edu. Copies of the guidebook are available for the cost of printing from Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, Publications Distribution Center, 112 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802. Call Toll-Free (877) 345-0691.*

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