MAZON was thrilled to join our colleagues in the Jewish Farm Bill Working Group to bring the voice of the American Jewish community to Washington D.C. The group met with national policymakers and White House representatives, urging them to focus on food justice in the upcoming Farm Bill. The group also delivered eight jars containing over 18,000 sunflower seeds – one seed to represent each signature on our Jewish Petition for a Just Farm Bill. Your signatures provided one powerful message. Thank you.
The rhetoric surrounding the Farm Bill has left me speechless. While heated debate is nothing new in the months leading up to a Presidential election, the hijacking of a once non-partisan issue by extremists leaves me completely nonplussed.

When members of Congress seek to promote a political agenda instead of engaging in serious debate, our democracy is the poorer for it – but those who truly suffer are those who are struggling to pull themselves out of circumstances created by the lengthy economic downturn. Surely we can all agree that America is far too wealthy a nation to let any of its citizens go hungry.

Our nation came together to build programs like TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) and SNAP (food stamps) to help hungry people when they need it most. But now, hungry people have increasing cause for worry, as these programs are in jeopardy of being dismantled.

Vilifying one another and misrepresenting programs and practices has polarized Congress and torn apart long-standing support for the people who must rely on these vital programs. While this may score political points in the short term, it’s creating a frightening future for those who are most vulnerable among us: seniors, the disabled, the working poor, and single parent families.

Yes, annual spending on SNAP has increased dramatically in the past four years. Because the program was designed to be responsive – to expand when our economy is stalled (and we can all agree that it’s stalled), AND contract when the economy improves again. SNAP is a remarkably effective program, keeping 3.9 million Americans OUT of poverty in 2011 with a historically low 3.8% rate of waste and fraud. Furthermore, every $1 of SNAP benefits yields $1.73 for local economies. These are impressive and independently verifiable statistics of which we should be proud.

The shockingly judgmental statements leveled at those who are simply trying to ensure their children have enough to eat should give every American pause. The Talmud teaches that, “Jews are compassionate children of compassionate parents.” Judging others, particularly those who are in need, is antithetical to all we believe as Jews.

So as we prepare to welcome 5773, let us choose compassion over judgment; agreement over discord; truth over deception. Let us give real meaning to the best of our teachings and our traditions and speak up for those who are in need, lending our voices to a policy outcome that means a future marked by hope instead of by fear.

Then surely we will be inscribed in the Book of Life and merit a year of sweetness, health and happiness.

L’shalom,

FROM MAZON’S BOARD CHAIR

I am honored to assume the responsibility of serving as MAZON’s newly-elected Board Chair. MAZON is near and dear to my heart; it is an organization with which I have been actively involved, in various roles, for over 25 years.

One of my first projects upon arriving in Minneapolis in 1987, as a newly ordained Rabbi at Adath Jeshurun Congregation, was to ask our synagogue to become a MAZON partner. My congregants have responded generously over the years, contributing for their simchas and to holiday appeals while working with MAZON’s grantees to advance their efforts. Presently our community is piloting a MAZON advocacy initiative seeking to make a substantial impact on the lives of hungry children in Minnesota.

It is deeply troubling that, despite our sincere efforts, levels of hunger in the US are as high as they were when MAZON was first established. In the face of these challenges, it is inspiring to see the energy and commitment of MAZON’s board and staff. It is moving to see the respect that MAZON has earned, on behalf of the Jewish community, within the anti-hunger community.

We are deeply committed to facing the challenges before us. As we move forward, we depend on our hundreds of engaged synagogues and thousands of supporters to draw on the many resources they possess to alleviate persistent hunger.

People who are food insecure cannot afford for us to relax our efforts. With your help, we can fulfill our Jewish responsibility to act dynamically on behalf of the most vulnerable among us in following the example of God, “who brings justice to the oppressed and provides food for the hungry (Psalms 146:7).”

Lech l’shalom,

Rabbi Harold J. Kravitz
Max Newman Family Chair in Rabbinics
Adath Jeshurun Congregation, Minnetonka, MN

New at the Office

Emily Dingmann has joined MAZON as Communications Manager. Emily brings five years of marketing experience in addition to her work with a nonprofit summer camp for youth. Emily has a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition from the University of Minnesota.

The staff of MAZON extend our gratitude to our amazing interns: Jason Lipeles and Elizabeth Fischer! Thank you for your hard work!
Let’s Demand Greater Government Accountability in the Fight Against Hunger
by Mia Hubbard, Vice President of Programs

Federal safety-net programs like SNAP are a prime example of our society’s conscious decision to pool its resources and act collectively to prevent hunger in our country. But as the Farm Bill deliberations rage on in Congress, SNAP – the level at which it’s funded, requirements for eligibility, claims of rampant abuse and more – remains the most contentious issue. And as this happens, our collective fight against hunger seems poised to take a huge step backward.

Rather than restrict or demonize government food programs, we should instead demand greater accountability from our government and the federal nutrition policies funded by our taxpayer dollars. But this accountability must go beyond the narrow (albeit important) concerns of waste or fraud. We should demand greater scrutiny, transparency and accountability of the decisions being made in order to determine whether our country is effectively addressing the social problems we’ve collectively committed to address.

What might this broader concept of government accountability look like?

- **Lawmakers and government officials would openly publicize the achievements of SNAP rather than trying to obscure them.** Poverty rates have increased in recent years while food insecurity, though high, remains steady. Taxpayers deserve to know how well the federal nutrition safety net is performing and that nearly four million people were lifted out of poverty due to SNAP. And when lawmakers propose cuts to successful programs like SNAP, we should be told directly how it will impact the ongoing effectiveness of the program.

- **Policymakers and politicians would act in alignment with polls, and in the best interests of their most vulnerable constituents.** In a 2012 poll by Hart Research Associates and the Food Research and Action Center (a MAZON grantee), more than three in four voters oppose cutting SNAP funding, saying it is the wrong way to reduce government spending. Additionally, a strong majority (69%) of voters support our government playing a major role in addressing hunger.

- **Government officials would seek to remedy any element of SNAP where opportunities for improvement exist.** This means active willingness on both sides of the aisle to acknowledge where reforms can be made, and where additional resources are actually required. It also means that a policy remedy should match the stated policy objective: If the goal is to reduce fraud, then increasing funding for fraud investigators more directly addresses the issue than increasing the complexity of SNAP eligibility rules.

- **We would know the real costs associated with the policy prescriptions being proposed.** In Congress, there have been proposals that cut SNAP by $4 billion, or $16 billion, or $33 billion or even $133 billion over the next 10 years, justified by vague assertions of “cutting bureaucracy or abuse.” Without question we should be vigilant against any fraud and actively root out waste in federal programs. But the implication is that the proposed cuts would only reduce bureaucracy or close loopholes, and that is simply not the case. Cuts of the magnitude being floated would not just affect the administration of the program, but also severely cut into the benefits received by hungry families across the country. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that if SNAP is cut by $4 billion, it means that families needing assistance will receive $90 less a month to buy food.

- **Government officials would recognize the relationship and relative roles between government food programs and charitable food programs.** Charity plays an important role in fighting hunger, but charity could never fill the gap left by cutbacks of government food programs. We need both.

Hunger is a tragic problem – one we cannot solve as individuals, through the market, or by charity alone. It’s time to call government to account for hunger, poverty, and inequality in our midst. It’s time to more closely scrutinize the policies and cutbacks under consideration in Congress and their impact on low-income and working-poor families. And it’s time to demand better policy outcomes for hungry people in this country.

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**YOU NEED TO KNOW**

**Let’s Demand Greater Government Accountability in the Fight Against Hunger**

**EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY IN ACTION**

Over the last year, MAZON’s advocacy campaign has ramped up tremendously. We are proud to report that 14 synagogues in 5 states are actively working with MAZON to address hunger in their communities. The substance of their efforts is highly diverse: They are addressing local, regional and national issues. Some are advocating for legislative change, others for administrative change. Whether their chosen issue is increasing access to food or targeting help for a specific population, these efforts have one thing in common: with MAZON’s help, they are realizing their potential as a powerful constituency that can and will affect change.

Please contact Samuel if you would like to bring education and advocacy to your synagogue, JCC or other community group: schu@mazon.org or 424.208.7111.

**Map Key**

- Current Partners
- Coming Soon!
Greetings from Camp!

I’m having a blast this summer! I grew up attending Jewish camps in California, so I am sure you can imagine how thrilled I was to visit several camp communities this summer to lead anti-hunger awareness and advocacy events.

Campers have been learning about the prevalence of hunger in America and wrestling with the tough decisions that hungry people are forced to make every day. Each program started with the campers listing 6 necessities. Then I asked them to eliminate, two by two, the ones that they could do without. It was fascinating to see and hear them longer-term repercussions. They were truly beginning to understand the struggle that 50 million Americans face everyday.

Advocacy is a prominent aspect of MAZON’s approach to fighting hunger, so we engaged the campers in a Paper Plate Campaign, asking them to share their own thoughts about the issue of hunger. The plates were displayed in the dining hall on Shabbat and then sent on to elected officials. As I walked around the room to talk with each kid and read their plates, I was moved by their compassion:

“There are 17 million children going to school without breakfast every morning and that number keeps increasing. Who is to say that I am not next? Please do something.”

“All of my grandparents NEED Food Stamps to keep food on the table and even with it they require other assistances. My grandparents aren’t the only people who need Food Stamps. More families, Americans and people of the world need it too. Please protect funding for Food Stamps.”

I was so proud to see such thought-provoking messages lining the walls. It is obvious to me that the kids really got it. They truly understood our Jewish obligation to protect the most vulnerable among us. I am so grateful that my summer of attending camps is coming to an end, but I can’t wait to visit more camps and share this experience with more kids next summer! — Laura Mizes

Remembering a dear friend

by Barbara Bergen

The first time I met Rabbi Jack Stern was in late 1999, shortly after I began my tenure at MAZON. By then, Jack had a long history with MAZON, having been a supporter from the organization’s beginnings. We were in New York, at a farewell reception for the departing executive director, when this slight, white-haired man with a noticeable limp introduced himself to me. Any idea I had that he was frail was quickly dispelled.

Jack was, in fact, a towering, powerful figure who, despite his profound and positive impact on the American Jewish community, never displayed a hint of arrogance or self-importance. Jack was a warm, welcoming, friendly man with a ready smile and hearty laugh. When you were with Jack, he gave you his undivided attention. He was one of those rare people who was truly and fully present in the moment. He listened intently and with genuine interest, even when he knew far more than the speaker about the topic at hand.

Through the years and right up until his death, Jack was a staunch and dedicated supporter of MAZON. He faithfully attended board meetings, was actively engaged on several board committees, and always made himself available for advice, counsel or to take on a task. In fact, I can’t remember Jack saying no to anything he was asked to do – including diligently calling a long list of Reform rabbis each summer to gently but passionately urge them to make an appeal for MAZON at the High Holy Days.

MAZON and I are deeply grateful to have had Jack as a friend, a mentor, an advocate and a supporter. I treasure the time I spent with him, and I will miss him always.

Rabbi Jack Stern left behind a legacy of compassion and generosity, not only to those whose lives he touched, but also to MAZON by including us in his estate plans.

As you contemplate your legacy, we invite you to join the MAZON Legacy Society by designating MAZON as a beneficiary in your will, charitable remainder trust, life insurance or retirement plan.

Your charitable legacy can help bring us one step closer to a future free from hunger.

To learn more about the MAZON Legacy Society, please contact Cari Uslan at 424.208.7210 or email cuslan@mazon.org.

Thank you for your generous support!
Healthy Options
Healthy Meals
by Maria Feldman, Project Director

We are so proud to report that all 12 Healthy Options, Healthy Meals (HOHM) food banks are implementing a formal written nutrition policy as the core component of their action plan. Why so proud about such a seemingly basic idea? You might be surprised to hear that very few food banks across the country currently have a written nutrition policy in place. And having such a policy turns out to be a very important thing.

By formalizing and documenting its nutrition policy, a food bank reminds all its stakeholders that providing nutritious food is a vital part of the food bank’s mission and a non-negotiable part of each and every person’s job. Having a formal written policy also helps to ensure that nutrition-focused practices will continue beyond any one individual’s tenure with the organization. Furthermore, one of the primary recommendations in a recent study by California Food Policy Advocates (a MAZON grantee) and the Center for Weight and Health at U.C. Berkeley (an HOHM partner) was that food banks should create and abide by a formal written nutrition policy, because doing so strongly correlates with a food bank’s success in turning that policy into practice.

A formal nutrition policy defines the terminology to be used (e.g., what “nutritious” means) and identifies the categories of food to which the policy will apply (donated, purchased and/or government). It outlines the food items deemed “appropriate” for the food bank to have, which in turn guides acquisition decisions and impacts potential development strategies. Such a policy can also specify the approach the food bank will use to monitor inventory, such as a system based on nutritional quality instead of weight.

We are proud to be guiding the 12 HOHM food banks as they develop their formal written nutrition policies. If interested in learning how your local food bank could develop such a policy, contact Marla: mfeldman@mazon.org or 424.208.7112.

Fighting Hunger in Rural and Remote Communities
by Lisa O’Brien, Program Associate

Try to conjure an image of hunger in America, and you’ll most likely envision homeless people standing in endless soup lines amid the crumbling infrastructure of the inner city. The stark reality—a reality that rarely makes the headlines—is that poverty and hunger are more prevalent in rural America. Why? Because of the unique challenges these communities face: vast geographic spread, low population density, lack of infrastructure, and limited availability of healthy affordable food.

To help mitigate these challenges, MAZON recently launched a groundbreaking national initiative designed to fight hunger in rural and remote communities. This pilot project, made possible by generous funding from the Wal-Mart Foundation, will help rural anti-hunger organizations leverage their current advantages, like greater access to government officials and a strong sense of community, and build their capacity to address food insecurity in their area. MAZON will provide training and technical assistance in four critical areas—leadership and management; fundraising; advocacy and community; and coalition building—as well as financial support to enable their progress in these areas. Similar to our previous initiatives, we will also facilitate peer-to-peer networking opportunities so that these organizations can engage with and learn from one another.

Earlier this year, we began our work of identifying and recruiting suitable food pantries, and will convene participants in our Los Angeles office in November. We will keep you informed about the challenges we discover and the solutions we develop as we advance our long-term commitment to strengthen the capacity of food pantries to help the low-income families they serve.

In 2012 MAZON awarded 284 grants totaling over $3,500,000.

Partnership Grantmaking

Alabama
Bay Area Food Bank, Theodore
Alaska
Food Bank of Alaska, Anchorage
Kenaí Peninsula Food Bank, Soldotna
Juneau Cooperative Christian Ministry dba The Glory Hole, Juneau
Arizona
Association of Arizona Food Banks, Phoenix
St. Jude Food Bank, Tubac City
Arkansas
Arkansas Foodbank Network, Little Rock
California
Alameda County Community Food Bank, Oakland
Amador-Tuolumne Community Resources, Jackson
California Association of Food Banks, Oakland
California Food Policy Advocates, Oakland
California Hunger Action Coalition, Los Angeles
Catholic Charities, Diocese of San Diego, San Diego
Community Action Partnership of Kern, Bakersfield
Community Action Partnership of Orange County, Garden Grove
Community Link Capital Region, Sacramento
Daughters of Charity Ministry Services, Lynwood
Familia Center, Santa Cruz
Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles
Food Bank for Monterey County, Salinas
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, Concord
Food For People, Eureka
FOOD Share, Oxnard
Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, Santa Barbara
FoodLink for Tulare County, Inc., Visalia
FoodPrint Unity Center, Inc., Montrovia
Fresno Metro Ministry, Fresno
Grup de la Comida, San Francisco
Hope-Net, Los Angeles
Hunger Action Los Angeles, Los Angeles
Imperial Valley Food Bank, El Centro
Interfaith Community Services, Escondido
Jewish Family and Children’s Services, San Francisco
Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles/SOVA, Los Angeles
Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute, Torrance
Los Angeles Community Action Network, Los Angeles
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, Los Angeles
Project Chicken Soup, Culver City
Public Counsel, Los Angeles
Redwood Empire Food Bank, Santa Rosa
River City Food Bank, Sacramento
San Diego Hunger Coalition, San Diego
San Francisco Food Bank, San Francisco
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, San Jose
Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County, Watsonville
Senior Community Centers, San Diego
St. Anthony Foundation, San Francisco
St. Joseph Center, Venice
St. Joseph’s Family Center, Gilroy
St. Margaret’s Center, Lennox
St. Mary’s Center, Oakland
Sunnyvale Community Services, Sunnyvale
Thai Community Development Center, Los Angeles
The Resource Connection Food Bank, San Andreas
Union Station Homeless Services, Pasadena
Western Center on Law and Poverty, Los Angeles
Westside Food Bank, Santa Monica
Colorado
Care and Share Food Bank for Southern Colorado, Colorado Springs
Denver Urban Ministries, Denver
Jewish Family Service of Colorado, Denver
La Puente Home Inc., Alamosa
Metro CareRing, Denver
Wild Food Bank, Greeley
Connecticut
FOODSHARE, Bloomfield
Connecticut Food Bank, East Haven
Connecticut Association for Human Services, Hartford
Jewish Federation Association of Connecticut, Hartford
End Hunger Connecticut!, Hartford
Stamford Jewish Community Center, Stamford
Brass City Harvest, Waterbury
Jewish Family Services of Greater Hartford, West Hartford
District of Columbia
Bread for the City, Washington, DC
Capital Area Food Bank, Washington DC
D.C. Hunger Solutions, Washington, DC
Emmanua Services for the Aging, Washington, DC
Food & Friends, Washington, DC
Florida
Christians Reaching Out to Society, Lake Worth
Farnwokers Self-Help, Dale City
Florida Impact, Tallahassee
Samuel M. & Helene Soref Jewish Community Center, Plantation
Treasru Coast Food Bank, Ft. Pierce
Georgia
Atlanta Community Food Bank, Atlanta
Jewish Family & Career Services, Atlanta
Hawaii
Kauai Independent Food Bank, Lihue
Idaho
Idaho Community Action Network, Boise
The Idaho Foodbank, Boise
Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force, Garden City
Illinois
A Just Harvest, Chicago
Greater Chicago Food Depository, Chicago
Illinois Hunger Coalition, Chicago
Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago/EZRA Multi-Service Center, Chicago
Lakeview Pantry, Chicago
Northern Illinois Food Bank, St. Charles
MAZON IS PROUD TO BE A HIGHLY RATED CHARITY
- A+ by CharityWatch
- Meets all 20 BBB standards for charity accountability

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