

# Fall Harvest GLEANNING

## Food banks

Continued from page 1A

ed Ferraro, "and we have to cut it into a third more pieces than we did."

To make matters even worse, companies that once supplied large amounts of food to the banks have in some cases moved or improved their efficiency so that they have less excess food to donate.

The overall effect: demands are increasing while resources are dwindling. "People are already feeling the pain," Ferraro observed.

Agencies such as Foodlink and the Southern Tier Community Food Bank, and the hundreds of area and parish food cupboards, food pantries and soup kitchens, are attempting to help relieve at least some of the pain due to hunger.

The idea of helping the hungry is an old one. In ancient Hebrew law, for example, farmers were prohibited from completely harvesting the crops in their fields. The unharvested crops were to be left to be "gleaned" through a "second harvest" for the poor as well as orphans, widows and resident aliens.

Adapting this idea of a second harvest to today's situation, 182 food banks from across the country are linked together as the Second Harvest National Food Bank Network to share food supplies "gleaned" from major corporations. These corporations donate excess food, or food that is deemed unsaleable for such reasons as being too spicy.

Ferraro noted that gleaning from the fields still occurs, but more as a teaching tool. He estimated that only two percent of Foodlink's donations come from such gleaning. The difficulty in dealing with such food, he said, is: "You reach a saturation point in your ability to distribute fresh food."

More likely sources of food to help

feed the poor are government surplus; goods deemed fit for consumption but not for sale; donations from stores and farmers; and food purchased through donated or government funding.

But Farrer said with those other sources of supplies remaining basically stagnant or even decreasing, the percentage of food coming from gleaning may have to increase.

"Next year we're encouraging farmers to plant an extra couple of rows," Farrer said. He added that his food bank is exploring the possibility of developing canning facilities, which has been done in other regions of the country. This concept was among the ideas to address food supply problems examined at the Eastern Regional Food Bank Association, hosted Sept. 29-Oct. 1 in Corning by the Southern Tier Community Food Bank.

Ferraro noted that Foodlink is actively involved in two additional approaches to helping the needy obtain food in Rochester. One is encouraging the creation of neighborhood farmers markets — as has happened in recent months on the city's West and Lyell Avenues. A second approach is working for the return of supermarkets to sections of the city not currently being served so that people can buy low-cost quality food.

"If we can accomplish bringing a food supply to urban neighborhoods and make food available at a good price, people should spend less money on food and the effect will be not having them show up at food cupboards that can't meet all the needs," Ferraro said.

Ferraro added, however, that for now the government needs to step up its efforts.

"I'm not a big fan of more government," Ferraro concluded. "But if there isn't going to be enough resources left for charity to meet the demand, especially for the hungry, the government is going to have to do more."



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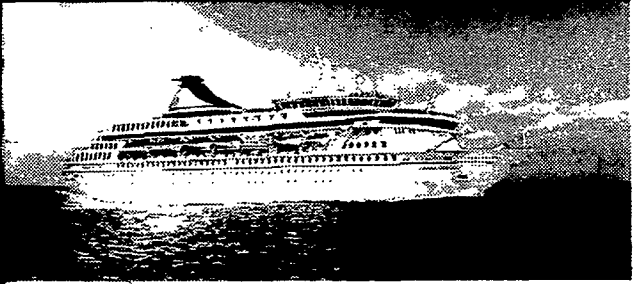
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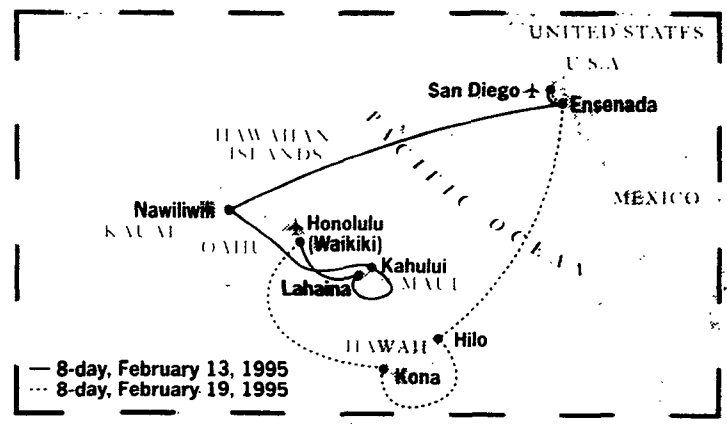
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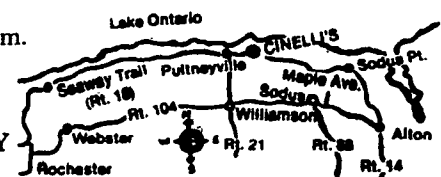
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