



1st Annual Event October 6, 2016 Program Synopsis

50 Million Americans are "Food Insecure"

The USDA defines food insecurity as a state in which "consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year."



Special Thanks to our MAVF Council of Advisors and Grant Review Committee Members:

Saurav Adhikari, Ramu Arunachalam, Chris Bruhl, Charles Hill, Byron Loflin, Kim Morgan, Dr. Anil Nigam, and Dr. Supriya Srinivasan.

About Us

WHO WE ARE

The Meera & Ashok Vasudevan Foundation (MAVF) is a fully funded initiative by Meera & Ashok Vasudevan, co-founders of Preferred Brands International, a Connecticut based food company that manufactures and markets TastyBite® and other natural & organic foods whose products are sold in several countries including the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, UK, Japan, and India.



OUR MISSION

MAVF is dedicated to the idea that it is possible to permanently move people out of hunger and malnourishment in a manner that is sustainable, self-reliant, and healthy.

OUR APPROACH

We will provide grants, collaborate with and support an ecosystem of grassroots organizations, non-profits, research institutions, think tanks, independent scholars, artists, and social entrepreneurs who are aligned with our mission.

Our Focus Areas



GREEN THE PANTRY

Ensure availability of fresh produce in all food pantries across America. This will have an immediate and lasting effect on the health of all visitors.



HUNGER COLLABORATIVE

Create a collaborative to represent the entire food ecosystem that will allow us to pool resources and address the issue of hunger and malnourishment.



RESEARCH GRANTS

Provide grants to researchers to gain insights and enable synthesis of data and analysis on the issues of hunger and malnutrition.

Program Agenda

Cocktail Hour/Meet & Greet

Welcome Address

Ashok Vasudevan, Co-Founder - MAV Foundation

Keynote Address

Max Finberg, Director - AmeriCorps VISTA

Speaker: Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro

Panel Discussion

Meera Vasudevan (Moderator), Co-Founder, MAV Foundation

Panelists

Joel Berg, CEO - Hunger Free America

Lucy Nolan, Executive Director - End Hunger Connecticut!

Åsa Skogström-Feldt, President & CEO - The Hunger Project

Panel Q&A

Attendees

Supriya Banavalikar	The Hunger Project
Joel Berg	Hunger Free America
Ellen Bromley	City of Stamford Social Services
Chris Bruhl	Business Council of Fairfield County
Beverly Catchpole	Connecticut Food Bank
Sam Connor	Wholesome Wave
Jim Corgel	Corgel Group
Nancy Coughlin	Neighbor to Neighbor
Rep. Rosa DeLauro	3 rd District of CT
Sam Fankuchen	Golden
Matt Farley	Connecticut Campus Connect
Max Finberg	AmeriCorps VISTA
Roger Gordon	Food Cowboy
Rep. Jim Himes	4 th District of CT
Marc Jaffe	Childcare Learning Centers
Mona Jauhar	NutriAssets LLC
Katrina Kazda	x-Sustainable America
Earl Kim	Stamford Public Schools
Jeremy Kranowitz	Sustainable America
Kate Lombardo	Food Bank of Lower Fairfield County
Tom Long	The Workplace
Ceci Maher	Person 2 Person
Mayor David Martin	Mayor of the City of Stamford
Michelle Lapine McCabe	Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport
Tim McGuinness	Food Bank of Lower Fairfield County
Lee Miller	Food Law and Policy Clinic
Kim Morgan	United Way of Western Connecticut
Kevin Mullins	Community Plates
Lucy Nolan	End Hunger Connecticut!
Paul O'Leary	Connecticut Food Bank
Gary Oppenheimer	AmpleHarvest.org
David Rich	Supportive Housing WORKS
Raquel Rivera-Pablo	A Pinch of Salt
Cristina Sandolo	Green Village Initiative
State Rep. Caroline Simmons	144th District in Stamford, CT
Åsa Skogström-Feldt	The Hunger Project
Christi Staples	Partnership for Strong Communities
Hans Taparia	Preferred Brands International
Nancy von Euler	Fairfield County Community Foundation
Karen Wies	LifeBridge Community Services
Sharon Wood	Cat In Woods, LLC

Welcome Address



Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

Meera, my buddy, co-adventurer, wife, business partner and now foundation co-founder (in that chronological order!) joins me in welcoming each of you to this event. We are truly grateful for your presence here this evening.

You mean a lot to us. More importantly, your work means a whole lot to the 50 million Americans who are food insecure today and to whom we dedicate this evening.

When we conceived this event a couple of months ago, we knew we would be meeting with some very inspiring people, who have made it their life's work fighting hunger, reducing food waste, increasing food recovery & access and designing policies and initiatives that would forever change the lives of millions.

I'd also like to acknowledge the presence of our keynote speaker Max Finberg, Director of AmeriCorps Vista. You'll hear more about him and from him soon. Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro is here and we will hear from her as well. Congressman Jim Himes was here as is Caroline Simmons our State Representative in Hartford. And, of course, we have our friend and Mayor of Stamford the Hon' David Martin. We are grateful for the presence of these elected officials and I take that as a resounding endorsement of the work you all do. That's what attracts them here.

We've met almost all of you in this room in our recent journey since establishing the MAV Foundation and are overwhelmed by how much you know about the subject of hunger. It's more than we can ever hope to learn.

So it takes some courage to stand in front of you. But I do so because we, too, feel passionately about ending hunger and malnourishment.

I am a child of a famine averted. I was born in Bangalore in post-colonial India and I was a little boy when we were threatened by devastating droughts in 1966 & '67 on a scale that brought back the nightmares of the Bengal famine of 1943, which claimed 3 million lives. The world didn't take notice of this completely avoidable tragedy since it got lost in the background noise of the World War II. Churchill not only disallowed the ship carrying food to go to Calcutta, but when informed about the famine infamously asked, "Why hasn't Gandhi died yet?" Recently, scholars are questioning whether he actually said that but I no longer know which is revisionist history.

The mid-60s famine I refer to was alarming enough for Biologist Paul Ehrlich author of *Population Bomb* to write, "The battle to feed all of humanity is over." He further said, "Hundreds of millions of people will starve to death. I have yet to meet anyone familiar with the situation who thinks India will be self-sufficient in food by 1971. India couldn't possibly feed two hundred million more people by 1980."

Well, Ehrlich was probably an alarmist. But, first and foremost he was a scholar who did manage to raise awareness of a real tragedy unfolding.

Fortunately, this time around, India turned to the US and the result was a happy ending to a centuries old cycle of famine.

The formula was 2-fold. The quick fix was the US Food-for-Peace program better known as PL-480. This prevented immediate tragedy as 2 million tons of wheat was made available at subsidized rates (4 1/2 pennies/lb.) to India. The long-term solution was the launch of the Green Revolution that transformed India from a basket case to a breadbasket to the world.

The story of Norman Borlaug is the stuff of legends. Few people have been credited by saving more lives in the history of the world than him. He was working on a strain of dwarf wheat in Mexico widely resistant to pests and diseases that yielded 100-200% more than conventional crops.

C. Subramaniam, the Union Minister of Food & Agriculture in India and his team including a young scientist Dr. Swaminathan saw a permanent solution to India's food problem in Borlaug's work and moved with uncharacteristic and desperate urgency. 16,000 tons of this miracle wheat was flown to India on Boeing 707's chartered and paid for by the Rockefeller Foundation.

A more inspiring and effective example of collaboration between Foundations, Governments, and Scientists is hard to find. For those interested in numbers, wheat production in India was just 11 million tons before the Green Revolution. It was 90 million tons last year. Today, India is the largest producer of wheat in the world after China. For his work in India and Pakistan in the 60s, Norman Borlaug received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970.

A lifelong friend of Borlaug, Dr. Swaminathan won the World Food Prize and is often referred to as the father of Indian Agriculture. My undergrad was in Agriculture and Dr. Swaminathan was our commencement speaker. We've been fed on Borlaug and Swaminathan stories since I was 18. They are true heroes.

Emboldened by the early success of the Green Revolution, the 70's saw the launch of the White Revolution, also known as Operation Flood. India was desperately short of milk with only 20 million tons in 1970. Today, India is the largest milk producer in the world with nearly 140 million tons. Dr. Kurien, one of the earliest and arguably the most famous and largest social entrepreneur in the world led this effort and was also awarded the World Food Prize in 1989.

And onward to wellness. In the 90's concerned by the increasing obesity, diabetes, and carb-heavy nature of the Indian diet and the continued poverty of the Indian farmer as he planted low value cereals and millets, India launched the Rainbow Revolution. The idea was to increase the production, processing, exports and consumption of fruits and vegetables. The statistics are staggering. From under 6 million tons in the 60's, India today is the world's 2nd largest producer of fruits & vegetables at over 200 million tons. This revolution had many champions. One of them, Dr. Barwale, a farmer turned scientist turned entrepreneur who also won the World Food Prize in 1999.

3 revolutions, (Green, White and Rainbow) 3 World food prizes, 1 Nobel Prize and a billion winners. Now India is realistically ready to tackle the problem of hunger and malnourishment.

The truth is, today the US, India, and China produce enough to feed the world. In fact, total world food production is 1 ½ times total consumption. The problem clearly is not availability. It is the lack of universal access and affordability.

Now, let's look closer home. About the time, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited President Johnson in the White House in search of food aid; there was public outrage and shame in the US over a CBS documentary, "Hunger in America." The film was graphic, tragic, and unflinching as it made the country aware that there were 10 million Americans desperately hungry. It galvanized Congress to act and the Food Stamp program was born. We almost had it licked.

But we slipped. Instead of coming down these numbers are now up 500% with 10 million becoming 50 million Americans. Only, this time around the documentary, "A Seat at the Table" amazingly enough has not produced a McGovern Dole like partnership to study hunger.

I'm truly glad we have Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro here with us this evening. All she has to do is to find a Republican partner on the Hill. As we all know, that can't be too hard!

I'm going to spend the next couple of minutes just framing the scope and the scale of this problem. Many of you are familiar with these numbers but let me state them anyway for the benefit of those who are not. My purpose in doing so is not to make you cringe, feel outraged, or indignant but perhaps energized to participate.

In the US today, "Hunger" or "Food Insecurity" (the Government officially coined the phrase in 2006) is a national, urban, suburban, and rural problem that cuts across the geo-demographics of the country. A few snippets:

- 16 million children or 1 in 5 live in hungry households.
- Hunger rips across the race barrier. More than half the hungry in the US are white.
- Food insecurity exists in every one of the 3143 Counties of the United States. Let me give you another perspective. On last count there are 43,000 zip codes in the US. From just a few hundred food programs in the '80s, there are more than 60,000 food pantries today. That's more than 1 pantry per zip code.

- But the tragedy is the food in pantries on an average is calorie heavy and nutrient light. They are called empty calories. Basically they come from added sugars, processed carbs, and solid fats. And given the subsidy structure in the US they are inexpensive compared to fruits and vegetables. Consequently, the food-insecure consume a lot of them.
 - That is 1 in 3 empty calories consumed every day. So 70% of adults who are food insecure are either overweight or obese.
- Ironically, the US spent nearly \$11 billion on corn and soy subsidies that contributed to reduced input costs driving down prices of sodas and processed foods. Subsidies on fruits & vegetables were a meager \$1.6 billion. No surprise that vegetable prices rose 25%-40% since the 80's while sodas and processed foods dropped 10-30%, exacerbating the problem of affordability and obesity.
- The US spent \$7.2 trillion on the military in just the first decade of this century. Yet a staggering 25% or 620,000 military families on active duty are on SNAP because they are food insecure.
 - That's 1 in 4 military families.

For those of us who believe money follows the laws of gravity and trickles down- here is an idle computation I did a few months ago that might give you pause.

- In 1990, corporate profit after tax in the US was about \$1 trillion. 25 years later it exceeded \$7 trillion, a growth of 555%! Of course in such a wealthy society there should be no hunger if monetary policy was Newtonian! However, hungry Americans in the same period grew from 37 million to more than 50 million!

I'm reminded of the Most Reverend Hélder Câmara the Brazilian Roman Catholic Archbishop who famously remarked, "When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist."

No discussion on hunger is complete without addressing food waste. And I acknowledge several national experts in this room.

- Last year, 133 billion pounds, or nearly a third of our food was wasted. This is valued at a staggering \$160 billion! Almost 1250 calories are wasted per person per day!
- Talking of money, an authoritative study recently estimated the cost of hunger in America also at \$160 billion. By the way, this does not include Federal programs like WIC, SNAP, etc., which is another \$90 billion plus.
- So we are talking a \$1/4 Trillion dollars as the cost of hunger in America.
- This is politically, economically, socially, and morally unacceptable.

That's what prompted Meera and I to set up the MAV Foundation.

Our Mission: MAVF is dedicated to the idea that it is possible to permanently move people out of hunger and malnourishment in a manner that is sustainable, self-reliant, and healthy.

Our Approach: We will collaborate with, and support an ecosystem of grassroots organizations, nonprofits, research institutions, think tanks, independent scholars, artists, policy makers and social entrepreneurs; committed to end hunger in a sustainable way.

Let me say this without hubris or arrogance. What America is today, the world will be tomorrow or at any rate wants to be. At least that has been true for more than a 100 years. So the last thing we want to be is hungry and malnourished.

The only good news is that this number has been steadily dropping 4 years in a row and the latest June 2016 data shows 43,376,981 SNAP participants. Let's not round these numbers off. We are talking about hungry people here. So, if we are to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 it means we have to move 8,488 Americans from malnourishment every day till 2030!!!

Ladies & Gentlemen, we can do this. Alone, we can't. Together we can.

Thank you.

Keynote Address



Thank you Meera. I'm sorry that my parents aren't here given that gracious introduction because my father would be proud and my mother would actually believe her. Fortunately, my brother is here so he can report back to them.

I am very grateful, Meera described our first dinner together that was much like tonight — one of immediate family, where you felt connected around the idea that together we could accomplish an amazing goal of ending poverty and hunger and malnutrition. (It's always a dangerous thing to come between hungry people and dinner, so I'm glad that the salads were already set on the table and at least we have something to eat.)

Introduction

I wanted to thank Meera and Ashok, that you would consider me worthy of coming and joining, let alone speaking. There are many folks, many of you who do this all the time in your work to address hunger and poverty in various sorts, whether that's here in Stamford or in Fairfield County or in Connecticut or around the world. I began my interest in overcoming hunger when I was a kid in junior high school and the famine in Ethiopia took place. *We are the World* was playing in my Sony Walkman and all of the pictures in the media were seared into my consciousness. That was when I began thinking of what needed to happen so that our brothers and sisters wouldn't starve to death. That began for me a path that has led me through a number of stages to focus on issues of hunger in our country and around the world. It has brought me into relationships with many of you in the room and many others.

And that is how I wanted to start: it is because of our relationships with Meera and with Ashok that we are here tonight. As Ashok eloquently shared - there are so many people in our county, in our state, and in our country, and in our world, who don't have enough to eat. Most of them we don't have a relationship with and that's what we hope to change with the work of the MAV Foundation.

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Michael's Story

(cont'd)

So I wanted to start with a brief story about Michael. Michael and I met about 20 years ago through my congregation's urban prayer breakfast. He had just gotten out of prison, was trying to get his life back together and part of that was being able to eat, like we all need to do. So through the feeding program operated by the church in inner city Washington, DC, we met. Fast forward to now and Michael is doing much better. He's married, he has two darling daughters who are my goddaughters, he has a job for the first time in his life and he's putting food on the table for him, for his wife, and for his two daughters.

He's not hungry thanks to three things. First, it is that job that is the first defense against hunger. So that's where I wanted to start. Second, there are government programs that make sure he and his wife and his daughters do have enough to eat, and third, there are organizations — much like those represented in this room — that fill in the gaps. So those were the three points that I wanted to touch on tonight before we get to eat.

Private Sector

One is the private sector, two is the public sector, third is the nonprofit sector. Many of you are captains of industry. Fairfield County and Stamford itself is home to nine Fortune 500 headquarters, used to be eleven I understand. It is one of the wealthiest places, not just in the state, not just in the country...in the world and so I would suggest that the jobs that you create and that you provide mean that folks have enough money to eat.

Michael has a job at Checkers, a fast-food chain. He's kept it for three years now and he started, at about \$8 an hour. Thanks to increases in the minimum wage and because he's so diligent and shows up and his manager noticed, and recognized that - he's now up to \$11.70 an hour. But he doesn't get 40 hours a week, so he struggles to make those hours work - as many hungry people do. But it's because he earns a paycheck — again, for the first time in his life — that he's able to buy the food that feeds his family. Many of you earn the money, run the companies and the businesses that provide those jobs and those paychecks to others — that's our first line of defense.

So, one of the ways that some companies that are interested in making sure that their employees never have to go hungry is by bumping up the pay scale of those at the bottom so those who might be cleaning the office, those who might be the entry-level folks just starting off in the companies,

make a little more than the average. Why? So that it is not just the minimum wage, it's the living wage so that they are able to provide enough for their families. Even if that means those at the top take a little less. Not much, but enough to make sure that those folks earn enough to eat. That's part of the role that you play and often doesn't get acknowledged but is one that I want to say thank you for. If it weren't for those paychecks you wouldn't be able to eat, but the second thing is, and Ashok touched on this, is what the public sector does.

Public Sector

Your taxpayer dollars and mine, provide about 113 billion dollars worth of Federal Nutrition Assistance programs. Joel Berg [of Hunger Free America] and Lucy Nolan [of End Hunger Connecticut] and many of you have made sure that that continues to be the case. So, the second line of defense against hunger is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP for short because we in Federal government love our acronyms. Forgive us for swimming in our alphabet soup that drowns most of the rest of you, but the Food Stamp Program is now SNAP. It's all on an electronic benefits transfer card like your credit card or my debit card, which has reduced the fraud and abuse to the lowest levels in history, but it also means that we can make sure that those 46 million folks who get those benefits can use it, and we know that it doesn't last the whole month. We know that the programs are not enough because school lunch and breakfast do not cover the weekends. We know that those are the programs that Congressman [Jim] Himes and Congresswoman [Rosa] DeLauro have fought for and supported. Senator [Chris] Murphy has done an amazing job in supporting the Summer Food Service Program that provides meals during the summer when school is out.

I was just with my daughter at Dad's Take your Child to School Day, sort of a flip on Take Your Child to Work Day. She's in a middle school that has universal free breakfast, because it is cheaper that way than doing all the paperwork. So I got to have breakfast with my daughter.

We can afford to feed her breakfast but not every family can, and that is why universal breakfast and breakfast in the classroom is important. It's those government programs that provide the safety net — as threatened as it might be — that makes sure that we don't have that starvation, that the CBS TV special showed right before I was born.

Nonprofit Sector

But it's the third piece that I want to acknowledge tonight. As Director of AmeriCorps VISTA, it was so cool that a number of you came up and said, "We're so grateful for the Volunteers In Service to America" that our federal taxpayers provide. Hunger Free America has almost 100 all around the country. We have scores throughout the state of Connecticut that provide that extra boost of capacity to the organizations, to the non-profit agencies, that need the help. So, it's with that third point that I wanted to conclude. It is that network within the non-profit world that provides the safety net if you don't have enough money from a job. USDA's WIC program ensures that my goddaughters, MyKayla and Xenia, have enough of the proper nutritious food to eat. But then, if there's still a need, then there are the pantries, then there are the shelters, then there are the non-profits like what Michael and his wife Tenesha and their daughters relied upon in order to not have to live on the streets.

Thank you. It's because you do that work, that our country is a little bit better off, in showing love and respect to our neighbors — to our brothers and sisters — so that they don't go as hungry, so that they don't go homeless. And that's why I am so excited about what Meera and Ashok — and all of us for being related to them — are now involved with, given the launch of the MAV Foundation. I am very, very excited that they have chosen that this would be their focus, that the idea of collaboration would be a big part of that, of bringing us all together, whether that's the private sector, the public sector, or the non-profit sector, to make sure that we can all come together to address the challenge of hunger.

Conclusion

I recognize that we are now to the point of being able to eat, so I want to wrap up with a story of a few years ago. As Meera said, my darling daughter Eliana is 11 now, she just started 6th grade in middle school. But a few years ago when she was in pre-school, I was directing The Alliance to End Hunger. As has been the case for many years now, Hunger Free America, End Hunger CT, and others have launched the Food Stamp Challenge or the SNAP challenge, in order to live on the average amount that a SNAP recipient gets. It used to be \$1.10 a meal, it's up a little to \$1.25 now, but imagine that. So for my wife and I it was \$2.20 a meal. So we went shopping on that, as elected officials have, as journalists have, as many non-profit advocates have, and made some tough choices.

As Ashok referenced, calories are cheap but nutrients are expensive, so trying to get that right balance was tough. We decided that we weren't going to have our daughter subjected to that because we didn't have to - thanks be to God. So one night we were eating and Eliana, who wasn't on that budget, had some strawberries for dessert. We had cut up some strawberries and put them in her bowl - she ate them all after having finished dinner. We had taught her just a few basic things of sign language, so *this* (hand gesture of fingers tapping together) means more. So *more* (hand gesture) strawberries. So we cut up some more strawberries and put them in her little plastic bowl and she had a second bowl of strawberries for dessert. She ate those and asked for more (More). So we cut up a third bowl of strawberries. What parent doesn't want to be able to provide that to their child. But what she consumed in strawberries that night was the entire day's budget for someone on SNAP.

The poet Pablo Neruda wrote an amazing poem called, The Great Tablecloth and that is how I will conclude.

Hunger feels like pincers,
like the bite of crabs;
it burns, burns, and has no fire.
Hunger is a cold fire.
Let us sit down soon to eat
with all those who haven't eaten;
let us spread great tablecloths,
put salt in the lakes of the world,
set up planetary bakeries,
tables with strawberries in snow,
and a plate like the moon itself
from which we can all eat.
For now I ask no more
than the justice of eating.

(Max Finberg is currently the Director of AmeriCorps VISTA, the Volunteers in Service to America national service program that seeks to overcome poverty. He has previously served at the White House, the Departments of Agriculture and State, the Alliance to End Hunger, the U.S. House of Representatives and the Congressional Hunger Center. He and his wife Kate are grateful that their children eat three healthy meals a day and want all kids to be able to do so.)

Address by Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro



Good evening, and thank you Ashok for that warm introduction. Congratulations to you and to Meera on the launch of the MAV Foundation! Your work as a couple at Preferred Brands International, and your establishment of this foundation is inspirational.

This is such a natural next step, given your shared passion for food and keen awareness of the plight of hunger across our communities. But not everyone sees a problem and says, "I have to do something to

help. I cannot wait for someone else to act." You two are helpers. We all owe you a debt of gratitude. You have committed yourselves to trying to end hunger before 2030. As Ashok has said: "Alone, we can't. But together, we can." All of us here tonight are with you, and together, we can make a difference.

Max Finberg—Thank you for that thoughtful keynote, and for your leadership as the Director of AmeriCorps VISTA. I want to recognize my friends Joel Berg of Hunger Free America, Lucy Nolan of End Hunger Connecticut, and Åsa Skogström-Feldt of the Hunger Project for participating in our panel this evening. Joel, Lucy, you have been such remarkable allies and friends in this fight, and I am so glad to be with you today. You are the best people to be in the trenches with. And Åsa—it is an honor to get your international perspective.

Your insights on the state, national, and international outlook for hunger and malnutrition are a critical part of this conversation—I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

I also want to recognize my colleague Congressman Jim Himes, who is here this evening, and who has fought hard against cuts to SNAP [food stamps]. And Mayor [David] Martin, it is good to be with you here in Stamford!

And to all the food rescue organizations, technology companies, hunger foundations, food banks, and NGO representatives in attendance—thank you for fighting the fight against hunger. It truly takes a village, and I am so heartened to be here with all of you.

This organization has the potential to have an enormous impact on hunger and malnutrition. The launch of the MAV Foundation is cause for celebration. MAV's mission is dedicated to the idea that "it is possible to permanently move people out of hunger and malnourishment in a manner that is sustainable, self-reliant, and healthy."

Through grants and collaboration with grassroots organizations, think tanks, research institutions, artists, and social entrepreneurs, the MAV Foundation will be a critical resource in the conversation around eradicating hunger, in Connecticut, across the United States, and around the world.

Over the years, I have had the honor of working with an inspirational leader, Dr. Deborah Frank, the founder and principal investigator of Children's Healthwatch. She has dedicated her entire career to helping low-income children struggling with hunger. Let me tell you something she told me about why your work today is so critical.

Imagine for a moment we had a miracle vaccine that made everyone who took it healthier. When given to children, it encouraged their growth and brain development, helped them to learn better in school, made them less likely to be hospitalized, anemic, or obese.

If such a vaccine existed, wouldn't we try to vaccinate every child in America, to ensure their healthy growth and development, and to give them each the best chance to succeed in life? We *do* have that vaccine – It is called food!

Everyone who takes it gets healthier. We need to think of it that way. We need to vaccinate every child—every person—against hunger, to give each of them the best possible start in life.

Study after study has shown—and I know from watching my own grandchildren—that the first few years of life are essential to long-term outcomes for kids. But for children to thrive, we have to support their development, their health, and their overall well-being with public policies that make a difference for their families.

Good nutrition in the first few years of a child's life sets a solid foundation for the rest of their lives. It builds their brains, aids the development of a strong immune system, and sets a trend for health growth.

But when children do not receive nutritious food, we see instances of developmental delays and poor academic performance, especially among elementary-age children in math and reading.

This is not an isolated problem: the majority of young children in America are not consuming a nutritious diet—which contributes to both nutrient deficiency and obesity. We see a vicious cycle in this country of people consuming empty calories because they are cheaply available—leading to an epidemic of obesity and health issues. Yet we also see widespread hunger. These are intimately linked—and the MAV Foundation understands that. It will address these twin issues head on.

The nutrition of America's infants and children ought to be our first priority. Nearly one in five children under age six live in food insecure households. We know these first few years are the most critical, and we know that parents want to give their children the best possible start in life. That is why I have introduced the Young Child Tax Credit, which would give families an economic boost during a child's critical development years.

And, of course, it is not just children. Hunger affects millions of seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, low-wage workers and others.

French philosopher Brillat-Savarin wrote, "The destiny of nations depends on how they nourish themselves." Food insecurity does not just affect the poorest in our community—it affects the lives of working families, children, workers, the unemployed, seniors, and veterans. There is not just one face of hunger—when we give this program the support it deserves, we lift up the entire community.

Given the current climate in Washington—and the Majority's attempts to hobble our efforts to end hunger—the work that the MAV Foundation supports is more critical than ever.

Earlier this year, the Majority on the Education and Workforce Committee introduced the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Bill that rolls back years of progress on fighting childhood hunger.

The bill contains a three state pilot program to block grant the school lunch program. This is a boldfaced attempt to cut funding—and it will hurt hungry children. It makes it harder for high-poverty schools to offer breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students. And it will affect kid's ability to get meals during the summer months as well.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that if this bill becomes law, over 7,000 schools would lose the ability to offer free breakfast and lunch to their students. These schools serve nearly 3.4 million students.

Each and every person here knows how devastating these cuts would be. We are not talking about a budget line item—we are talking about whether or not children are too hungry to concentrate in class.

I have led an effort, alongside hunger advocates like Lucy and Joel to counter the Congressional attacks on childhood nutrition, and to prevent this flawed Child Nutrition bill from coming to the floor. I also led 111 Members of Congress to call on House leaders to strengthen nutrition programs in this bill, rather than enact these harmful changes. More than 750 groups have come out in opposition to the bill.

This is déjà vu all over again. Back in 1995, the speaker Newt Gingrich tried to block grant the entire school lunch program. Many of us demonstrated the staggering impact these cuts would have. We had thousands of paper plates sent from schools to the Hill. We held hands ringing the Capitol with schoolchildren, chanting, "Don't Cut our School Lunch!" We even had 500 protesters standing outside of a Washington ballroom where Gingrich was speaking, waving school lunch trays in the air and chanting, "No more cuts!"

And we also have to work to ensure that the 2018 Farm Bill—which authorizes the nutrition and hunger programs—does not repeat the mistakes of the flawed 2014 Farm Bill—namely, hurting low-income families struggling to put food on the table. We need to protect SNAP [food stamp] benefits for the families who rely on them.

SNAP impacts over 427,000 Connecticut residents who receive an average of \$132 per month in benefits. In Connecticut's Third Congressional District, SNAP helped over 34,000 families from 2011-2013, 48% of which had children. Additionally, over 75% of households receiving SNAP in the third district have one or more workers providing income.

And the economic impact of SNAP cannot be understated. According to research from the United States Department of Agriculture, each \$5 of SNAP benefits generates nearly twice that amount in economic activity. Here in Connecticut, we received nearly \$56 million in SNAP benefits—which pumped about \$715 million into Connecticut’s economy in 2015.

And according to the most recent Census data released last month, safety net programs—such as SNAP—cut the poverty rate nearly in half in 2015, lifting 38 million people — including 8 million children — above the poverty line. SNAP is also an extremely efficient program. More than half of all benefits go to households in the deepest poverty. And over seventy percent of all benefits go to households with children.

The Majority’s proposals for SNAP would shift the program to the states to reduce benefits—an idea Jared Bernstein, former chief economist to Vice President Biden, called “one of the most destructive ideas in poverty policy.” Cutting the amount of benefits that families receive through SNAP would drive more families to rely on food banks like the ones the MAV Foundation supports to supplement their meals. And as Lucy Nolan, Joel Berg, and Åsa Skogström-Feldt, can surely tell you, demand is already extremely high at food banks across the country.

So in both the Child Nutrition Reauthorization and the Farm Bill, we will have battles to fight for hunger programs. You can be sure I will be fighting right beside you.

The MAV Foundation will be a critical resource as we work to end hunger. Together, I believe we can make strides for the millions of families who are struggling each and every day. As President John Kennedy put it, “We have the ability, we have the means, and we have the capacity to eliminate hunger from the face of the earth. We need only the will.” Thank you, and congratulations!

(Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro has been a champion of combating the rates of hunger in this country since she first came to Congress. From fighting for increased funding for food stamps during the 2008 economic recession, to leading the charge on preventing the school lunch program from being block-granted to the states, Rosa has worked tirelessly to ensure that American families have the support they need to put affordable and healthy meals on the table. For Rosa, her work has been and will always be about helping people. That’s why, as a senior member of the committee responsible for funding the hunger and nutrition programs, Congresswoman DeLauro is a strong supporter of improving access to healthy food in schools, maintaining robust nutrition standards, and expanding access to summer meal programs.)

Panel Discussion



This was a unique panel of experts that included a global perspective (Åsa Skogström-Feldt), a national policy perspective (Joel Berg) and local state expertise (Lucy Nolan). Moderated by Meera Vasudevan, Co-Founder, MAVF.

Q: Åsa, what have you learned about communities and the impact governments can have in the fight to eradicate hunger and malnourishment? Any best case examples? Any lessons for all of us?



“Right now we are working in partnership with villages in Africa, South Asia and Latin America, in 20,000 villages and what we have learned over the years is that to create and support the sustainable end of hunger, we really need to get to the root causes. We need to put people in the center of their own development and think about all the support and the factors that we can give so that they themselves can be actors. Hunger is about education,

hunger is about healthcare, hunger and malnutrition is about having access to clean water, it's about having proper sanitation, it's about all the basic needs that we have agreed upon and should be there and should be met for everyone.” – Åsa Skogström-Feldt, President & CEO - The Hunger Project

Q: Joel, what have been some of the best examples of our government's policies to successfully eradicate hunger and malnourishment? How have you been personally involved in crafting or influencing some of these policies?

“The work we've done to increase participation in this program is tremendous in New York City, when I started SNAP participation was about 798,000 people.

Panel Discussion



We advocated it and we did benefits outreach, we raised it a million extra people, not because we want more people on the dole, but because hungry people needed this help. They were working, but not earning enough to feed their families. With that we increased federal spending in NYC by at least 1.5 Billion to 2 Billion dollars a year.

Even a dollar increase in wages, working 35 hours a week, that's 35 bucks in someone's pocket, thousands of dollars over the year without a penny of taxpayer spending. This stuff works. And people say, 'Oh Joel, public policy is too hard, how can we

solve hunger without influencing public policy.' And my answer is quite simple - that's like asking how you can solve drought without water. Advocacy works." - Joel Berg, CEO - Hunger Free America



"What End Hunger CT! has done and really worked hard to do is what is called After the Bell Breakfast and that's when school starts. There's something called grab and go breakfast and it is unbelievably fabulous. The kids walk in, their breakfast is there, the milk is there and they pick it up and they take it into their classroom, they all sit around with their teacher and their classmates, they're reading, they're talking, they're going through the day.

The first school breakfast grab and go, the only grab and go in Stamford, was at the high school and it did really well until a new school principal came in this year and cut down the time by 20 minutes. And it has significantly decreased. So I'm just letting you know. It really shows that just even something like that, a small cut in time, can effect a program significantly." - Lucy Nolan, Executive Director - End Hunger Connecticut!

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Join the conversation,
share your thoughts, view
all event pictures at:
www.mavfoundation.org
[#mavfmission](https://twitter.com/mavfmission)



[MAVF](#) is dedicated to the idea that it is possible to permanently move people out of hunger and malnourishment in a manner that is sustainable, self-reliant, and healthy.

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