

## Podcast 4 *Garden as Social Actor*

In the Waterville food Bank, a scene plays out five days a week. Over 60 people, representing themselves or their families, cross into the small vestibule next to the Church on Pleasant street, hoping to get a box or two of food - canned, refrigerated, fresh. Hundreds of people a week, thousands of families. In the state of Maine, almost 7 percent of older adults are at risk of hunger, and 19.3% of residents reported not having enough money to buy food in the last year (Waterville Food Bank, 2016). In 2015, the proportion of people who experienced food insecurity across the nation was 12.7%, while in Maine, the amount of people who are food insecure is elevated at 15.8% (Hunger Pains, 2017). The Waterville Food Bank is completely run by volunteers, and supplied by extras from Walmart, local farms, and Good Shepherd Food Bank a statewide food bank. Nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Good Shepherd's partners reported having no paid staff, relying only on volunteers, most of whom are over 60 years old (Hunger Pains, 2017). Hunger in Maine is real, prevalent, and chronic. SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, a federal program designed to help people buy nutritious foods by providing vouchers to shop at a local grocer, shows ways that hunger is intersectional with other social issues. SNAP is not only a program that helps support people who are hungry, but it helps young, old, and disabled; Thirty-six (36) percent of SNAP households in Maine are families with children, 25 percent have one or more people 60 years and over, and 35 percent have one or more people with a disability (Hunger Pains, 2017). Clearly, food insecurity in Maine, and across the country, is intersectional to other social issues.

Maine has a unique paradox to food insecurity: it is also home to a booming agricultural scene. Maine has some of the largest percentages of young farmers and women farmers in the country, and is home to the second highest number of artisan cheese makers of any state in the country (Love, 2014). Studying this paradox, one Colby student for their honor's thesis suggested that we could bridge this gap through creating more school gardens, farm-to-school programs, or offering CSA school-pickup programs (Love, 2014). Whatever the case, it is important to recognize that Maine has greater proportions than the national average of people who are food insecure, which are intersectional with other social issues, and juxtapose the booming agricultural scene.

In order to play a part in food equity, curbing food insecurity, and helping to offer fresh, local food to people who most need it, Colby's farm donates much of its produce to the local food bank. Every Thursday, we glean from the farmer's market and bring extra, unwanted food to the food bank, and at the end of our harvest season, we bring our own hardy crops like carrots and winter squash to the food bank. Other models exist in Maine, helping to bridge the local food movement and prevalent food insecurity, like the Unity Food Hub, which connects farmers with low-income buyers, or Veggies for All, which grows food specifically for the Unity Food Bank. These are just a few ways that the people across the state are addressing and working toward solutions of food inequity.

## Works Cited

Hunger Pains, 2017. "Hunger Pains: Widespread Food Insecurity Threatens Maine's Future." Preble Street and the Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine. Accessed from: <https://www.gsfb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Food-Pantry-Report-2-6-171.pdf>

Love, E., 2014. "The Relationships Between Local Food and Food Security in Maine." Honors Theses. Paper 732. <http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/honorsthesis/732>

Waterville Food Bank, 2016. "Learn About Hunger in Maine and the U.S." *Watervillefoodbank.org*. Accessed on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017, from: <http://watervillefoodbank.org/learn-more-about-hunger.html>