



# FOOD JOURNAL

Volume XVIII, Number 10 - October 15, 2004

## REPORT CALLS FOR NATION TO COMBAT CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Reversing the rapid rise in obesity among American children and youth will require a multi-pronged approach by schools, families, communities, industry, and government that would be as comprehensive and ambitious as national anti-smoking efforts, according to a new report from the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. The report notes that no single intervention or group acting alone can stop the epidemic of childhood obesity, and the steps recommended by the committee that wrote the report all aim to increase and improve opportunities for children to engage in physical activity and eat a healthy diet.

"We must act now and we must do this as a nation," said Jeffrey Koplan, Vice President for Academic Health Affairs, Emory University, Atlanta, and former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Koplan chaired the committee of 19 experts in child health, nutrition, fitness, and public health who developed the report in response to a request from Congress for an obesity prevention plan based on sound science and the most promising approaches. "Obesity may be a personal issue, but at the same time, families, communities, and corporations all are adversely affected by obesity and all bear responsibility for changing social norms to better promote healthier lifestyles," Koplan added. "We recognize that several of

our recommendations challenge entrenched aspects of American life and business, but if we are not willing to make some fundamental shifts in our attitudes and actions, obesity's toll on our nation's health and well-being will only worsen."

Among specific steps recommended by the report is a call for schools to implement nutritional standards for all foods and beverages served on school grounds, including those from vending machines. The committee recommended that schools expand opportunities for all students to engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. The report also calls on the food, beverage, and entertainment industries to voluntarily develop and implement guidelines for advertising and marketing directed at children and youth. The report advocates that Congress give the Federal Trade Commission the authority to monitor compliance with the guidelines and establish external review boards to prohibit ads that fail to comply. Restaurants should continue to expand their offerings of nutritious foods and beverages, and should provide calorie content and other nutrition information.

The Committee acknowledges that parents must play their part as well, by providing healthy foods in the home and encouraging physical activity by limiting their children's recreational TV, videogame, and computer time to less than two hours a day, among other means.

Community organizations and state and local governments can make a difference by implementing programs that promote nutrition and regular physical activity and by supporting the establishment or revision of zoning ordinances and comprehensive plans to include or enhance sidewalks, bike paths, parks and playgrounds, and other recreational facilities.

The committee did not call for a “junk food tax” or the repeal of agricultural subsidies. However, it did recommend that federal programs such as the Food Stamp Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) support pilot programs to increase participants’ access to nutritious foods including fruits and vegetables.

Additional information about the various categories of recommendations are contained below:

### Influence of Schools on Healthy Eating & Exercise

The committee urges new policies to ensure that all foods and beverages available at schools are consistent with nutrition guidelines. A 2000 report from the General Accounting Office found that competitive foods were sold in 98 percent of secondary schools, 74 percent of middle schools, and 43 percent of elementary schools.

According to the report, schools should implement new nutritional standards for all foods and beverages served or sold on their grounds. These standards should be developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in consultation with independent scientific advisers and should include standards for fat and sugar content. The committee recognized that many schools rely on funds raised by the sale of competitive foods and beverages and the advertising that may accompany these sales. Schools should develop and enact policies to make themselves as free of advertising as possible, the report says. As alternatives, other fund-raising activities, such as walkathons, should be encouraged.

To counter trends of decreasing physical activity among school-age children, schools were advised to provide opportunities for students to engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily, the report says. Schools should provide physical education classes that last 30 to 60 minutes each day and expand opportunities beyond traditional physical education classes to create or enhance intramural sports, activity clubs, walking and biking to school, and other venues and programs.

The committee called on school health services to play a more prominent role in addressing obesity by measuring each student’s weight, height, and body mass index (BMI) annually and providing the results to the students and families.

### Healthy Eating and Activity at Home

Although many societal factors affect children’s eating and activity habits, parents can exert a profound influence on their children by promoting healthy foods and an active lifestyle from an early age and serving as role models, the report says. Parents can encourage their children to develop a healthy, varied diet by introducing new foods. Studies show that repeated exposure is most critical during the early years of life and that it can take five to 10 exposures to a new food before a child will accept it. In addition, parents should consider smaller portion sizes, encourage children to stop eating when they feel full, and avoid using food as a reward.

Parents also should stock their homes with healthy products, particularly fruits and vegetables, to encourage their kids to choose them as snacks. Many concerns have been raised about whether increased consumption of sweetened beverages, such as soft drinks and flavored drinks, is linked to the rise of childhood obesity. By the time they are 14 years old, 52 percent of boys and 32 percent of girls are drinking three or more eight-ounce servings of soda a day. The links between sweetened beverage consumption and BMI are not definitive, the report notes.

However, the committee recommended that children be encouraged to avoid sodas and other high-calorie, low-nutrient beverages.

Parents can encourage children to make physical activity a regular part of their lives by engaging in active play or sports with them, providing equipment and opportunities, and by cheering on children's active pursuits. In addition, parents should decrease their children's inactivity by limiting recreational TV viewing as well as video and computer game playing to less than two hours a day. Studies have shown that the prevalence of obesity is highest among kids who watch several hours of television each day or who have TV sets in their bedrooms.

### Industry Contributions to Addressing Obesity

The food and beverage industries spend \$10 billion to \$12 billion annually marketing directly to children and youth, the committee found. The average child views more than 40,000 TV commercials each year and more than half of TV ads directed at kids promote high-calorie foods and beverages such as candy, snack foods, fast foods, soft drinks, and sweetened breakfast cereals. In addition, the entertainment industry promotes many products that encourage sedentary behaviors.

While research suggests that the cumulative impact of long-term exposure to such advertisements may adversely affect kids' eating habits and activity levels, there is insufficient evidence directly linking advertising to childhood obesity. The committee recommended an approach to the marketing of foods, beverages, and sedentary leisure pursuits to kids that would be similar to that recommended for controlling alcohol advertising.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) should convene a national conference of industry, business, and public health representatives as well as other stakeholders to establish standards for marketing foods, beverages, and sedentary entertainment, and

guidelines for evaluating the effectiveness of the standards. The industries would be responsible for implementing the standards and guidelines. Monitoring mechanisms and advertising codes should be used by the industries and external review groups. Furthermore, Congress should empower the Federal Trade Commission with the regulatory authority to monitor compliance, scrutinize marketing practices, and establish external review boards to investigate complaints and to prohibit ads that may be deceptive or that have "particular appeal," but conflict with principles of healthful eating and physical activity.

Given Americans' increasing reliance on prepared foods and restaurants for meals and snacks, food packages and restaurant menus or displays should enhance the nutrition information they provide, to help consumers make informed choices, the report says. More restaurants should expand their offerings to include healthier meal options and provide nutrition information on menus or at the point of sale.

### Impact of Communities on Obesity

State and local governments need to work with developers and community groups to find ways to increase opportunities for physical activity in communities and neighborhoods. In many areas, children do not have safe places to bike, walk, play games, and otherwise be physically active because of traffic, lack of land, or high crime rates. These issues are often of particular concern for subgroups of the population at high risk for obesity, such as low-income families who live in areas without recreational facilities or ready access to grocery stores that stock affordable fresh fruits and vegetables.

Community groups should advocate for sidewalks, bike paths, parks and playgrounds, recreational centers, and other opportunities for physical activities. Also, local communities should encourage access to healthful foods. Local governments should work to increase access to venues for activity and develop pro-

grams to encourage walking and bicycling to school.

### Involvement of Health Professionals

Health insurers and health plans should designate childhood obesity prevention as a priority health issue and should include screening and obesity prevention services in routine clinical practice, the report says.

Pediatricians, family physicians, nurses, and other health care providers should actively discuss their patients' weight and BMI with parents and with the children themselves in a sensitive and age-appropriate manner. The report also recommends that parents seek information about their children's weight status from their health care providers. Health professionals' training programs and professional organizations should require that knowledge and skills related to obesity prevention be incorporated into their curricula and examinations so that health professionals have the awareness and skills to tackle these issues.

The study was sponsored by the DHHS Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; the National Institutes of Health's Division of Nutrition Research Coordination; and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Institute of Medicine is a private, nonprofit institution that provides health policy advice under a congressional charter granted to the National Academy of Sciences.

*Copies of Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance are available from the National Academies Press; telephone 202/334-3313, toll-free 800/624-6242, or on the Internet at [www.nap.edu](http://www.nap.edu).*

## CHOOSE A NEW TREAT THIS HALLOWEEN

The American Dietetic Association reminds us that we should not forget about the importance of good nutrition just because it's Halloween. They recommend mixing up the candy bowl with a variety of non-traditional but nutritious goodies like:

- Mini rice cereal bites
- Packages of trail mix or nuts
- Cereal bars
- Small boxes of raisins
- Small packages of dried fruit
- Sugar-free gum
- Mini juice boxes
- Snack-size packages of peanut butter and crackers, graham crackers or oat-meal cookies.

Instead of giving out candy they also recommend considering non-food treats such as Halloween pencils, pens, stickers, tattoos and spider rings. If you can't resist handing out candy, they suggest mini chocolate bars with nuts for a little extra nutrition.

Help your kids choose miniature pieces of candy so that portions are small and controlled. Lastly, parents and kids should agree ahead of time on the guidelines for how much and when candy can be consumed in one day. Be sure to mix in fruits, vegetables and whole grains to their daily eating plan, too.

*For more information on a healthy eating plan, and to locate a dietetics professional near you, go to [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).*

*Archived Food Journals are now available online at [www.tacaa.org](http://www.tacaa.org).*

*The Food Journal welcomes your comments and ideas for stories. To contact us, please call (800) 992-9767 ext. 203, or e-mail comments and suggestions to [foodjournal@tacaa.org](mailto:foodjournal@tacaa.org).*

### USDA AWARDS \$1 MILLION IN FOOD STAMP OUTREACH GRANTS TO FAITH- AND COMMUNITY- BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman awarded approximately \$1 million to eight faith- and community-based organizations to improve access to and awareness of the Food Stamp Program (FSP) for eligible low-income households. Two of the recipient organizations are in Texas.

“Providing nutrition assistance with dignity and respect is a top priority for President Bush and me,” said Veneman. “These grants support community- and faith-based organizations at the local level that provide unique approaches to reach eligible people.” The purpose of the outreach grants is to test innovative food stamp outreach strategies to underserved eligible low-income individuals and families. The new grantees will use community events and education; establish partnerships with employers, food retailers and other Food and Nutrition Service programs; and test provision of services at alternate work or community sites to reach those in need. Outreach strategies will be customized to the needs of the community. USDA plans to study the effectiveness of the outreach strategies to educate eligible people about the nutrition benefits of the program, eligibility rules and application guidelines.

“We know that there are individuals and families who are eligible for the program but still do not participate,” said Veneman. “We want to ensure that everyone who is eligible for food stamp benefits knows about the program and how they can participate.”

Grant opportunities were made available to public, private and non-profit organizations, including faith and community-based organizations across the nation to assist in educating eligible low-income people who are not cur-

rently participating in the Food Stamp Program.

The two Texas grantees are:

- Alamo Area Development Corporation (AADC) - San Antonio, Texas - The “Food Stamp Outreach Program” will distribute information about the FSP through partnerships with employers in Atascosa and Wilson Counties (rural). Pre-screening will also be offered. AADC staff will educate human resource staff of participating employers about the benefits of the FSP.
- Lone Star Legal Aid (LSLA) - Houston, Texas - LSLA will conduct a two-phased community outreach campaign. During phase one, an extensive 7-week education campaign, LSLA will host two community events each week in the target area during which they will offer information about eligibility, benefits, and the application process. Pre-screening and application assistance will also be provided. During phase two, LSLA will support four monthly events in specified parts of the target area. Each event will include an educational component as well as pre-screening and electronic submission of applications, once this feature is launched by the State.

Other grantees include:

- Community Food Resource Center - New York, NY
- Hispanic Health Council, Inc. - Hartford, CT
- Jewish Vocational Service, Inc. - Boston, MA
- Nebraska Legal Services - Omaha, NE
- Shared Harvest Foodbank, Inc. - Fairfield, OH
- The Outreach Center - Morganton, NC

*For more information on the Food Stamp Program and outreach grants, including a summary of the projects, visit the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service Web site at [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov).*

### SOARING OBESITY RATES COULD BE COSTLY

Rising obesity rates will push Texas and the nation to physical and financial disaster unless people change their behaviors, according to speakers at the recent Texas Produce Convention held in San Antonio.

Leslie Biediger with the Texas Department of Health said childhood obesity rates are rising at an alarming rate and will prove to be costly. "From 1999 to 2000, 16 percent of children in all age groups were overweight," she said. "But in a survey in 2000 and 2001 of fourth, eighth and 11th graders, it showed we have a 32 percent overweight rate in Texas." "There's a huge price tag that comes with this issue. If we continue to increase obesity rates at the rate we're increasing now, in 2040 we're going to have about 14 million people in the state of Texas who are obese, with a price tag of about \$40 billion," she said.

With studies showing obesity rates much lower among people who consume five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, Biediger said partnerships with schools, the produce industry and others are vital in promoting higher consumption of those foods. "Only 23 percent of Texans consume the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables, but improvement is possible," Biediger said.

Texas Agriculture Commissioner Susan Combs cited studies estimating one-third of children born in the United States in 2002 will develop Type 2 diabetes due to obesity. "However, among Hispanics that number is 50 percent, so we're working with the Hispanic communities in Houston and Dallas and other areas to avert what I call a train wreck," she said. "And CDC (Centers on Disease Control) said that while we lost 415,000 people last year to illnesses related to tobacco, they expect to lose 500,000 Americans in 2005 to illnesses related to being overweight or obese."

"The point is," she continued, "it's gonna kill us, literally. Families will be in terrible shape; the costs are going to kill us, and the prediction that medical costs will be \$40 billion, that's in today's dollars. Our state budget for a two-year period is \$105 billion, so you can see that those kinds of losses and costs will kill us." Combs said her agency has created several programs to help public schools promote exercise and healthful foods to students and parents.

*This article was written by Rod Santa Ana, III with the Texas A&M University Agriculture Program. It has been edited and reprinted, the full text is available at [www.csrees.usda.gov/newsroom/news/food/news0014.html](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/newsroom/news/food/news0014.html).*

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### HHS WELFARE ROLLS FALLING

Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson announced welfare caseloads dropped in the first quarter of 2004 to fewer than two million families for the first time since February 1970.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) caseloads dropped 1.3 percent for individuals and 0.8 percent for families between December 2003 and March 2004. The number of TANF families in Texas decreased from 113,763 in December 2003 to 103,262 in March 2004, while the number of TANF recipients decreased from 273,432 in December 2003 to 243,270 in March 2004.

The 1996 TANF law expired on 10/01/02, and is operating under an extension. The welfare reform law creating TANF was enacted in August 1996. During that month, 12,242,125 individuals and 4,408,508 families were receiving welfare aid. HHS reports that since then, welfare rolls have decreased 60.7 percent for individuals and 54.7 percent for families.

*To view the state-by-state data, go to [www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2004/TANF\\_data04.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2004/TANF_data04.htm).*

### HEALTHIER US SCHOOL CHALLENGE

U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Ann M. Veneman launched the HealthierUS School Challenge to help encourage schools and parents to continue promoting healthy lifestyles for children.

During a kickoff event for National School Lunch Week Oct. 10-16, Veneman said the Challenge's goal is to help children develop lifelong healthy eating and physical activity habits. "Across the country, schools, families and communities are working to fight childhood obesity. They are finding new and exciting ways to encourage healthy eating habits and physical activity," said Veneman. "The HealthierUS School Challenge provides an exciting new incentive for schools to take increasingly bold steps to address the problems of childhood overweight and obesity."

The School Challenge is an extension of the HealthierUS initiative that encourages all Americans to eat a nutritious diet and become physically active each day. The HealthierUS School Challenge is designed to build upon USDA's Team Nutrition program, which provides schools with nutrition education materials for children and families; technical assistance materials for school food service directors, managers and staff; and materials to build school and community support for healthy eating and physical activity. In addition, the Challenge builds on USDA's push to improve the nutritional quality of school meals through the School Meals Initiative that sets nutrition requirements for federally-reimbursed school meals.

The HealthierUS School Challenge will recognize schools that achieve the goal of meeting voluntary nutrition and physical activity standards established by the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service at Gold and Silver levels of accomplishment. "Developing lifelong healthy eating and physical activity habits is a priority for this Administration," said Veneman. "The

HealthierUS School Challenge will motivate schools to work even harder and smarter with students, parents and the community to achieve a longer and better life for our children."

In order to be certified as part of the HealthierUS School Challenge, schools must enroll in Team Nutrition and then meet even higher standards than those required by the federal government. There are two levels of achievement.

To be certified as Silver, schools must:

- Serve National School Lunch Program meals that are verified to meet nutritional standards;
- Offer nutritional education;
- Maintain National School Lunch participation above the national average;
- Offer physical activity for students; and
- Ensure that all foods offered throughout the school meet healthy standards as reflected in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

To go for the Gold, schools must do all of the Silver level, plus:

- Serve or sell no food or drink during the day other than school meals or meet healthy standards for all foods offered anywhere in the school at any time of day.
- And offer school lunches every day that includes a fresh fruit or raw vegetable, a whole grain product and low or non-fat milk.

More than 28,000 schools have signed on to be Team Nutrition schools. The HealthierUS School Challenge will give guidance and encouragement for those schools to do even more. Over the next two years, 100,000 schools participating in the National School Lunch Program will have the opportunity to accept the School Challenge. For this first year, elementary schools will be eligible. Next year, middle and high schools will be offered the opportunity to participate.

*Further information about Team Nutrition and the HealthierUS School Challenge is available at [www.fns.usda.gov/tn](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn).*



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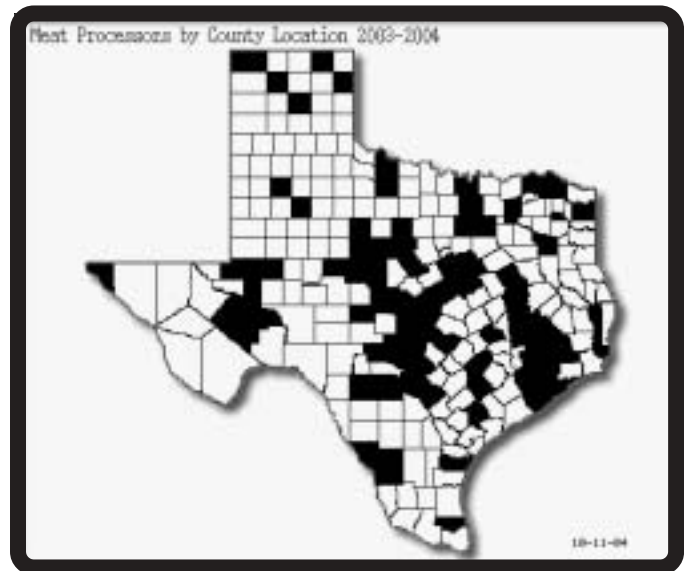
*The TACAA Food Journal is published monthly by the Texas Association of Community Action Agencies, Inc. (TACAA). Funding for the newsletter is provided under a contract with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) under the Community Food and Nutrition Program. Opinions expressed are those of TACAA staff and do not necessarily represent views of TDHCA, TACAA, or its members. TACAA provides the Food Journal at no cost to readers throughout the state, and encourages readers to submit articles and comments for review and publication.*

### HUNTERS FOR THE HUNGRY DONATES RECORD AMOUNT OF FOOD TO TEXANS IN NEED

There is a lot of cheering going on among those involved in the Hunters for the Hungry program. During this past year, due to the collaborative effort among several groups including meat processors, hunters, businesses, state government, non-profit organizations, individual volunteers, and TACAA, Inc., the Hunters for the Hungry (HFTH) program donated a total of 126,917 pounds of meat, or 507,668 quarter-pound servings, to hungry Texans, an increase of 20% over the previous record high.

The donation process is simple. Meat processors are recruited to process game at a low, tax-deductible cost to the hunter. Hunters call TACAA's toll-free hunger relief number or visit the web site ([www.tacaa.org](http://www.tacaa.org)) for information on local meat processors participating in the program. Venison is the primary form of meat donated, but the program accepts other wild game donations as well on a case-by-case basis. Meat processors donate the processed, pre-packaged meat to local food banks, food pantries, and other organizations feeding the hungry.

The colorful range of partners and wide-ranging benefits uniquely distinguish this successful program. During the 2003-2004 program year, hunters throughout the state graciously donated their harvested meat to HFTH. One hundred meat processors offered their time and resources to process this donated meat, at a reduced cost (see map to right). More than one hundred non-profit agencies throughout the state received the donations and shared the bounty with those in need. Businesses, civic associations, state departments, and individuals generously contributed their financial and in-kind support. As a result, Texas families and individuals facing a wide variety of hardships received an excellent source of protein to boost their health and wellness, and the quality of Texas wildlife improved, in turn conserving the environment.



Since 1991, more than 3.5 million quarter-pound servings of wild game have been donated and distributed to fellow Texans through HFTH. During the past six seasons, the donations have continued to increase (see chart on reverse).

Hunger, however, remains a critical problem in Texas. Unfortunately, the second highest rate of food insecurity in the nation continues to persist in Texas. According to the Center for Public Policy Priorities, more than 3.1 million Texans are food insecure, meaning that they don't always know where they will get groceries or money for the next meal. Almost one-quarter of Texas children—1.4 million households—live in food insecure households. As a result, almost 874,000 Texans suffer from outright hunger.

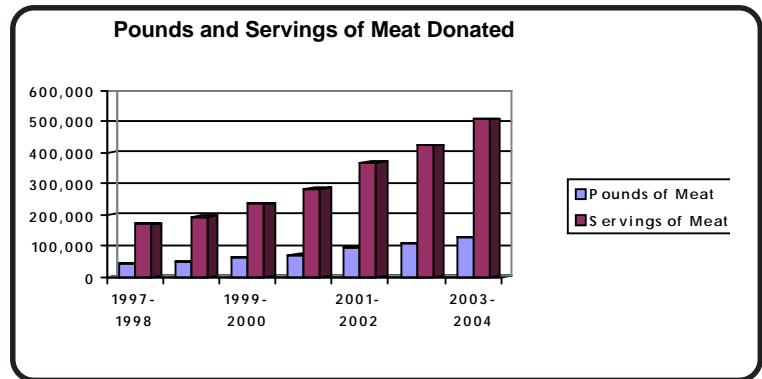
HFTH offers a hopeful response to these grim numbers. Texas ranks second in the nation on another, more promising scale: the number of people engaged in hunting. Texas hosts more than 913,000 hunters each year, who in turn take advantage of the blessed abundance of deer and other wild game that roam the state. In fact, many areas of Texas have an overpopulation of does, especially this year. This abundance has the potential to translate into millions more platefuls of hot, nutritious meals to those who might otherwise go without them, such as at-risk children who often go without lunch or dinner, the elderly, the homeless, single-parent families, the disabled and those with chronic illnesses.

With deer season upon us, there is no better time than now to participate in HFTH. During this upcoming year, we hope to shatter our previous record and serve more Texans than ever before. In order to achieve this goal, we need your help to spread the word and to recruit more hunters and meat processors as partners.

Financial contributions to HFTH can also generate a tremendous impact by helping to subsidize processing costs of wild game donations and to further program development. Subsidy money, such as that provided by the National Rifle Association Foundation (South Texas Region and West Texas Region) and individual donors this past year, are key to HFTH's continued success.

We are eager to hear from you. Please call toll-free within Texas to the TACAA hunger relief hotline at (800) 992-9767, ext. 506, visit our website, [www.tacaa.org](http://www.tacaa.org), or send an e-mail to [hftth@tacaa.org](mailto:hftth@tacaa.org) for more information about HFTH. If outside of Texas, call (512) 462-2555, ext. 506.

If you are interested in making a monetary donation to HFTH, call the numbers above and request a donation form. You may also download a donation form from the Internet at [www.tacaa.org](http://www.tacaa.org). Patches, decals, bumper stickers, caps, and cookbooks are available as gifts when you donate to the program. For those who love to cook, the HFTH Texas Wild Game Cookbook contains over 100 recipes for wild game dishes, and offers a touch of Texas, with recipes and anecdotes from prominent Texans.



### ***MAKE HUNGER YOUR NEXT TARGET!***



*HFTH is one of several hunger relief programs TACAA operates through Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP) funds administered by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA). This program is a collaborative effort of several groups, including meat processors, hunters, non-profit organizations, state government, businesses and individual volunteers. Promotion of the program is conducted through several outlets, including the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) publications and publicity, sporting goods stores, and hunting events. An Advisory Council comprised of representatives of several state agencies, hunters, meat processors, community service providers, and others help guide and promote the program.*