DYLAN’S STORY
“You shouldn’t have to worry about where your next meal is gonna come from...”  Page 3

COLLEGE HUNGER
Not just a Top Ramen problem.  Page 7
LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

This season, as we all turn our hearts and minds toward Rosh Hashanah and the Yom Kippur fast, the greater MAZON community may see the holidays and their rituals through a new lens.

MAZON launched This Is Hunger last November—a first-of-its-kind, interactive touring exhibit housed in a big-rig—in the hope that together we could change the way you see your neighborhood, your city, your nation. We’ve extended the tour through February of 2018 to respond to the many communities that want the opportunity to explore and begin to understand the American experience of hunger, and how we can make positive change for the most vulnerable among us.

Grappling with these stories and others like them is part of our work as Jews, especially in this time of reflection before the Yamim Noraim.

With each story, This Is Hunger illustrates the outrageous scope of food insecurity—and how hunger can hide where we least expect it. Charitable responses to hunger, such as food pantries, provide vital emergency assistance, but are not, and were never meant to be, a solution to this enormous problem.

It is programs such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, aka food stamps) that will provide sustainable solutions to food insecurity. As negotiations on the budget ramp up in Washington, we expect that the conversation will turn to who is most “deserving” of assistance.

The stories we hear in This Is Hunger describe the difficult choices that individuals and families are making in an effort to put food on the table. We are not to judge those who are living in poverty, nor should we assume to know the circumstances of their lives. What we do know is that no one deserves to be hungry.

Our communities are stronger when vulnerable populations are fed. We all benefit when programs like SNAP are protected, children are eating nutritious food, and our seniors are never forced to choose between paying for food or medication. Every day, your support is essential to achieving our most basic goal: ensuring all of our neighbors are able to feed their families with dignity.

L’shalom,

Shirley Davidoff
BOARD CHAIR

Abby J. Leibman
PRESIDENT & CEO
Dylan, Kentucky

“It was the best time, when my mom had a job. I actually enjoyed life. I used to get to do whatever. Now that my mom got laid off, I get up in the morning and put on my shoes like anybody else, but when I get to school, I think about losing our house. Before I go to bed at night, I actually pray that we won’t.

I have a lot of weight on my shoulders for a 14-year-old. I can’t stand our situation. I’ve had to sacrifice a lot since my mom lost her job after working for the school district for 20 years. The only work my mom can get these days is part-time substitute teaching and it’s not enough to pay for the basics. I’m actually wearing my mom’s pants right now because we can’t afford to buy me clothes. I can’t take the college classes I qualified for because we can’t afford them. My mom doesn’t know it, but I quit baseball so she wouldn’t have to spend money on my uniform. It’s not a good feeling when you’re sitting in the house eating chips and potted meat as your friends are off playing ball and going to steakhouses when they win. It’s not a good feeling at all.

Our food stamps have gone from $300 to $200 a month for my mom and me. We’re not able to afford healthy foods that some people can. We’ve had to open up canned foods from the pantry that’s probably older than me. We run out of food some months and I go to bed hungry. I’ve gone days without sleep because of hunger. The next day, I’ll go through class pinching myself, doing stuff to stay awake.

When I’m hungry, I’m not in the mood for anything. I’m depressed. Then, my mom picks me up and I continue to work as hard as I can in school. I’ve wanted to become a surgeon since the fourth grade. I keep reminding myself that if I work hard in life, I can get to where I’m fine. Then I can buy my mom a new house.

It’s not fair that we have to go through this. It’s not fair for anybody to have to go through this. You shouldn’t have to worry about where your next meal is gonna come from—especially people with kids.”
Advocacy In Action

Judaism and other faith traditions share the fundamental value of taking care of the most vulnerable among us. This is at the heart of our advocacy work. For 32 years, MAZON has undertaken advocacy and built advocacy infrastructure around the nation to ensure that these vulnerable populations in the most under-resourced regions of our country have the support to fight for long term policy change that will help lift them out of poverty. Here is a snapshot of our current work:

**Protecting SNAP in the Budget**

MAZON went on the record this May in opposition to the draconian cuts to SNAP and other food assistance programs proposed in President Trump’s budget:

“The President’s budget proposal is a **moral disgrace**. A budget should reflect our values and priorities as a nation. This budget, which would take critical nutrition assistance away from millions of Americans who struggle with hunger, betrays our basic American principle of taking care of those in need.”

— MAZON President and CEO Abby Leibman’s May ’17 statement on the budget

**Testifying in Front of Congress**

On March 28, 2017, MAZON’s Vice President of Public Policy, Josh Protas, provided unique and compelling testimony to the House Agriculture Committee on the future of SNAP:

“In Leviticus, we are commanded to leave the corners of our fields and the gleanings of our harvest and vineyards for the poor and the stranger. This commandment is a clear expression of our collective responsibility for each other... In our country today, we are blessed to have a national program that manifests these traditional values... This program respects the dignity of those who experience hunger and poverty, responds when the needs increase, supports work, promotes long-term health and wellbeing, contributes to our economy, and provides vital assistance to the most vulnerable in our society. Of course, this program is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—SNAP.”

**CAPITOL HILL VISITS**

MAZON’s board members, staff, and supporters met with key members of Congress to discuss MAZON’s priorities for protecting and strengthening SNAP and addressing hunger among currently-serving military families and veterans. We met with more than 20 offices, including:

- Representative Mike Conaway (R-TX), Chair, House Committee on Agriculture
- Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
- Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS), Chair, Senate Committee on Agriculture
- Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture
- Senator Susan Collins (R-ME)
- Senator Bob Casey (D-PA)
- Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)
- Senator John McCain (R-AZ)
Dozens of Federal, State, and Local political officials and staffers have visited MAZON’s powerful *This Is Hunger* exhibit in their districts, learning about how hunger affects their communities.

**WORKING IN COALITION**

In February 2017, MAZON joined a coalition of anti-hunger organizations in urging the leadership of the Budget and Appropriations Committees in both the House and Senate to maintain and strengthen our nation’s critical food assistance programs far into the future:

“With the agriculture and rural economy struggling, households across the country struggling to meet their basic needs for nutrition [...] it would be perilous to hinder development and passage of the 2018 Farm Bill with further cuts.”

#ThisIsSeniorHunger

MAZON’s May 2017 #ThisIsSeniorHunger tweet chat, in honor of Older Americans month, reached more than 2.5 million Twitter users.
FOOD FIGHT

Why the Farm Bill is Must-Watch Legislation

Our country’s food and agricultural policies have a profound impact on people at home and abroad. The Farm Bill, a massive package of legislation that must be renegotiated and reauthorized every five years, is the primary agricultural and food policy tool of the federal government.

For anti-hunger advocates in particular, the Farm Bill is a crucial piece of legislation to watch. The current Farm Bill (formally the Agricultural Act of 2014), authorized a total of $956 billion in spending over ten years, 79% of which supported nutrition programs, including SNAP - the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps.

SNAP has proven itself to be both effective and efficient, helping 42 million individuals each month afford an adequate diet while achieving the lowest payment error rate in the program’s history. Defending and strengthening this critical program, which is a lifeline for so many vulnerable Americans, is crucial.

As negotiations on the Farm Bill ramp up this fall and continue into next year, here are some things to keep an eye on:

- **Budget Cuts:** The Farm Bill authorizes nutrition programs and establishes policies for them, but these programs are funded through the budget, which is proposed and enacted separately. While the President’s budget sets the tone and direction for federal priorities, it is the House and Senate that will conceive and pass the actual budget. If they use the President’s budget as a starting point, we can expect significant cuts to vital programs like SNAP.

- **Block Grants:** Some lawmakers want to change the structure of SNAP by turning it into a “block grant,” a capped sum of money given to the states by the federal government. A block grant would impose burdensome administrative costs on states and would open the door for states to use the federal money for other programs. This would reduce the amount of money going to help the people who need it most.

- **“Deserving” Poor Rhetoric:** Watch out for arguments by policymakers that we should categorically exclude certain individuals and families from SNAP eligibility. They paint a picture of a ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor—a cynical and narrow-minded view that some people are worthy of assistance and others are not. This portrait is inconsistent with the daily realities of those who depend on SNAP, and offends the ideals upon which this nation was built.

WHERE YOU COME IN
Visit MAZON.org/take-action and sign our petition to ask Speaker Ryan to protect SNAP. Already signed? Share on your social media platforms and encourage your friends to add their name and their voice.

WHAT’S IN THE FARM BILL?

- **SNAP and Nutrition Programs** – $756 billion
- **Crop Insurance** – $89.8 billion
- **Conservation Incentives** – $56 billion
- **Commodity Programs** – $44.4 billion
- **Everything Else** – $8.2 billion
  (trade and foreign food aid, forestry, agricultural credit, rural development, research and education, marketing, food safety, animal health and welfare, energy, and organic agriculture)
Beyond Top Ramen: College Hunger

For too many college students, food insecurity isn’t a Top Ramen problem—it is a crippling daily reality that means skipped meals, reduced portions, and the choiceless choice between eating and continued investment in their educational needs. All of this impacts student performance, retention, and health. A recent study by our partners at WI Hope Lab found that 2 of every 3 community college students is food insecure—many of whom struggle even while working and receiving financial aid.

A network of on-campus food pantries is growing, but this charitable response is not enough. Addressing student food insecurity requires broader institutional and government actions and more upstream responses. In particular, we must strengthen SNAP access for students.

In California we are working with a coalition of anti-hunger organizations and advocates on AB 214, which will clarify work requirements for SNAP eligibility. Another piece of legislation will encourage statewide expansion of student meal sharing programs, based on the Swipe Out Hunger model started at UCLA, where students with meal plans can donate their unused meals to a student in need.

All of this work is dependent on our ability to defend the vital SNAP program at the federal level, where recent budget proposals threaten to cut the program by 25%. Cuts of this magnitude will undoubtedly impact students who rely on SNAP, making MAZON’s advocacy at this level ever-more critical.

GIVE A GIFT TODAY

May the sounding of the shofar call you to act on behalf of all those who are hungry in our midst. Give a gift today by using the attached envelope, visiting mazon.org, or by calling us at (800) 813-0557.

Thank you for your generous support!

WE WELCOME NEW STAFF

Sarah Pratter, Development Associate

Sarah is committed to finding strategic and compassionate solutions to hunger. She joins MAZON after working with legal service organizations, providing civil legal services to vulnerable populations, and will now focus her skills on community outreach and fundraising. Sarah completed a J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School and a B.A. from New York University.
Inspired by Jewish values and ideals, MAZON is a national advocacy organization working to end hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds in the United States and Israel.

WHO IS MAZON?

LEGACY GIVING AND GIFT PLANNING

Find out about life-income gifts, giving through your will, or other creative ways to support MAZON. Please contact Amy Smith at asmith@mazon.org or by phone at (424) 208-7226

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR!

Help us minimize our expenses and fight for more hungry families. Please call us at (800) 813-0557 to join our monthly giving program today!

WHEN WE SPEAK... WE MUST BE HEARD