

Food Stamp Program Criticized, Disputed

BY MARTIN TOOMBS
SOUTHERN TIER EDITOR

Watkins Glenn — Local elected and social services officials disputed claims made by the Schuyler County Food Stamp Task Force at an informational seminar designed to explain the food stamp program and to examine its status in Schuyler County. More than 35 persons attended the meeting at St. Mary of the Lake's Parish Center.

John Turnbull, a VISTA volunteer in Schuyler County and a member of the task force, described the food stamp situation in the county as he has seen it, citing specific cases of delay in the processing of applications. He said that the wait for an appointment to fill out the application can be up for four weeks, and it can take a month more before the applicant is notified of the determination.

He cited a case where a man was under doctor's orders not to work, and needed food stamps to feed his family. After a delay, he decided to return to work and as a result his condition has worsened. Some applicants, he said, after such delays, simply stop trying to get the stamps, even though they are qualified. He also reported that

some persons have been told their income exceeded "gross income requirements." Turnbull said that "there are no gross income requirements" for the program.

Turnbull also noted that the state requires that each county outreach, and that he felt it was not being done in Schuyler County.

A member of the audience inquired if what Schuyler County was doing was illegal. Turnbull responded that "it could be interpreted that way."

At that point, Philip Smith, Schuyler County legislator and chairman of the social services committee, identified himself, and said that "I choose to disagree with your last statement." He later said that "to the best of my knowledge, we have no need for more personnel in that office" and that a report in the past showed that "we were accomplishing our outreach goals and to my knowledge still are."

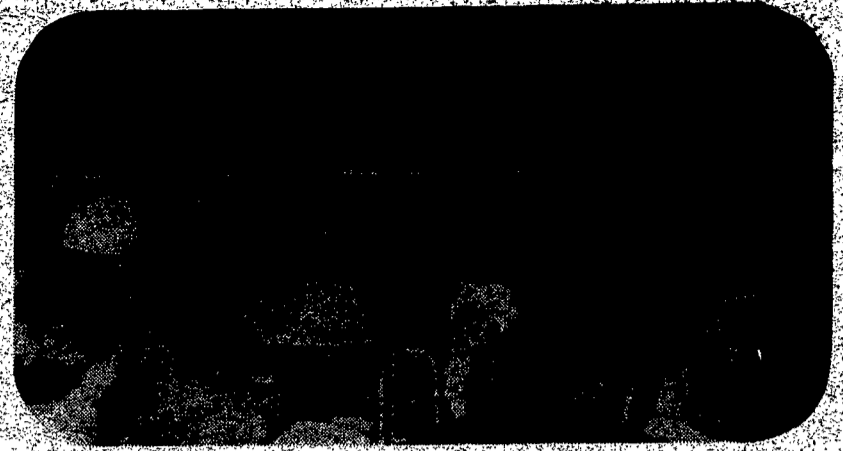
Discussion turned to whether it was possible for one worker to do all the necessary office work and outreach as well. It was noted that personnel in the program are paid through state and federal funds, at no expense to the county. Smith

asserted that it was the county's prerogative to determine staffing. Father David Mura, associate at St. Mary of the Lake, asked if it was proper for citizens to question such decisions of government. Smith replied that it was.

Father Neil Miller, chairing the seminar, said that everyone was there for the same reason, to make sure that the needs of the poor are met. Smith interjected that "I'm here to make sure you hear both sides of the story."

Responding to the problem of delays, Robert O. Bale, Schuyler County commissioner of Social Services, said that "to the best of my knowledge I don't think it has ever taken two months" for an application to be processed. He noted that outreach is difficult, as there are only two weekly newspapers and one radio station in the county, and many county residents work and shop outside the county. He pointed out that all departments in Social Services are "one person operations" and that when a person is sick or on vacation, the work doesn't get done. Bale commented that "I think what we actually need is a person working half time" in addition to the full time worker.

Later Patricia Meehan, the food stamp worker, stated that "prompt action is always given" on food stamp applications. She noted that she gives "interviews by appointment only" and that there are no appointments for two weeks each month when she does the paperwork. "A month's delay does not seem unreasonable," she told the assembly, especially when the



Addressing the Schuyler County Food Stamp Task Force's seminar are (from left) Dierdre Viera, Frederick Zolna, John Turnbull, Father Neil Miller, and William Blumerman.

family has probably "already been waiting a few weeks."

The panel assembled for the seminar included a VISTA attorney, a nutrition worker, and an employee of the state's food stamp unit.

Dierdre Viera, nutrition worker with the Central New York Community Nutrition Program, discussed the economics of the situation in Schuyler County. She noted that the 750 currently participating in the program is estimated to make up one quarter of those eligible. She estimated that the current figure means \$140,000 is being brought into the county yearly, and being spent in local food stores. She noted that if 100 per cent participation was reached, it would mean more than \$500,000 for the county economy. She pointed out that the Department of Agriculture estimates that one new

job is generated by every \$12,000 of bonus food stamp funds.

Frederick Zolna, VISTA attorney, noted that the 30-day requirement for action on a food stamp application can start when a person first walks into the office, if they sign an application and date it. It is then the responsibility of the office to hold the interview and make a decision within 30 days, rather than 30 days from the interview.

Several persons suggested the use of volunteers to do typing and answer questions, but Ms. Meehan stated that that would not be possible because it could be a violation of confidentiality. William Blumerman, from the state food stamp unit, stated that there was no reason why a volunteer can't work in the office, as long as judgments are left to the qualified certifier and security is maintained.

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Educators Meet

Judy Kollar (left), religious education consultant from the diocesan Office of Education, meets with religious education coordinators at St. Joseph's Parish in Weedsport. The group includes Annie Backman, chairperson of the religious education committee; Father Elmer Heindl, pastor of St. Joseph's; and Carolyn O'Neil, secretary.

Make Today Count Elects in Wayne

Macedon — Pauline Reeners, religious education coordinator at St. Patrick's and a member of the parish council, has been elected chairman of the Wayne County Chapter of Make Today Count. Her predecessor, Carol Tomek, was named co-chairman. Other officers are Peg Van Scott, secretary, and Florence Hilts, treasurer, both of

Palmyra — Make Today Count is an organization for cancer patients and others with life-threatening illness, their friends and families, and health professionals. The county chapter was founded by the human development committee at St. Patrick's.

Employees Honored

Elmira — Four employees of St. Joseph's Hospital were presented awards by Sister Martha Gersbach, hospital administrator, during recognition ceremonies Oct. 25.

Three were given suggestion awards, funded through a grant made by Mr. and Mrs. James E. Swartwood. Lester Goldschmidt, director of pharmacy services, suggested establishment of a directory of linguists in the area who could assist the hospital with non-English speaking patients. Kenneth Webster redesigned a

device used in respiratory therapy. Jean Strobidge, a registered nurse in the intensive care unit, recommended a revision in the charting record used by physicians and nurses.

Leland R. Crane, a security officer received the "Oppy" award for his "compassion, sensitivity and dedication to all with whom he comes in contact" during his mighty tour of duty at the hospital.

JITNEY SUPPER
Elmira — The Parents Club of St. Mary's, Southside, will sponsor a jitney supper Sunday, Nov. 7, for the benefit of the school. The event is scheduled for 5-6:30 p.m. in the school gymnasium on Franklin Street.

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Child-Rearing ... a Positive Approach

Auburn — "Usually you learn parenting skills at the knees of your parents, aunts, uncles, none of whom have had any training in these most important of all skills — parenting."

Ms. Jackie Eyerman, mental health educator with the Cayuga County Mental Health Center, was addressing the Home School Association of St. Mary's School at the Oct. 19 Harvest Dinner.

Ms. Eyerman, an advocate of positive reinforcement rather than negative, critical approaches to child-rearing, laid stress on developing responsible, thinking individuals who are able to function in the real world with consideration for the rights and feelings of others.

Her favorite "Grandma's rule" is the "you do what I want you to do, then you get to do something you want to do." This she finds more effective than the yelling and punitive approach.

She pointed out that a parent must spell out for a child exactly what the parent expects. "Clean your room," to a child may mean a pathway through the clutter in his or her vocabulary.

Another positive reinforcement is to catch a child when he is being good and telling him specifically why you like what he has done. Just hearing a general term like "good" is not as effective, she feels.

The first three of four communication styles she identified don't work. The authoritarian style characterized by "do it because I said" doesn't develop independent thinking people.

Inconsistency usually results in confusion in making the right decisions as the child is never sure of the consequence of his actions. She made reference to a 1974 study on juvenile delinquency which indicated inconsistent parenting as the major contributing factor to delinquency.

Overprotecting the child and never letting the child do things for himself is not conducive to a child learning. Although she pointed out, it can be scary at times when you sit precariously by as the child learns to master things himself. Of course, the loving and concerned

parents must be lurking in the background.

The problem solving approach is the most successful pattern of parenting. Listen to a child's suggestions to the problem and leave room for negotiation. Give children credit. It is needed to help him think and to grow. Get your child to do a less preferred thing first, then something more preferred as a method of motivation.

Ms. Eyerman conducts classes in parenting skills and communication workshops for parents of teenagers. Additional information is available by calling the Cayuga Mental Health Center in Auburn.

Sister Judith Whalen, principal of St. Mary's School, said this program was very much in keeping with the purpose of the Home School Association which is to foster communication — between parent, staff and children.

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Right to Lifers Busy in Auburn

Auburn — Members of the social action committee of the Cayuga County Right to Life heard a report on statements by congressional and presidential candidates in relation to the group's stand at the Oct. 21 meeting at Sacred Heart School.

The committee is planning to charter buses from Auburn to the March for Life in Washington, D.C. in January.

The group will have a special presentation for teenagers on fetal development at the Nov. 18 meeting at Sacred Heart School at 7:30 p.m.

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