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# Food & Nutrition

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This issue takes a look at the particular problem of making food help accessible to people living in rural areas and remote small towns. There are eight articles in all, ranging from a report on the impact of recent food stamp changes to a feature about serving summer meals to children.

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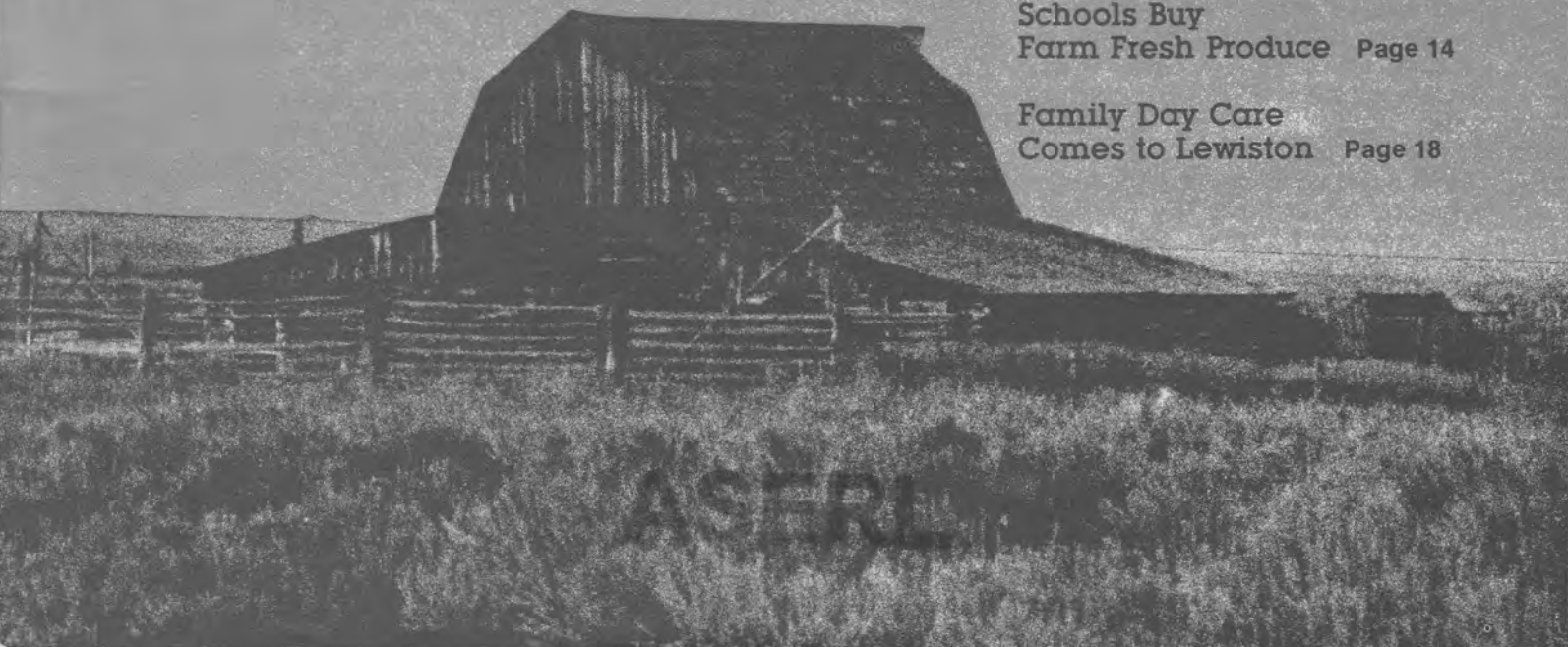
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# Food Stamp Changes Help the Rural Poor

**H**istorically, participation in the Food Stamp Program has been very low in rural parts of our country. In 1978, less than half of all eligible rural households participated in the program.

However, a study released by the Food and Nutrition Service in October shows this is changing dramatically. The study, which evaluated the impact of the food stamp reforms that took effect in 1979, reveals that the main beneficiaries have been the rural poor and the elderly. Of the 2.9 million people who have joined the program since the changes were made, nearly half are the rural poor.

## The impact of "EPR"

The Food and Nutrition Service study examines the impact of one of the most far-reaching of the food stamp reforms—the elimination of the purchase requirement. Previously, participants were required to make a cash payment for their food stamps. In exchange, they received an equal amount of food stamps, plus additional "bonus" stamps. Now, participants receive only the "bonus" amount of stamps, and they pay nothing.

Several earlier studies had found the purchase requirement to be a major reason why only half of the poor who were eligible for food stamps were actually using them.

## Looking at rural gains

The increase in rural participation was one of the most significant findings of last fall's study. In the most sparsely populated rural areas, the rate of increase was five times that of the increase in big cities. In the first 6 months after the reforms began in December 1978, participation in the smallest, most rural project areas increased almost 42 percent. Participation in the largest, most urban areas increased nearly 8 percent.

In absolute numbers, too, rural areas outstripped urban areas. Of all new participants entering the program between November 1978 and May 1979, nearly half entered in the most rural areas. Only about one-fifth entered in the most urban areas.

Rural increases are also reflected in data collected by region and by State. The regions with the greatest overall increases in participation were the Southeast (over 32 percent), Mountain Plains (nearly 32 percent), and the Southwest (almost 31 percent). These regions contain predominantly rural States. The smallest participation increase occurred in New England (7 percent).

Within regions, the greatest gains in participation were in the most rural States. The State with the largest participation increase was Alaska (almost 75 percent), followed by

Wyoming (nearly 73 percent). Most of the States in the Southeast, Mountain Plains, and Southwest Regions showed sizable participation increases. Five of the 8 states in the Southeast registered gains of over 30 percent in the 6-month period, as did 8 of the 10 States in Mountain Plains, and 3 of the 5 in the Southwest.

## Participation among Indians

Participation among Indians increased substantially. In fact, this increase was even greater than that among other rural residents. Between December 1978 and May 1979, there was a 75 percent increase in participation in predominantly Indian areas.

Some Indian project areas showed particularly dramatic gains. Ziebach County, South Dakota, went from 59 participants in December to 188 in May an increase of almost 219 percent. The increases were not confined to very small project areas—participation in Navajo County, Arizona, increased from 1,860 in December to 4,096 in May, a 120 percent increase. □

**Doing away with the purchase requirement has made it easier for States to issue food stamps by mail. In the following article, New Hampshire food stamp officials tell why and how they began mail issuance. They've found the new arrangement especially helps the elderly and the rural poor. More than half the State's population lives in rural areas.**

**New Hampshire is one of 39 States issuing food stamps by mail, either statewide or in specific jurisdictions.**

“A trip to buy food stamps could be some 20 miles one way for people living in the White Mountains up north or in the lakes region. This was

costly, as well as time-consuming, and many people had to ask for rides from friends or relatives.”



## Many people are getting food stamps by mail

Phil Davis began thinking about issuing food stamps by mail soon after he became food stamp director for New Hampshire in 1975. “It was always an option in the regulations,” he says, and there were reasons to look for alternatives to issuing stamps through banks.

For one thing, bankers were reluctant to join the program. “Most bankers came in kicking and screaming, but were persuaded it was their moral duty,” Davis recalls.

Problems began to set in almost immediately. “At the start we paid banks 75 cents for every food stamp transaction. By 1978 that wasn’t enough. Banks wanted to expand other services for customers and needed the space and personnel. And security was a problem for many town clerks. Bankers were giving notice, and we were at the point where service to entire counties would be wiped out.”

At the same time, Greg Lebel, New Hampshire food stamp outreach coordinator, was convinced that mail issuance would be helpful in rural areas, where almost half the State’s population lived. He knew the special difficulties rural people faced in participating in the program.

In 1977, Phil Davis discussed mail issuance with other State food stamp officials at a national welfare meeting. Kansas was mailing food stamp coupons directly to welfare clients, withholding from public assistance checks the amounts they were then

Getting food stamps by mail has made a big difference for many rural people, particularly elderly people.



**“People who always needed food stamps are getting them because it's easier.”**

required to pay for their stamps. Davis studied that system but decided to wait until the Food Stamp Act of 1977 went into effect, bringing changes which would make mail issuance even simpler.

Two key provisions of the new law made mail issuance particularly attractive—elimination of the purchase requirement (EPR) and the requirement for expedited service to especially needy people.

With no purchase requirement, there would be fewer food stamps to mail, so smaller envelopes could be used and mailing costs would be lower. Expedited service meant either mailing food stamps promptly from a central office or maintaining inventories at a number of welfare offices. Davis preferred the former.

A special task force spent 6 months developing the present system. It went into operation March 1, 1979, when New Hampshire implemented the 1977 law.

### **System is efficient**

The mail system used by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Welfare is efficient. Sixty-five people spend 1 work day a month putting food stamps for 15,000 households in envelopes and into the mail. The time involved seems minimal compared to 15,000 individual trips participants would have to make to 75 banks and 21 welfare offices throughout the State.

Food stamps are usually mailed on the next-to-the-last working day of the month for first-of-the-month delivery to coincide with the arrival of Social Security and other benefit checks. In

larger States, issuance is often staggered throughout the month, but New Hampshire is small enough to permit one major mailing.

The State also mails “expedited” food stamps every work day of the month. “Mail provides the quickest service in emergencies,” says Davis. “The applications are shipped in at night, processed, and shipped out the next night.” One thousand such cases are processed each month.

Errors are almost nonexistent. Mail losses are fewer than 100 a month, and approximately the same number are returned as undeliverable because the intended recipients moved and left no forwarding addresses.

### **It's made a difference**

Davis and others in the State are convinced that the change to mail issuance has helped bring more rural people into the Food Stamp Program. Participation throughout the State is up 18 percent, but in the rural districts it's up 25 to 40 percent.

Older folks find that the mail system helps them maintain a greater degree of independence. Those who don't drive may still need a ride to the grocery store, but an additional trip to the bank is one less request to make of friends or children. When you've been taking care of yourself for half a century or more, asking for help isn't easy. Often, too, the grocery store hours are more convenient than those of issuance offices.

“My daughter drives me to the grocery store,” says Alice King, who lives in a trailer park in the Lake country 3 miles from Laconia. “My food stamps come in the mail, and that's all I need. When my Social Security check comes, I cash it at the same store.” The 83-year-old widow plans her shopping around her daughter's schedule of work at a nearby electronics factory.

Snowy roads and icy conditions underfoot keep many elderly people housebound during long New England winters. Majorie Sanborn, 76, of



Laconia, uses a cane because of arthritis and has also worn a cast recently. She finds getting food stamps by mail a great help when she's able to do her own marketing, and even more of a convenience when the weather is bad and she has to ask friends to pick up her groceries.

Iona Little, 84, lives with a handicapped niece and her dog in a country place out from Laconia. She likes getting her stamps by mail and rejects the idea that people have stayed away from food stamps because of embarrassment. As she sees it, the biggest factor was the inconvenience formerly caused by



having to go to the bank and buy stamps.

"I don't know what there is to be ashamed of," she says, "...but it can be a lot of trouble—a trip to the bank and a wait might not seem worth it."

### **Using stamps is easier**

Many of the elderly who live in and around Laconia receive food stamps because Rev. Mark Schipul and members of South Baptist Church assist them. "They can't get around so we transport them and help with paperwork. We resent extra trips imposed by regulations and encourage these new attempts to simplify," says Schipul.

Rev. Schipul believes the elimination of the purchase requirement and mail issuance have "raised the dignity of people by eliminating red tape which confuses them and forces them to rely on others for help. . ."

Doris Makely, who runs the Senior Drop-In Center for the Belnap Merrimac Community Action Program in Laconia, sums it up when she says, "People who always needed food stamps are getting them and using them because its easier.

*by Catherine Tim Jensen*

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# Summer Meals for Rural Children

**S**ummer. For many children, the mere mention of the word evokes thoughts of sun, swimming, baseball, popsicles, and school vacation.

But for other children—particularly needy children in rural areas or those from needy households—summer can mean hunger. These are the children who may have to go without breakfast or lunch, either because they have working parents who cannot stay at home to cook meals, or because the money simply isn't available to provide the food.

The Summer Food Service Program for Children was designed to help meet the needs of children who have no other means of receiving nutritious meals during summer months. The program operates out of schools, churches, playgrounds, parks—facilities which can demonstrate that they have the capability to serve wholesome meals and snacks to children in needy areas.

## Sponsors serve meals

Any public or private nonprofit, nonresidential institution or residential summer camp may apply to sponsor a summer food program. Schools, churches, social service organizations, and city government agencies have served as sponsors in many areas.

By and large, however, schools that operate school lunch or breakfast programs are the prime candidates for sponsoring summer programs. For school food service personnel already experienced in operating a feeding program, converting to summer feeding is relatively easy.

There are certain basic requirements for summer sponsors. For example, they must:

- operate the program in areas where at least one-third of the children would qualify for free or reduced price meals under the school lunch or school breakfast programs, (this requirement applies to all sponsors except for summer camps);

- serve meals that meet minimum nutrition standards;
- be responsible for all records and finances;
- and adhere to all contractual agreements.

A sponsor meeting program requirements will be reimbursed for meals and snacks served to children. In addition, sponsors that prepare their own meals or that have meals prepared in a school will also qualify for USDA-donated foods.

## Other costs covered, too

In addition to meal reimbursements, sponsors get a certain amount to cover operating and administrative costs. Rural sponsors and those who prepare their own meals often have more costly programs to administer than sponsors who contract for the meals they serve. Therefore, rural sponsors and those preparing their own meals earn a higher rate of reimbursement for administrative costs than sponsors who contract with food service management companies.

Since rural sponsors often experience problems getting children to feeding locations, rural sponsors may claim certain transportation costs as operating costs.

## A summer sponsor in Georgia offers some advice

"Transportation—of children and food—is the biggest problem," said Ellen Tiner, describing some of the difficulties encountered by rural sponsors of the Summer Food Service Program for Children.



Tiner, social service coordinator for the Slash Pine Community Action Agency, is well acquainted with these problems. Her agency serves eight southeast Georgia counties, and last summer sponsored the feeding program for 9 weeks at 23 widely scattered sites.

The area the agency serves covers 4,520 square miles, and averages only about 22 people per square mile. It includes part of the region's vast Okefenokee Swamp, with its cypress, Spanish moss, and slash pines.

## Chose sites carefully

Tiner said her agency approached its transportation problems several ways. First, to cut down on the number of children that needed transportation, the agency located the



sites in or near the low-income areas where eligible children live.

Since Slash Pine provided food for ongoing programs of other agencies as well as its own, the agency served a variety of sites, including: a community center, a church, a child development center, schools, outdoor park areas, county and city recreation centers, and training centers for the mentally retarded. The smallest site had about 25 children; the largest, located near a food preparation center, had about 225. Waycross, the largest town in this area, administered its own summer program.

The agency actually provided transportation for about 30 to 40 percent of the youngsters. "We transported children in agency vans," Tiner said, "and volunteers brought carloads of children."

### **Served 23 sites daily**

Although Slash Pine served about 2,000 lunches a day at 23 sites, transportation of food went smoothly, Tiner said, thanks to some borrowed vehicles and a well-organized preparation and delivery system.

Every day, between 2 and 3 o'clock, site supervisors called the central office to order lunches for the next day. The area supervisor then consolidated the information, and called the food preparation centers, to tell them how many lunches would be needed.

Food was prepared at two central kitchens—one at a Head Start center and the other at a high school. Each purchased its own food and had its own 11-day cycle of menus.

The agency's Head Start center, in Coffee County, provided lunches for sites in three counties. Hot and cold meals were prepared on alternate days and delivered to sites in styrofoam chests about a half hour before serving. Three vans—one owned by Slash Pine and two on loan from county training centers, handled the deliveries.



Slash Pine contracted with the Clinch County school system for lunches for the other five counties. Cold bag lunches were prepared at a local high school and delivered in a borrowed refrigerated truck. Lunches were kept cold at the sites until mealtime in refrigerators or styrofoam containers with dry ice.

### **Some advice for others**

Since Slash Pine has sponsored the summer feeding program for 6 years, the staff is experienced. So are a lot of the volunteers. As Pat Lowery, executive director for the agency, said: "We've learned from past mistakes. We've had the opportunity to experiment and learn what works best for us, and that's what we use."

He offered this advice to potential sponsors of rural summer programs:

**Plan ahead.** Start your planning no later than February.

**Select your sites carefully.** Be sure your sites have holding facilities for food, and shelter in case of bad

weather. Select sites in needy areas, so you can eliminate some transportation problems. And choose areas where there can be recreational activities. Having recreational activities helps keep children on the site at mealtime.

**Identify ongoing recreation programs,** and let them be involved in your planning. They can provide staffing for the sites.

**Select your own staff carefully,** because they will supervise the children. Remember that in a rural area, it's important to involve local people. You can use volunteers too, and share CETA workers with other agencies.

**Have alternate plans.** Have alternate sites, in case you need additional space. And have access to additional staff or volunteers, in case you need more help.

*by Linda Klein*

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# Reaching Mothers and Young Children

Six years ago, a young woman named Debbie walked into a health clinic in Pineville, Kentucky, holding her 1-year-old son. She was 7 months pregnant, with little money to buy the food she and her baby needed.

On that cold January day in 1974, Debbie and her son became two of the first participants in the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, known as WIC. Pineville was one of 216 project areas selected by the Food and Nutrition Service to begin the program in 1974.

Today WIC is supplementing the diets of over 1.5 million women and children in the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Participants include women who are preg-

nant or have recently given birth, breastfeeding mothers, infants, and children up to age 5, all of whom are individually certified to have low incomes and to be in nutritional need.

Along with specifically prescribed monthly food packages, participants receive nutrition education. This fall the Food and Nutrition Service awarded \$792,981 in grants for 10 projects to evaluate and improve the WIC program. Three of the projects will be evaluating WIC services in rural areas:

The Michigan Department of Public Health will evaluate the effect of the

WIC program on the utilization of health services in rural areas and among migrant farmworkers.

The Hunterdon Medical Center, a rural WIC agency in west-central New Jersey, will develop a model nutrition education program stressing innovative instructional techniques.

The National Child Nutrition Project in New Jersey will identify the most successful methods of bringing migrant farmworkers into the program.

In rural areas, lack of transportation can make it difficult for many women and children to get the supplemental food help they need. The following article takes a look at how the WIC staff in one area is working to alleviate this problem.







## A mobile WIC clinic helps in Kentucky

In Kentucky's Gateway Health District—which serves 1600 WIC mothers and children in the rural counties of Bath, Menifee, Morgan, Montgomery and Rowan—the WIC staff is using some unusual approaches to reach people living in remote areas.

For example, to serve participants who can't get to the district's five regular clinics, the staff members load a car with files, scales and other equipment and drive to the small town of Jeffersonville in Montgomery County. There, in the town's community building, a nurse, nutritionist,

clerk, and community health worker set up a temporary clinic for people in the surrounding area.

They use simple, portable equipment: a bathroom scale to weigh older children and pregnant women; tape measures, attached to walls and tables, to measure height. But the system works, and makes the program more accessible to people in this part of the district.

At all of the district's clinics, the staff tries to be flexible in scheduling, particularly when bad weather makes transportation especially difficult. As nutritionist Georgia Walter, Gateway District's WIC coordinator explained, "During the winter, we have a big problem with snow and ice-covered roads. A lot of our patients live up in hollows, in remote areas. They can't get out, and we can't get in. Last January, schools were closed most of

the month, and nothing moved.

"The main thing we can do," she said, "is to be flexible in our scheduling. We encourage our patients to call in and reschedule their appointments for a time when they can make it to the clinics. Then we arrange for our staff to be there."

### Referrals are important

In the Gateway District, outreach is accomplished in a variety of ways. As might be expected, word-of-mouth is an important means of communication. WIC participants bring in family and friends who are also eligible for the program.

Much of the outreach effort, however, depends on coordination and cooperation within the health department itself and with other agencies and individuals in the district.

For instance, when birth certificates are received at county health centers, clerks identify babies with low birth weights and send their parents a letter which begins: "Congratulations on the birth of your new baby! We want to tell you about a program we have at the Montgomery county health center. It is called the WIC program."

The letter tells parents that because their baby weighed less than 5½ pounds at birth, the child may qualify for the special supplemental food help WIC provides. It urges them to call the health center and make an appointment soon.

The WIC program also gets patients referred from other health department programs, such as Family Planning and Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (known as EPSDT).

When the health department first started operating WIC, the staff publicized the program through the media and notified doctors and other individuals working with various agencies and institutions: schools, local universities, Headstart, social service and social insurance bureaus, the comprehensive care and mental health program, and Extension Service. The Department's health educator stays in contact with people in these organizations, which continue to refer women and children to the program.

### **Changing food habits**

Nutrition education is an important part of the WIC program, and a challenge, whether the setting is rural or urban. But it can be especially difficult in rural areas like this, where extended families are common and traditions are strong.

One of the common nutrition problems Georgia Walter sees is the practice of leaving children on bottles until they're 2 or 3 years old. This often leads to anemia because children tend to fill up on fluids and don't consume enough other foods. It can also cause dental caries, since chil-

dren's mouths are constantly exposed to milk and other beverages, many of which contain sugar.

"There's also a problem with some mothers introducing baby foods at too early an age," Walter said, "sometimes as young as 2 weeks. This can lead to weight problems later on."

In general, she added, people in this area tend to consume a lot of carbonated beverages, fried foods, biscuits and gravy, and they add fats to vegetables. "This can lead to weight problems, as well as other diseases," she said. "I usually pick out the worst problems and start there. I start slowly, suggesting a few changes at a time. Dietary habits are very difficult to change."

### **Mothers get counseling**

Most of the nutrition education takes place on a one-to-one basis, but occasionally the nutritionists give group lessons while the women are waiting to be certified or to pick up vouchers. They cover: ways to prepare and use WIC foods, nutritional needs, and shopping and general food preparation tips. Posters, leaflets, film strips and plastic food models are used to illustrate the 10- to 20-minute classes.

Other nutrition activities for WIC participants have included talks given by La Leche League to nursing mothers and pregnant women interested in nursing, and classes by health department hygienists on nutritious snacks and dental care.

"One of the really positive things about the WIC program, I feel, is the fact that we can provide nutrition education," Walter said.

"We try to teach our patients why the WIC foods are good for them, and how these foods fit into their total diet. But most important, we try to straighten out some of the dietary problems that have caused poor health and made these people eligible for the program in the first place."

*by Linda Klein*



# A Rural District Builds a School Breakfast Program

**S**chools in Mansfield, Ohio, have been serving breakfast for 2 years. From the start the district's breakfast program has had the full support of the school superintendent and the food service staff.

Like most schools starting breakfast programs—in urban as well as rural areas—Mansfield schools already had lunch programs, so adding breakfast was not difficult. In this article, school administrators and food service staff members talk about how they got the program going, the adjustments they made, and some of the benefits they've seen.

Through the School Breakfast Program, schools get Federal assistance from USDA in the form of: cash reimbursements for meals; donated foods; funds for equipment needed to store, prepare, transport, or serve food; and technical guidance.







## Breakfast began in a few schools at first

"A rural district can successfully operate a breakfast program," says Mary Fraker, manager of food services for Mansfield, Ohio, schools. "Simplicity," she says, "is the key." The Mansfield school district started the program by serving simple breakfasts in a few schools at first, then expanded it to other schools.

Mansfield, located in the midst of rich rolling central Ohio farm land, is a quiet rural community gradually being invaded by industry as machinery modernizes farming. Nevertheless, it is far from urban. Horse drawn buggies from the neighboring Amish settlements can be seen on the secondary roads. Family incomes range from very low to moderately high.

All 17 schools in the district, including the two high schools, now serve breakfast. The menus are very simple: a box of cereal, a carton of milk, and fruit juice. For variation, schools sometimes serve a fortified bread product instead of cereal, and fresh fruit—an apple, banana, or orange—instead of fruit juice.

"This breakfast meets USDA nutri-

tion requirements," said Fraker, "and the only piece of equipment needed is a refrigerator."

Fraker had the support of James Fox, superintendent of schools, when she implemented the program 2 years ago. Fox pushed for the school breakfast program and won the support of the school board. He advised the board that some of the district's schools—those with high percentages of children qualifying for free or reduced-price meals—would soon be required by State mandate to begin breakfast programs. He went on to explain the need in other schools as well and urged the board to adopt the program districtwide. Board members, some with pessimism, went along with his ideas and the program was started.

At first, some school principals were skeptical. "Although principals didn't have any bad comments about the program, some of them didn't relish the idea," said Fraker. "They thought there would be all kinds of problems."

## Made some adjustments

The problems encountered were not unique. Like any organization, industry, or agency adding a new function, schools had to make some adjustments in staffing, paperwork and scheduling. But, said Fraker, the changes were not major.

Fraker found she could meet the need for extra labor by adding hours to the schedules of certain employees, mostly cashiers. "In schools with high participation, I have the cashier work 5 hours instead of the usual 2, so she can help make up time used by the head cook on breakfast," Fraker explained.

With such a simple breakfast, cleanup is easy, and the children help. The janitor is paid for an extra half hour. The one addition to the food service staff was a breakfast supervisor, added to Fraker's administrative staff.

At first, storage was a problem because the cereal was so bulky. "We solved that problem by making a deal with a wholesale house," said Jane Snyder, breakfast supervisor. "The cereal is ordered in large supplies through the wholesaler, and then de-

livered to each school in small shipments as the school needs it." By purchasing in large quantities, the district pays a lower price for the cereal and saves storage costs.

## Working on scheduling

Because bus schedules in a rural district are tight, Fraker said, "time is of the utmost importance" in planning and serving morning meals. With a simple menu, it takes only minutes for schools to prepare breakfast and only 15 minutes to serve it. In Mansfield, breakfast runs from 7:30 to 8:45. The first bus arrives at 7:45.

The district still has some scheduling problems to work out—for example, some principals allow children extra time to eat if the buses are late, and some do not. But school administrators have found serving breakfast has actually alleviated some other problems associated with busing.

"Before the program," says Murphy Moultry, principal of the John Sherman Middle School, "the kids would get off the bus, and, for lack of



something better to do, would get into fights and scuffles on the playground. Now they go directly to the cafeteria. Those who do not eat sit with their friends and chat. We are taking care of the kids needs, and they enjoy that."

Moultry said the program has improved students' attitudes in class, too. "Before they walked into class half awake," he said.

Albert Paetsch, principal of the Empire School said he didn't need to be convinced of the need for the breakfast program. "Most of the students who attend this school are from low-income homes," he explained.

"Many times I found that behavior problems were stemming from the fact that the child had nothing to eat since his school lunch the day before," he added.

"Before the school breakfast began," recalled Margaret Sweat,

Empire School's head cook, "Mr. Paetsch would come into the cafeteria in the morning with a child in tow and say, "Fix this child something to eat!"

"The children were sick or nearly sick because of no food at home," said Paetsch.

#### **Participation averages 1,100**

Districtwide breakfast participation averages about 1,100 children daily. Eighty-six percent of all breakfasts are served to children qualifying for free school meals, and about 5 percent are served to children qualifying for reduced-price meals. About 9 percent of all breakfasts are served to children paying full price. Reduced price meals cost 10 cents; full price meals cost 30 cents in the elementary schools and 35 cents in the middle and high schools.

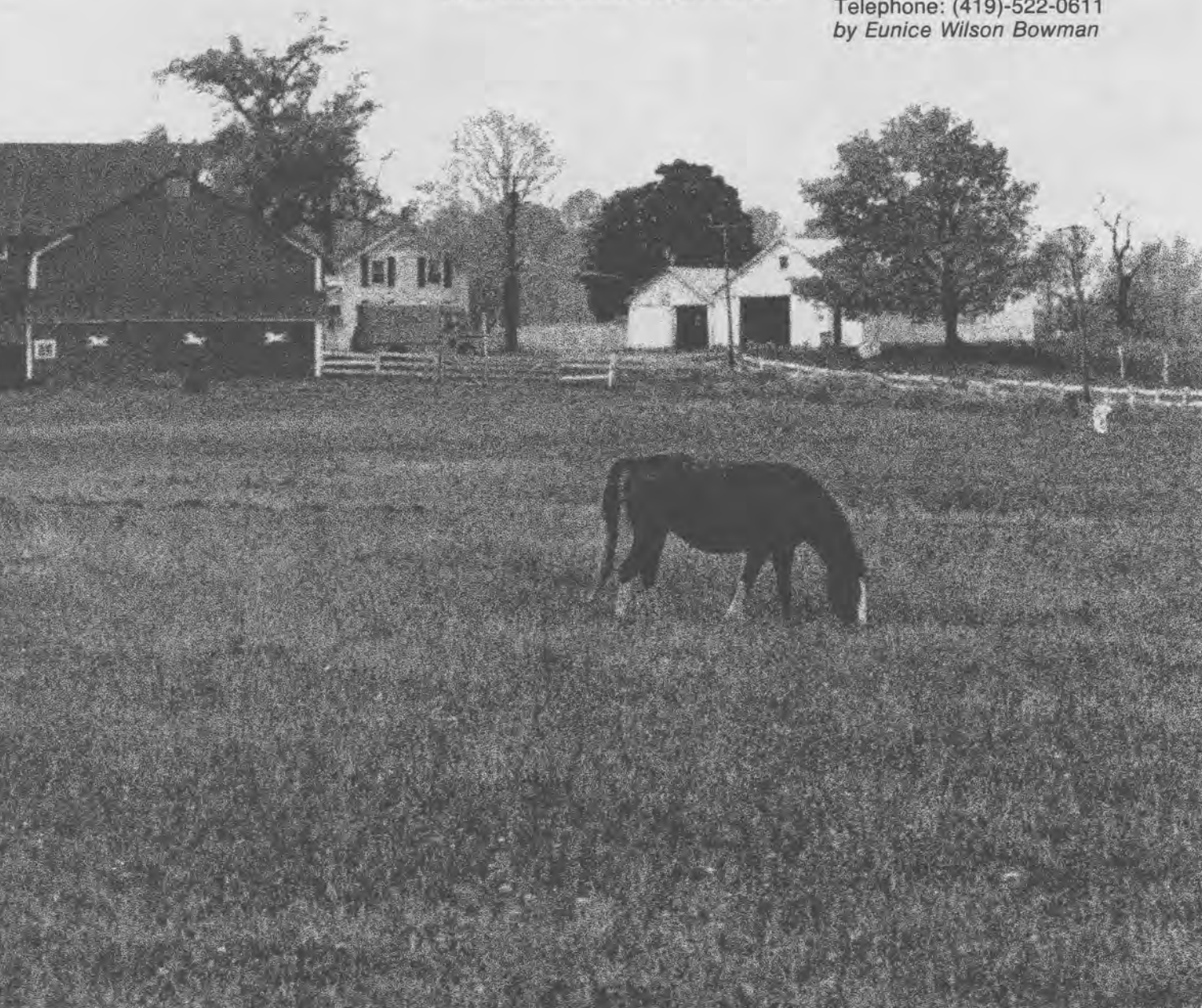
From the beginning, the school breakfast program has required little or no district funds. Department of

Agriculture equipment assistance monies paid for 75 percent of the cost of the 16 milk cabinets and 2 freezers schools needed, and the rest came from State funds and funds already included in the district's food service budget. Meal reimbursements provided through the School Breakfast Program cover food costs as well as preparation and operating expenses.

Mary Fraker says careful planning helps keep costs down. "I continually watch prices, and make menu changes accordingly," she said.

For other schools interested in the breakfast program, Fraker has this advice: "Start in one or two schools at a time before you go all out. Work with those schools for a month or two—this will help iron out unexpected little problems. Then, gradually add schools until they're all in operation."

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*by Eunice Wilson Bowman*





# Schools Buy Farm Fresh Produce

**M**any schools are exploring ways to buy and serve more fresh fruits and vegetables. Here's how two school districts arranged to buy fresh produce directly from local farmers. The districts, one in California and one in New Hampshire, have found that direct purchasing not only benefits the schools, but helps the local farm economy as well.





## **In Sacramento, California**

The cafeteria managers in the San Juan School District, near Sacramento, California, knew that when they ordered farm fresh fruits and vegetables, *farm fresh* is just what they'd get.

They knew because the man who sold the produce was the same man who grew, picked, and delivered it to them at 6 a.m. each Monday. He is a local farmer, involved last summer in a test to help San Juan find out if purchasing directly from the farmer is feasible in a large-scale food service operation.

During the summer, San Juan kitchen staffs prepared nearly 1,000 meals daily, serving five schools as well as two senior and child care centers. Gwendy Post, the food service staff member responsible for ordering the produce, suspended an agreement with a wholesaler for the summer months and contracted with a local farmer. It was the farmer's job to supply all the produce for school meals either from his own farm, other farms in the area, or when necessary from the wholesale market.

### **And what happened?**

"We compared the prices of produce purchased directly from local growers to the prices wholesalers charged for the same items," said Post. "We saved an average of 36 percent."

For the San Juan District this was welcome news at a time when rising food prices and restrained budgets are forcing many schools to pass cost increases on to students. Typically when the cost of a balanced school lunch increases by 10 cents, 14 percent of those students who ordinarily buy lunches drop out of the school's lunch program, opting instead for brown bags or heading for the nearest fast food or snack outlet.

Although the produce prices

dropped, the quality didn't. "In fact the quality of the fruits and vegetables got high marks from all of our summer cafeteria managers," said Post. The cafeteria managers filed weekly reports indicating their own and their customers' degree of satisfaction with the direct-purchased produce.

"It was interesting to note that the elderly people eating at senior citizen's centers were exceptionally pleased with the produce. Probably because it was more like the produce they enjoyed as children," said Post.

The results of the test, which showed that San Juan could maintain quality and reduce costs at the same time, have prompted other schools to investigate direct purchasing.

### **Benefits small farmers**

Marc Lienwand, the farmer who helped set up San Juan's direct purchasing test, is quick to point out the benefits to the farmer. "The small or family-owned farm operation is offered another market for its goods," he said, "and one that pays a bit better than the usual wholesale prices. Getting into the school food service market could be a great help for the 2 million or so family owned farms in the U.S."

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*by Rick Rice*

## **And Concord, New Hampshire**

Efforts to revitalize the local farm economy and improve school meals go hand in hand in New Hampshire, too. As a result of a project begun in January 1979, Concord schools are now buying fresh fruits and vegetables directly from local farmers. They're storing the produce in a brand new root cellar, built with donations from the community—and located beneath the school superintendent's office!

Now instead of having to rely solely on vegetables shipped in from other States during the winter months, Concord schools can also serve locally-grown vegetables, planted in the spring, harvested in the fall, and stored safely and economically for several months.

### **Storage is simple**

Root cellaring is an old-fashioned but effective method of storing foods. It requires no expensive refrigeration equipment, uses little energy, and allows people to store huge amounts with relatively little work. The Concord root cellar is a 35- by 15-foot area in what once was the leaky cement basement of the school district's administrative offices.

Building the cellar involved putting up 2- by 4-inch wooden boards, lining the ceiling and walls with 4-inch thick rigid polystyrene insulation and plywood panels, and installing ventilation grills and thermometers to control temperature levels.

Now in full use, the cellar has several 5-foot tall wooden bins, spanning about 6 feet each, located in the center of the room. The bins hold root

Below: Bob Munson, Samuel Kaymen, and school superintendent Calvin Cleveland (L. to R.) visit the root cellar.  
Right: Kaymen spends an afternoon with Concord students in one of their "winter storage gardens."

crops, such as carrots, buried in layers of sand and divided by boards. As the bins are emptied, the boards are removed to expose the next layer of vegetables. Shelves lining the walls hold apples and other produce not stored in the bins.

Concord schools began filling the root cellar last fall. By the end of the school year, Bob Munson, the city's school food service director, expects to purchase 5,000 to 6,000 pounds of carrots, cabbage, beets, potatoes, rutabagas, parsnips, apples, and other fruits and vegetables.

#### **Has required some changes**

Munson has found that serving locally grown vegetables has required some changes in the school district's food service. For example, meal

preparation takes more time, since the root crops need to be cleaned, cut up, and cooked a bit longer than canned vegetables. But, he says, the extra time is worth it: "It means we can serve crispy fresh carrots, which are a treat for the kids. Much of the old canned product was wasted."

The cost to purchase last year's imported and processed vegetables roughly equals the current cost to purchase and prepare an equivalent amount of locally grown fresh foods. So monetary savings are not the most significant result, Munson said, referring to the expected \$1,200 net gain in local purchases this year.

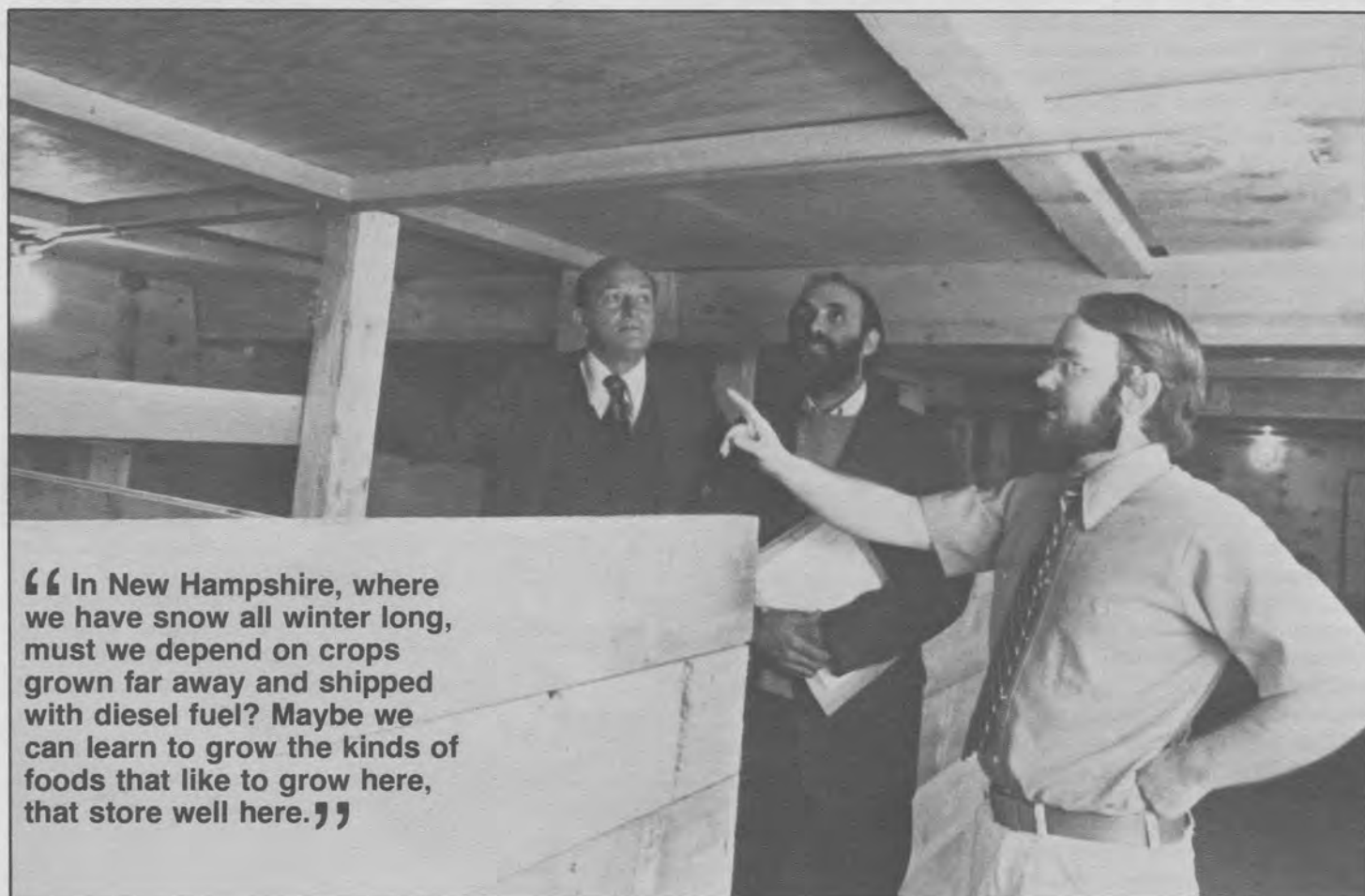
"But," he said, "we're getting the freshest possible product, keeping the money within the State, and saving energy."

Currently, 85 percent of all the food

consumed in New Hampshire is shipped in from other States, and until now the lunches and breakfasts served in New Hampshire schools have included almost no locally grown foods.

#### **Buy directly from farmers**

The Concord district now buys most of its fresh produce directly from local farmers who participate in a marketing project sponsored by the National Association of Organic Farmers, in cooperation with Vista. Fifteen farmers are currently participating in the project, which has as its goal reestablishing the once strong ties between local agriculture and the community. Project coordinators began by organizing a local farmers' market and then worked to



“ In New Hampshire, where we have snow all winter long, must we depend on crops grown far away and shipped with diesel fuel? Maybe we can learn to grow the kinds of foods that like to grow here, that store well here.”



with diesel fuel? Maybe," he says, "we can learn to grow the kinds of foods that like to grow there, that store well here."

"The Winter Storage Garden," one of Kaymen's lesson plans, includes a provision for small student gardens of foods storable in a root cellar. Thanks to the support of Edwina Czajkowski, who directs school environmental education for the district, more than a dozen classrooms are now taking part in the gardening project.

The first plots were planted on community gardening land last June, and by September students had a bounty of squash, pumpkins, flint corn, carrots, potatoes and sunflowers. A portion of the harvest went into the root cellar. But some was cooked right away and served in the school cafeteria, where table cards told student customers which class had grown the vegetable of the day.

### **Involving other schools**

With the root cellar and lesson plans well underway in Concord, Kaymen wants to get the materials, ideas, and experience to all school districts in the State. He feels that public education, coupled with a system of low energy food technology and improved marketing, will encourage small scale farming and put more locally grown food in school cafeterias.

For more information, write:  
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*by Dennis Shimkoski*

involve the schools and build the root cellar.

Samuel Kaymen, president of the National Association of Organic Farmers and agricultural coordinator for the Northern New England Center for Appropriate Technology, came up with the root cellar idea and played a key role in getting schools interested.

Kaymen presented the idea at a January 1979 meeting of the State School Service Association. He later won the support of five different groups and agencies, including a bank and an insulation company that together contributed more than \$3,000 in cash and building materials for the cellar.

The bank, which is depositor-owned, was already supporting the farmers' market by providing publicity

and space—its parking lot in downtown Concord is where the farmers sell their produce every Saturday during the growing season.

### **Lessons for students**

Kaymen is also working to heighten teachers' and students' awareness of food, nutrition, and agriculture. He's developed 30 lesson plans and exercises which encourage kids to think not only about what they eat and how it contributes to their health, but also about how foods are grown and marketed.

The lessons convey what Kaymen feels is an important message: "In New Hampshire where we have snow all winter long, must we depend on crops grown far away and shipped



# Family Day Care Comes to Lewiston



*When a mother of young children decides to look for work outside her home, she faces an important and often difficult decision: where to get the best care for her children while she's away from them. For low-income women with infants and very young children, it can be a great challenge to find good and affordable care.*

*The article that follows tells how a community service agency in Maine—the Catholic Diocese of Maine Human Relations Service—organized a network of family day care homes to help meet the need for good, low-cost child care in a five-county area. Through the network, the Diocese channels aid from several sources, including Federal reimbursements for meals provided by the Child Care Food Program.*

*The Child Care Food Program is a nationwide program administered by the Food and Nutrition Service in cooperation with State and local agencies. The program helps child care centers, family and group day care homes, and recreation facilities*

*operating outside school hours to serve nourishing, well-balanced meals to children.*

*Nonprofit, nonresidential child care institutions may join the program on their own, or they may join under the auspices of a qualified sponsoring organization. Family and group day care homes, however, must have a sponsoring organization. Organizations such as units of State or local governments, community agencies, and churches frequently become sponsoring organizations.*

*A family day care home consists of a single staff member licensed to care for up to six children, including no more than two of her own. A group day care home may have no more than 12 children under the care of two or more staff members.*

*For more information on how the Child Care Food Program can help child care centers and day care homes, contact your State Department of Education or the nearest regional office of the Food and Nutrition Service.*

**I**t was a shock to see cows by the side of the road as I drove to work," said Carolyn Davis, recalling days 5 years ago when she began working in rural and small town Maine.

Since 1974, Davis has been working as family day care coordinator for the Catholic Diocese of Maine Human Relations Service in Lewiston. When Davis took the job, the Diocese had just received a grant from the State Department of Health and Welfare to set up a network of family day care homes in a four-county area covering more than 4,000 square miles.

Working essentially alone, with the help of one clerical assistant, Davis had to: recruit and train family day care mothers; locate and place children needing care; and put together the administrative structure needed to channel State and Federal assistance, including Child Care Food Program assistance, to the homes.

Carolyn Davis is like many of the new migrants to rural parts of Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire. She came, with her family, to find a simpler style of life. She is well-educated, with skills to offer the neglected little towns whose populations shrank or remained stable for half a century as young people were drawn to the cities. Before moving to Maine, Davis had worked in the industrial city of Manchester, New Hampshire, where she had helped the Greater Manchester Day Care Association set up its first family day care network.

## Similar in some ways

In some ways, she said, the initial tasks of building a network are the same no matter where you are. For example, in both urban and rural areas, most people who apply for family day care are not licensed, and making sure they get licensed is a first step. To qualify for Federal meal reimbursements and other aid, homes must be licensed or have approval from Federal, State, or local governments.

Also, in both urban and rural areas, people tend to be drawn to family day care work for the independence it allows. They're often hesitant to become affiliated with an association, fearing it will complicate their lives with bureaucracy and red tape. Combatting this fear is another part of recruitment in both areas.

There are significant differences, however. "The biggest difference

from Manchester was geography," Davis said. "There, if I had to, I could visit every home in a day. It was fairly easy to place a child because all the homes were fairly close to one another.

"In the city if a placement doesn't work out, there may be another home nearby. In the country you have no options. You may have a child to place . . . and the only opening may be 20 miles away. The logistics are much harder.

"The other problem was visibility," Davis added. "In Manchester, there was a child care center, run by our association in a red brick building—a former schoolhouse—which people knew. People could identify our service. In Maine, it was painful because we were so invisible.

"When I started there was virtually no licensed day care and nothing besides informal day care or private babysitting arrangements. There were no centers. Nothing was organized."

### Recruiting and licensing

Davis set out to recruit children and providers by talking to people with extensive community contacts—extension service agents, public health nurses, welfare workers, town clerks. She hung posters, containing pockets stuffed with brochures, in post offices, town offices, wherever it was permitted.



Carolyn Davis gives 5-year-old Alyssia a hug. Alyssia is one of the 187 children served by the network's 37 homes.

She recruited for homes through newspaper advertisements. "Wanted: Warm, caring, individual to care for children, infancy to 13, at home for Federally funded day care program. Must be licensed."

Licensing presented special difficulties. "It took from 6 to 12 months," said Davis, "so you had to recruit someone willing to wait and also willing to put up the licensing fee of \$10, plus the cost of any necessary changes."

Fire and water inspections required for a license were time-consuming. The water inspection is required of homes using well water, something not necessary for homes in towns and cities. Fire inspection often took months because it was done by a separate State agency which also handled all fire investigations and licensing of restaurants and other public places.

"It was impossible to get a fire inspection during the holidays because all the bars wanted to be ready for New Year's Eve," Davis recalled. The unit licensing child care providers now has two fire inspectors on its staff, so the processing moves more quickly.

Fire inspectors look carefully at wood stoves, a popular source of economical heating in Maine. Requirements for wood stoves in a residence differ from those for child care homes. Often a visit from an inspector will mean changes or additional expenses before a home can be licensed to accept children.

Distance is also a factor in licensing time. "If you have 10 homes waiting in a city such as Lewiston and only one in small country places, all far from one another, you can be sure that Lewiston will be taken first because more can be done in less time."

### Need was apparent

The need for family day care was apparent from her first days on the job, according to Davis.

"I remember visiting a mother way up in the far reaches. The mother was only 23 years old and had six children for whom she needed care. We were able to place the children, and she went to work in a small factory making wood items."

Davis believes the need for child care becomes greater all the time. "Nationally 30 percent of mothers



Linda Rogers, who cares for Carolyn Davis' two young children, learned about day care from neighbors. Until a year ago she worked in a yarn mill as a "twister," running a machine with 80 bobbins 8 hours a day. When Linda heard that a family day care provider in her home town of Lisbon Falls was moving, she applied. At that time her son David, age 2, was cared for by a licensed day care provider associated with Davis' program.

Linda Rogers' workday is typical of most family day care mothers, beginning at 7:30 a.m. and ending at 5:30 p.m. She receives \$27 a week for care of a full-time child, plus meal reimbursements. She gets extra money for caring for infants, and less for part-time care.

Carolyn Davis is pleased that her own children are together after school. She believes the familiar setting of a home with a single caretaker is important to a small child's adjustment and perception of life.



with children under the age of 1 are in the work force. Inflation is pushing them out to work. In Maine, which has a very high cost of living, this is particularly true," she said.

There are now 37 homes participating in the network Carolyn Davis organized. Together the homes serve 187 children, including Davis' son Ian, age 6, and her daughter Laura, age 2.

The Diocese pays the homes a flat rate of \$27 per child per week for general care. As a Child Care Food Program sponsor, the agency also provides reimbursements for every breakfast, lunch, supper, or snack the homes serve. Parents of the children pay the Diocese directly for care and meals. The amounts vary according to the family's income.

"Nobody's rich," said Davis, describing both the children in care—two-thirds of whom qualify for USDA free or reduced price meal rates—and the day care providers, whose incomes are varied.

### **Help with meal planning**

To get Federal assistance through the Child Care Food Program, homes must be affiliated with an authorized sponsoring agency, they must serve meals that meet minimum nutrition requirements, and they must keep records. Sponsors, such as Davis' agency, handle the administrative chores and paperwork necessary to obtain reimbursement.

To simplify day care providers' bookkeeping chores, Davis devised a menu list with numbers. Using USDA meal patterns as a guide, she listed 40 possible lunches or suppers, 19 breakfasts, and 20 snacks. The providers simply put the numbers on a form which covers a week. Under each number there is a line for substitutions and a line for additions.

For instance, snack 5 is a banana and English muffin. If a provider serves cantaloupe instead of a banana, she simply jots down the substitution. In addition to reducing recordkeeping chores, the lists give providers an easy-to-understand framework for planning a variety of well-balanced meals.

### **Work closely with homes**

As the network has grown, so has the administrative workload. There are now two offices—in Lewiston and

in Waterville. The staff includes a program specialist, a secretary, and three field workers, who travel 4 days a week.

The field workers are the day care providers' lifeline to the agency. They assist in recruiting, visit the homes, and provide guidance and support. It is the field workers who review the menus and talk over any food service problems. Together with Carolyn Davis and program specialist Cammy Collins, the field workers also plan monthly training workshops, which include nutrition and menu planning as topics.

The training workshops are not held in the heavy snow months—January, February, and March—and a schedule of smaller meetings may soon be arranged to cut down on travel and gas consumption. Not all roads are paved and "every trip seems to be at least 50 miles," says Betsey Reynolds, who is proud she hasn't been stuck in the snow in 3 years on the job. Her sturdy station wagon transports high chairs, walkers, playpens, gates and large toys, all provided by the agency. Many of the smaller toys and furniture belong to the families themselves.

In Maine, as in Manchester, Carolyn Davis said, the "fathers" in family day care homes often provide valuable support. One, for example, took time off from work to scrape the lead paint off the woodwork in the family's 1861 farmhouse, in order to meet a government requirement. Another worked out an insurance policy covering all the homes in the network. The policy is comparable to that available for schools but rare in day care. In some homes, fathers help with grocery shopping—a big job for day care providers—and meal preparation.

Family day care, Davis said, is practical and individualistic, qualities as natural to the Maine landscape as pine trees. Davis' concepts and skills, developed in urban areas, have helped family day care take root and grow in the open country of the North.  
*by Catherine Tim Jensen*

For more information, write:  
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Lewiston, Maine 04240





Anything from asparagus to zucchini may appear on the menu at Irene Woodward's family day care home. The family's 88-acre farm is the test site for vegetables for the Maine Cooperative Extension Service. Irene's husband, Charles, plants as many as 10 seed varieties to find those most successful in the Maine climate and soil.

The Woodwards were early migrants from urban life to Northern New England. Twenty years ago Charles sold his share of a printing business in the Boston area, and they moved to Maine. He wanted to learn to grow vegetables, and, by luck, found a job with the University of Maine at the experimental station.

Later, when he was able to buy the farm near Leeds, summer growing was established there. The result was a saving to the State and a convenience to Charles. Now, during the winter months, he specializes in growing apples for the university at Highmore Farm in nearby Monmouth.

The three Woodward daughters are almost grown—one in college, one in high school and one in eighth grade, so the day care children, Alyssia, 5, and Emily, 2, fill a void. They play in the barn and field, or in the kitchen overlooking the Androscoggin River, while their own mother works at a health center nearby as a lab technician.





At Judy Chateauvert's home in the country near Greene, Maine, Michael, age 5, and Andrea, age 3, have been watching their new baby brother grow and change. He started coming with them to day care when he was 8 weeks old.

Judy also cares for Matthew, age 5, whose father died recently in an accident. Judy watchfully eased him through the shock, the moments of shyness and sudden tears. Now, Matthew and Michael play at being woodsmen, working as they've seen their fathers work,

tossing hooks into trees, sawing wood and piling logs. Michael's sister, Amy, age 7, joins the other children after school.

At the Chateauvert's, the children play in a field marked by typical New England stone fences. Years ago Judy's father-in-law used it as a hayfield. Later, Judy and her husband built their home by the field and put up swings and a picnic table for their children, who are now almost grown.

The field has a slope for sledding in winter and tumbling barefoot in

the summer. In the next field Judy grows blueberries which the children sometimes pick and eat as they play. Each year, Judy freezes a winter supply.

Blueberries and raspberries grow in the Chateauvert field, too. During the growing season, a large garden provides tomatoes, squash and many other vegetables for the children's meals and snacks. Judy also buys foods not native to Maine, such as cantaloupe, because she wants to introduce the children a variety foods.







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