

WE ARE THE WORLD TOO



Hunger in Salt Lake County

A report prepared by Crossroads Urban Center in conjunction with the
University of Utah Graduate School of Social Work

CROSSROADS URBAN CENTER

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BOARD CHAIRPERSON
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April 1986

Dear Friends:

This report was written because there is hunger in Salt Lake County. During the 20 year history of Crossroads Urban Center, we have worked to create public awareness of and to propose solutions to this tragic situation.

We Are The World, Too! Hunger in Salt Lake County, is a report which brings to life the statistical data on hunger. It emphasizes that the hardest hit victims of hunger are children. For the sake of these children this report must be viewed as more than a substantiation of hunger. This report is intended to be a call to action.

We would like to thank the University of Utah Graduate School of Social Work, the Junior League of Salt Lake, Inc., The United Methodist Church, The Lutheran Church in America, and The American Lutheran Church for their participation in this study.

We invite all Utahns to join with us in helping hungry people move beyond the challenge of immediate survival toward greater self-reliance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'John W. Chipman'.

John Chipman
Board Chairman

SUPPORTED BY VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

WE ARE THE WORLD, TOO! HUNGER IN SALT LAKE COUNTY

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I. THE INTERVIEWS

INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of hungry people in Utah, and those who try to feed the hungry in Utah are facing record demand. In this study you will meet people who are struggling to survive in a community that is attempting to deny that hunger exists. You will also meet people who are a part of a new class in our society. Although a majority of the hungry in Utah still come from single parent homes, there is an increasing number of two-parent households affected as well. Many of these people find themselves in a "pre-homeless" condition; without work and denied two-parent welfare they are without opportunity, and without hope. More people than ever before come to Utah emergency food pantries, and there are more families on the street and in the homeless shelters. The following pages are not meant to depress you, though they will, but to provide you with facts and an awareness that will help bring about the reduction of hunger in Utah.

This study has been divided into five basic parts. In the first section, we have provided descriptive information from some of the surveys that were conducted with emergency food pantry clients at Crossroads Urban Center. Next there is some pertinent background data on poverty in Utah and Salt Lake County, as well as a basic overview of the work done by Crossroads Urban Center. Subsequent sections of the study deal with the methodology and raw data gathered by the study, the findings, and our recommendations for action to begin the pro-

cess of solving problems identified by this project. In addition, there is a section of quotations taken directly from survey participants - the clients of Crossroads Urban Center. It is our hope that this study will not only help to document hunger in our community, but also serve as bridge between the hungry of Salt Lake and those who can help provide the assistance they so desperately need.

The interviews conducted for this study show just how painful reality can be for the poor and disadvantaged of Salt Lake. Despite the prevailing misconception that Utah "takes care of its own" and that poverty is somehow not real, the surveys remind us that people suffer needlessly everywhere - including right next door. The extent of poverty in Salt Lake County is not difficult to document. Statistics show that nationally the poor are getting poorer, while at the same time the emergency food pantry system in Salt Lake is faced with a catastrophic increase in the demand for their services. The experience of Crossroads Urban Center as the largest pantry in the state is a good example: Crossroads served 59% more people in 1985 than in 1984, totalling 18,073. This trend has been experienced throughout Salt Lake County and has continued into 1986.

The emergency food network in Salt Lake is poignantly experiencing the the impact of accumulated cuts in services to the poor and long-term structural unemployment. "Emergency services" are becoming part of the welfare system. Instead of providing service at times of crisis, pantries now are being

forced to supplement or replace food stamps, inadequate welfare grants, and other forms of government assistance that don't meet people's basic needs. Through the documentation of these realities it is our intention to provide groundwork from which to work on solutions and appropriate responses to the plight of the poor.

This study originated as an effort to document hunger in Salt Lake County, both with numbers and through the eyes of the hungry themselves. Surveys were conducted by Crossroads Urban Center and the University of Utah Graduate School of Social Work with clients of the emergency food pantry at Crossroads in the spring of 1985. The questions were designed to collect specific information in a variety of areas, while also asking for subjective responses from participants. The results are disturbing.

Participants in the study were people without options. Twenty-six percent of Crossroads' clients have no income at all. While most typical client interviewed was a single mother trying to raise small children on an insufficient income, the overall case load statistics for Crossroads' pantry show that 42% of the households served are two-parent families. Low-income families face high costs for food, utilities, and housing. For the most part, government benefits are often unavailable to these families, or are inadequate to meet their basic needs. We spoke to people who had been trapped in situations of unemployment, lack of income, increasing shelter costs, and declining health and well-being. Furthermore, a majority of these people were coming to an emergency food pantry for the first time. Overall the households we saw were either homeless already, or in the condi-

tion of being "pre-homeless", desperate, and without hope.

The people who participated in the survey had many responses when asked what they would say to someone who said hunger in America did not exist. Many clients wanted to be able to show that hunger does exist by asking those who don't believe it to share their lives with them for a time. There was also a lack of confidence that the government and the rich would ever help to solve the problem of hunger, or even accept the fact that hunger is real. More than a few clients wanted to know why we couldn't feed the hungry here in America first, and there was anger at a system which prevented them from regaining security, health, and dignity.

Recommendations are included in this study as well as the findings. Hunger in Utah is clearly a problem that does not need to exist. We hope that this document will serve as a call to action in terms of feeding the hungry and solving the problems which cause needless hunger in Utah. There are more people in crisis food situations in Salt Lake than at any time in recent memory. The last thread in the "safety net" for low-income people, which has been stretched to the limit, will break unless solutions are actively sought. There are recommendations for individuals and groups who are concerned about hunger, along with a list of changes in current policy which should be undertaken by various levels of government and agencies to reduce the burden on the poor.

SELECTED SURVEYS

This section relates the experiences and problems families seen at Crossroads Urban Center have experienced getting food. The researchers who developed the methodology and questions have a background in social work, not nutrition. Descriptions of household situations are not intended to provide any systematic or scientific rendering of nutritional deficiencies. Instead, they provide information on how people are coping on a day-to-day basis when short of food. The names of each family have been changed to protect the privacy of those interviewed.

The existence of hunger in Utah is a paradox. While its presence in our family and neighbor-oriented state seems improbable, hunger in Utah is a painful reality. The hunger we saw was not manifested by visible starvation. Instead, hunger in Salt Lake County appears in more subtle forms, like skipping meals regularly, eating the same types of food over and over, and eating less food altogether. The people we interviewed, by and large, eat enough to stay moderately alert. Forty-eight people (25%) had no food at all on hand and were often lethargic and felt hopeless. None were receiving an adequate diet. The results of their insufficient food supply showed up as an increased incidence of poor health, depression, and family changes. A number of people talked about dreaming of food, constantly thinking about the next meal or being obsessed with the thought of food. The following accounts depict the conditional hunger existing today in Salt Lake County.

"Just a few things, flour and stuff, no fresh fruits or vegetables. I only buy meat once or twice a month."

Mrs. S., a frail, 77 year-old, caucasian widow appeared eager to answer every question in the hunger study in great detail. It seemed as though she was very pleased to share her concerns regarding her living situation. As the interviewer, I got the impression she would have enjoyed "visiting" for the remainder of the afternoon. As I struggled to conclude the interview, I knew she was a very lonely, isolated senior citizen.

Mrs. S. lives alone in a three room apartment that she has occupied for over 40 years. She receives \$198.00 a month from Social Security and \$19.00 a month in food stamps. Mrs. S. recalls that she used to eat by spending many afternoons each week quilting at the ward. "They would feed us lunch every day; now when I go to quilt there is a dish of hard candy on the table. I don't go as often as I used to, I just don't have the energy." Although Mrs. S. does receive Medicare, she has not seen a doctor regarding the large open sores up and down both of her legs. She states that her only medical problems are "trouble with my intestines and bowels." She feels that the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables contributes to the problem. Regarding food, Mrs. S. says she would really like to shop the sales and stock up on specials, but there is never anything extra for that kind of thing. "I can't very well walk six blocks with a case of corn."

"I have a half dozen eggs and some malt-o-meal."

Debbie was concerned about how long the interview would take. "This is the first time I have left our million dollar baby with a sitter, I need to hurry." The petite, caucasian, 29 year-old mother of four, proceeded to share with me that in January of 1985 she had given birth to a two-pound baby girl. She delivered the baby a little less than three months early. "It was really touch and go for several days and the State of Utah spent a lot of money keeping Amy alive."

Last week Debbie finally brought her little girl home equipped with a special heart monitor. Within the week she received notice that her heat would be turned off. She went on to explain through her tears that if her little girl's body temperature fell she could be in real trouble. "So all the money that has been spent to keep her alive the last few months could, well, you know..." Debbie was unable to complete her thought. After the interview, another Crossroads' staff person helped Debbie contact the Public Service Commission regarding the gas shut-off notice. Debbie had indeed filled out the necessary papers for a medical emergency with the utility company, but the doctor's note was not on letterhead paper, so she had been told her shut-off would still take place. Before leaving Crossroads, Debbie had a verbal commitment from one of the Public Service Commissioners that the heat would remain on. Debbie explained that she had put every extra penny into utility payments, thus running out of money for food. When asked what she had on hand for her eight, five, and four year-olds, she said she just had a

few foods from the Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC). She also shared that the three older children had all had the chicken pox and were more tearful and cranky than usual.

"I have a loaf of bread; a bag of hard rolls. We never have more than what we eat in a week."

Jim is a 27 year-old, caucasian man and it is his first visit to Crossroads. He was accompanied by his two daughters, Val, age 11, and Wendy, age 8. His wife, Lois, was waiting in the car. First he distributed coloring books and crayons to his girls, saying, "They are apt to get cranky if I don't keep them active." Then he settled back to tell his story, explaining that he felt that people should know that Utahns are living in hunger. In the last three months they have been evicted from another apartment. They have moved seven times in the last year, several times following evictions and utility shut-offs. Jim has lost another part-time job in the past month and now they live at the family shelter. When asked if anyone in the family is suffering from depression he said, "All of us, everybody is depressed. My wife is a defeated woman. At the shelter, it is so dirty and noisy. We are all so sad." No one in the family was receiving any mental health assistance. One of the children has asthma and they have no health insurance. Like many parents in the survey, he worried about buying regularly needed prescriptions.

When asked what he would have done if the food pantry was not open, he said, "I would have been into the dumpsters." He says that when he goes without food he gets "more like an animal. I get protective of the kids. Sometimes I do criminal things."

He describes food shortages as "constant for us." Both parents and children always skip lunch. When asked what he would like to say to someone who thought there was no hunger, he said, "I'd like them to look behind the fast food joints, they should see the business at the dumpsters after hours. Look at the business at Crossroads, go to a soup line, look at my skinny kids. I'd like to see Senator Hatch after he spent a week diving into the dumpsters for his kids' food, then maybe people would understand."

"I try to buy a whole month's groceries when I get my stamps - at the end of the month I have a harder time. Now I have three cans of vegetables, instant potatoes and two eggs. We just moved, and now my food stamps are late."

Mary, Joe, and their five children ages 7, 6, 4, 2 and 5 months receive \$533 a month from welfare. They are a caucasian family. Although two-parent families on AFDC are rare, Joe has lupus and TB and thus they qualify. They have come to Crossroads because their food stamps were late, they have just received a gas shut-off notice and been evicted, and they are out of food. Several family members are suffering from depression, and Mary is especially worried about her two year-old son. "He used to talk, but now he won't at all. He seems listless." She also worries that the other children seem ornery and don't sleep as well at night. She says that she comes to Crossroads three times a year "when my food stamps are messed up," and that she would have "panicked" if Crossroads had not opened today. Once she used up the number of times she could visit the pantry (five times per year) and did not eat for three days. She looks com-

pletely worn out as she ends our interview saying, "There is a lot of hunger - there is too much money spent by our government on other things. If I could do something about it I would. But I can't."

"What food do I have right now? Potatoes."

Thirty-one year-old Irene is a black woman with two children, ages 7 and 7 months. Her only source of income is \$373 per month from welfare. When her husband left, she relied on her family and moved in with her parents. Although her parents are also low-income and can't contribute to her income, she was denied food stamps.¹ Irene never eats breakfast, but food shortages still occur at the end of every month. She says she has more stress, anger, and depression when she goes without food for a day or two and the children get more nervous and overactive. Although she is trying to get back together with her husband, she worries about what will happen when she doesn't get her welfare check.²

¹Although federal regulations allow for the existence of more than one household in the same dwelling [7 CFR 273.1(a)(1)(ii)], children over 18 who are living with their parents cannot be considered a separate household unless the parents are elderly or disabled, regardless of individual circumstances [7 CFR 273.1(a)(3)(i)].

²The Utah State Legislature eliminated two-parent AFDC in 1981.

"I have bread and mayo and that is it."

Mrs. D. is a 30 year-old, caucasian, single mother of three. When asked if there had been any major changes in the family in the past three months she laughed and said, "My husband left us, my ten year-old son has been ill, and I have had a baby. We have been evicted from our apartment, and we are living in our car and at my office building. I guess that is about all the changes in the last three months." Mrs. D. states that she has been on assistance in the past and will do anything not to have that happen again. "I feel like I am fighting a losing battle. As soon as I got a job, I lost my medical card, day-care, and food stamps. I now have a job and we live in poverty." While helping Mrs. D. to her car, it was evident to me that the family was indeed living in the vehicle. A cardboard box in the corner of the car served as the "refrigerator." It contained half of a loaf of bread and a jar of mayonnaise.

"I have powdered milk, rice, two cans of soup, honey and some WIC cereal. I've only had coffee for the last day and a half. I didn't just come because I'm hungry, I came to Crossroads for my kids - it is hard, your kids get used to food and they want it even when you don't have any."

Although Crossroads' Direct Services Coordinator, Luisa, had seen Kate, a Native American woman, several times before at Crossroads, she almost didn't recognize her because she had lost so much weight. Kate's boys, ages 9 and 6, were at school during our interview, but her new baby girl and little daughter, almost 2, were both in her arms at first. The income from AFDC for a family of five is \$500 per month. She had a job, then lost it.

"I still don't have the money from the job, and they lowered my grant." Now her food stamps are 11 days late. They are lost in the mail. She is very depressed and angry over the delay, and when I asked her what she would have done if the pantry was not open today, she answered, "I would have gone to welfare and kept asking about my stamps." She is stressed because her new baby has been sick and her 6 year-old son is hyperactive. Unlike so many of the other adults in our study, Kate was receiving help for depression at a Mental Health Center, taking medication, and is in therapy. She has been actively involved in therapy since the death of one of her children from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Although Kate and the children live alone in an apartment, for a while last year they moved in with her family. When Kate's food stamps were cut, she moved out and lived on the streets and at the family shelter. Kate receives help from WIC, but the formula for the baby doesn't last a full month. Infant formula was the first thing for which she asked Luisa. When asked if she acted differently when she went without food, she said, "Yes. I'm sad and depressed, I'm upset. I feel like it is my fault, I feel helpless towards my kids." At the end of the interview, Kate hugged me and started to cry when she received the \$10.00 interview payment. She told me she would buy more rice and beans to stretch the food package.

Kate was later represented by Crossroads' staff at a fair hearing concerning the difficulty she was experiencing receiving her food stamps. She testified at this hearing that workers at

the welfare office in her district had delayed reporting her stamps lost, even after she had contacted them twice. Furthermore, food stamps that are reported lost for two months in a row are supposed to be distributed over the counter in the future. Kate was able to secure her right to this type of service, and a memo was issued at the welfare office in her district concerning the requirement that lost stamps be reported to the issuance office immediately after the client contacts a worker.

"At home I have three cans of vegetables and one can of split pea soup on hand. Milk is like gold at our house. I never drink milk, I save it for the boys."

Jill is an attractive, Hispanic, 28 year-old working mother. She is divorced and has two sons, ages 3 and 7 months. She has come to Crossroads because her home has been burglarized for the second time this year. Both times food (canned and frozen) was taken. The police told her this is a common complaint from the low-income housing complex in which she lives. With her income of \$4.00 per hour from her full-time job at a sewing plant, expenses are budgeted to the penny. The family is ordinarily short of food, and the robbery has brought them to a crisis. It is obvious in talking to Jill that it was hard for her to come to Crossroads today. "I never would have just for myself, but I won't let my boys go hungry." Both children are cross, cranky, and clinging to their mother during the interview. She says she is short-tempered and often depressed when food gets low. When asked how she gets by during food shortages, she gives a reply we hear over and over again in our interviews, "I skip meals. I've eaten grilled [USDA commodity] cheese sand-

wiches for five days now, and sometimes I pool my food with other single moms to make meals."

"I have one can of peaches, one container of infant formula, one can each of green beans and corn on hand."

As 38 year-old Susan describes her ten children ages 17, 15, 12, 9, 8, 7, 5, 3, 2, and 9 months, it is hard to imagine dividing the food she has on hand between them. This caucasian family's income comes from Bob's employment, but food is always a concern with an income of \$700 per month. They have never applied for any form of government assistance, although they would be eligible for food stamps. She has come to Crossroads Urban Center because the Mormon Church (LDS) welfare she has been receiving has ended. Her bishop has told her there are too many people in need and that she must work 40 hours a week to continue the assistance. With her large family (including four preschoolers), she just can't put in that amount of time. When the family is low on food, she explains she just has no energy.

"We have no food left, nothing."

Mr. M., a 34 year-old Hispanic father, appeared uncomfortable throughout the interview. Eye contact was limited and voice volume low. It was difficult for him to answer many of the questions. Mr. M. lost his job over two months ago. He and his wife and two children, ages 10 and 12, have never visited Crossroads before. "We have never been in this situation before. I never thought it could happen to us." He states that his

family is not eligible for any kind of help from the State because he is living at home. "Sometimes I think my family would be better off if I just up and left, but I love my wife and my children. I don't want to leave."

The family income in the past month has come from the selling of the furniture, pawning of rings and a gun, and frequent visits to the blood donor bank. Mr. M. states that there is no insurance for anyone in his family and he just keeps his fingers crossed that no one will need medical attention this winter. "Everyone has constant colds, sore throats, and ear infections. The kids' teeth are in bad shape, but those are all things we can live with." The morning of the interview Mr. M. had been to Social Services, Job Service, the blood bank, and the Red Cross to sign up for heating assistance. When asked how going without food affects his children, Mr. M. dropped his head, began to cry softly and said, "It really hurts too much to talk about it. I can't do this anymore." On that note, the interview was concluded.

"I have half a loaf of bread and a box of cold cereal."

Julie is five months pregnant and the mother of a very active two year-old. The child spent the entire interview exploring the pantry and stuffing apple and orange slices into his little mouth as though he were a squirrel gathering nuts for the winter. This petite young woman explained that she had heard nothing from her husband for over five weeks. He had been deported to Mexico. She was fearful of going to any agency for help because, "I might get him in more trouble." Julie worked

in a convenience store until she was fired for stealing. "Sometimes I would take bread and milk home for my little boy." She was hoping to work into full-time employment so that she would have insurance. She has not yet seen a doctor, although she is in her fifth month of pregnancy. "I would really like to hear the heart beat and know that everything is O.K. All I can do now is show up in an emergency room when I know it is coming and hope that someone will help me."

She is concerned about the health of her baby because she often goes without food so that her two year-old, Peter, can eat. She knows exactly what food she has on hand and says she will do anything to keep her little boy from going hungry. "Sometimes my husband's boyfriends come over now that he is gone. After they go to sleep, I take what I think they won't miss from their wallets. See, I told you I would do anything for my son."

"We have no food, again."

Ann and Ron, a caucasian married couple in their 30's, describe their journey from Denver. They were on their way to look for work in California when the car broke down in Salt Lake City. First, they lived in the car, and for the last week they have been at the family shelter. Ron bitterly describes himself as a "Vet", and it is obvious to the interviewer that he is suffering from some form of mental illness. Ann is in need of dental attention, but they have had no form of medical assistance or insurance since she lost her job in Denver. Their

two daughters were listless throughout the interview. As Ann explains, "My oldest daughter seems to understand when there is no food." Her oldest is 2 years old, her youngest is 5 months.

This is their second visit to Crossroads in two weeks. They had to have a special food order because they had few cooking utensils and no access to a stove or refrigerator. When asked about last week's food order, Ann says, "Last week we had the best meal in weeks. Following a trip here, we took two cans of corn and half of a pound of butter and mixed them together. We heated our soup over a hot plate and it was delicious!" Ann tells us that it is amazing how many people at the family shelter are willing to share what little they have. "There was no way for us to save our corn soup, so when we were full, we passed the pan around."

"I only have cans of soup at home."

Connie is a 27 year-old Native American. Her son Roy is 5 years old. It is her first time at Crossroads. Connie has bruises all over her arm and on the side of her face. She looks down and whispers as she explains that they live off the \$153.00 she receives from mineral rights. In the past she had received food stamps, but they were cut-off when she moved in with her sister. They have no form of health insurance, and she is worried because Roy has a bad cold. If she had money, she says she would buy flour, bread, and meat. She has several strategies for stretching her food supply. She doesn't eat lunch, she pools food with her sister, and then she just skips as many meals as she needs to so her son can eat.

II. BACKGROUND:

POVERTY IN UTAH

In August of 1985, the Census Bureau reported that the U.S. poverty rate in 1984 was 14.4%. This is 4.4 million more people in poverty than in 1980. Over 196,000 Utahns live in poverty - an estimated 12.2% of the population.³ The Census Bureau also reported that the poorest 40% of American families received 15.7% of the national income in 1984, while the richest 40% received 67.3%. For the poorest group, this is the lowest percentage they have received in 37 years of record keeping. For the richest group it is a 37 year high.

Median family income in the United States in 1984 was \$26,430. A family of four was classified as poor if it had cash income of less than \$10,650 for 1985. In Utah, 25% of all households had incomes of \$10,000 or less for 1983,⁴ and the average family coming to the emergency food pantry at Crossroads Urban Center during this study had a yearly income of only \$3,744 (\$312 per month.)

Low-income people in Salt Lake are spending a disproportionate amount of their income on high shelter costs. A report issued in May 1985 by the City of Salt Lake on housing needs in the city stated:

"To an extent, housing problems are invisible. When

³Utah Department of Employment Security, Affirmative Action Plan Information, (Salt Lake City, 1985), p. 6.

⁴Bureau of Economic and Business Research, 1983 Utah Statistical Abstract (University of Utah, Salt Lake City, 1984), p. V-43.

we see people on the street or in their homes we may not be aware that: 2,500 households pay more than 60% of their income for rent; another 12,600 households pay up to as much as 50% of their incomes for rent. To put this cost level into perspective, most of us pay no more than about 25% of our incomes toward mortgage or rent costs."⁵

In addition to high housing costs and skyrocketing utility rates, Utah has higher food costs caused in part by a 5% sales tax. Even after several years of advocacy by local anti-poverty organizations, Utah still has a decidedly bleak participation rate in the Food Stamp Program. Only 35% of those eligible for food stamps in Utah actually use the program, which represents one of the lowest participation rates in the country.⁶ The Food Stamp Program in Utah has been plagued with administrative barriers that prevent people from participating and getting the help they need. This is due in part to the "welfare stigma" that exists in Utah, which serves to drive people away from the assistance they so desperately need.

While all Utahns are affected by the high costs of shelter, utilities, and food, some are hit harder than others. Currently in Utah, 41.6% of households headed by women with children under 18 live in poverty.⁷ The homeless are an increasingly large segment of Utah's population. The Task Force for Appropriate Treatment of the Homeless Mentally Ill estimates the homeless

⁵John Allred, Housing Needs in Salt Lake City (Salt Lake City, 1985), p.1.

⁶This percentage is arrived at by taking the number of participants in the Food Stamp Program in Utah as of January 1985 and dividing by the number of people in Utah at or below 125% of poverty (1983 estimate.)

⁷Information provided by the Department of Employment Security, Labor Market Information Services, June 1985.

population at between 500 to 800 in the county at any given time.

The Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office delivered a report in January of 1986 to the Task Force for the Homeless Mentally Ill. The report indicated that the Salt Lake County Sheriffs Office spent \$3 million last year handling problems stemming from the area's homeless population. Eight percent of all bookings into the County Jail are labeled as transients - about 1,700 in 1985. Of those, 19% are sent to mental health facilities. According to the Salt Lake Tribune, which covered this report:

"Lt. Elray Dowell said that sometimes when transients are taken to health institutions for urgent treatment, doctors have said the illness can wait for a couple of days when an appointment can be made. The doctors later call the law enforcement agencies, saying they have 'rethought' the problem and have decided no treatment is necessary, Lt. Dowell said."⁸

As elsewhere, minorities have a substantially larger population in poverty. For example, in 1984 minorities had an unemployment rate of 10.9% as compared to the overall unemployment rate in the State of just over 6.5%.⁹ Utah's poor are threatened by more than unemployment and inadequate support for basic vital services. In the last decade, Utah's population increased by 38%.¹⁰ As opposed to other rapidly growing Inter-mountain States, 80% of Utah's growth is a result of the State's high birthrate. This is placing an enormous pull on dwindling resources, a situation with tragic and painful results for the

⁸The Salt Lake Tribune, January 19, 1986, Sec. B, p. 2.

⁹Utah Department of Employment Security, op. cit., p. 6.

¹⁰Bureau of Economic and Business Research, op. cit., p. I-11.

poor and disadvantaged of Utah.

CROSSROADS URBAN CENTER

Crossroads Urban Center is located at 347 South 400 East in Salt Lake City, Utah. Crossroads is an ecumenical church and community supported, private, non-profit center. Its stated purpose is to provide service to low- and no-income minority and disadvantaged people in Salt Lake County. The Hunger Study was based out of the direct service component of Crossroads, which includes Utah's largest food pantry, commodity food distribution, holiday food baskets, Santa's Helper Program, and a low and no cost Thrift Store located at 802 South 600 East in Salt Lake City. In addition, Crossroads has self-sufficiency projects involving community gardening and aquaculture, an anti-hunger advocacy project, and a community development arm. These components reflect Crossroads' philosophy of helping to meet a family's immediate needs while working with them to improve their situation.

The Crossroads food pantry served 18,073 people in 1985. There were 7,476 households which received additional surplus commodity foods, and the Thrift Store filled over 3,000 free clothing orders. It is significant to note that 70% of the food is donated from private sources. Although Utah has the highest birthrate in the nation, Crossroads is the only pantry specializing in infant needs, such as formula, baby food, diapers and baby clothes. Crossroads also provides special service to the elderly, families, and people with special dietary needs.

Crossroads serves families and individuals who are senior citizens or disabled. Single individuals are referred to another food pantry, unless no one else is open or has an adequate supply of food. Families are given a three-day food supply when it is available, and Crossroads will provide food five times in a year, although the Hunger Study showed that many request additional service and were served. For example, pantry staff members were observed by interviewers telling families to come back for additional infant formula and baby food. Proof of eligibility is not required, and need is self-declared. Verification of family size is not required for the initial interview, however someone seeking aid a second time must verify family size.

The Crossroads pantry has been in existence for over 15 years, and has seen more than a tripling of pantry usage since 1975. For example, the pantry served almost 5,000 people during the entire year of 1975, compared to serving 4,334 people in the second quarter of 1985 alone. In the last five years, Crossroads has experienced a steady upward climb in the usage of food assistance programs. (See Graph 1) The year 1985 saw Crossroads experience another major jump in pantry usage, the largest in their history. Consequently, it has been a record year at Crossroads in terms of direct service to the poor.

CROSSROADS 1985 CASE LOAD

In 1985, Crossroads served over 18,000 people with food orders. (See Graph 2) This is a drastic increase from the 1984 total case load of 11,400. Forty-five percent of the case load

was under 12 years old and half of these children are 5 and under. Only 8% of the clients were teenagers - both teen-parents and teens living with their parents. Forty-five percent of the people served were between the age of 22 and 60. Of these, plus the teenage parents, 58% were single parents and 42% were two-parent families. Six percent of the total households were senior citizens or disabled. The percentage of homeless families served was 12%. These homeless families were almost evenly divided between transients and homeless Utahns. For example, in April of 1985, 54% of the homeless served by Crossroads were families, primarily from other western states (Nebraska, Nevada, California, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, Texas and Arizona), and 46% were homeless Utahns who had been evicted from their homes. Of the total families seen, 26% had no income. Forty-seven percent of the people seen were minorities. The minority most represented at the pantry were Hispanics, which may be partly due to the fact that the pantry staff of two is bi-lingual. The second most represented minority was Native American.

EMERGENCY FOOD PANTRY USAGE IN SALT LAKE COUNTY

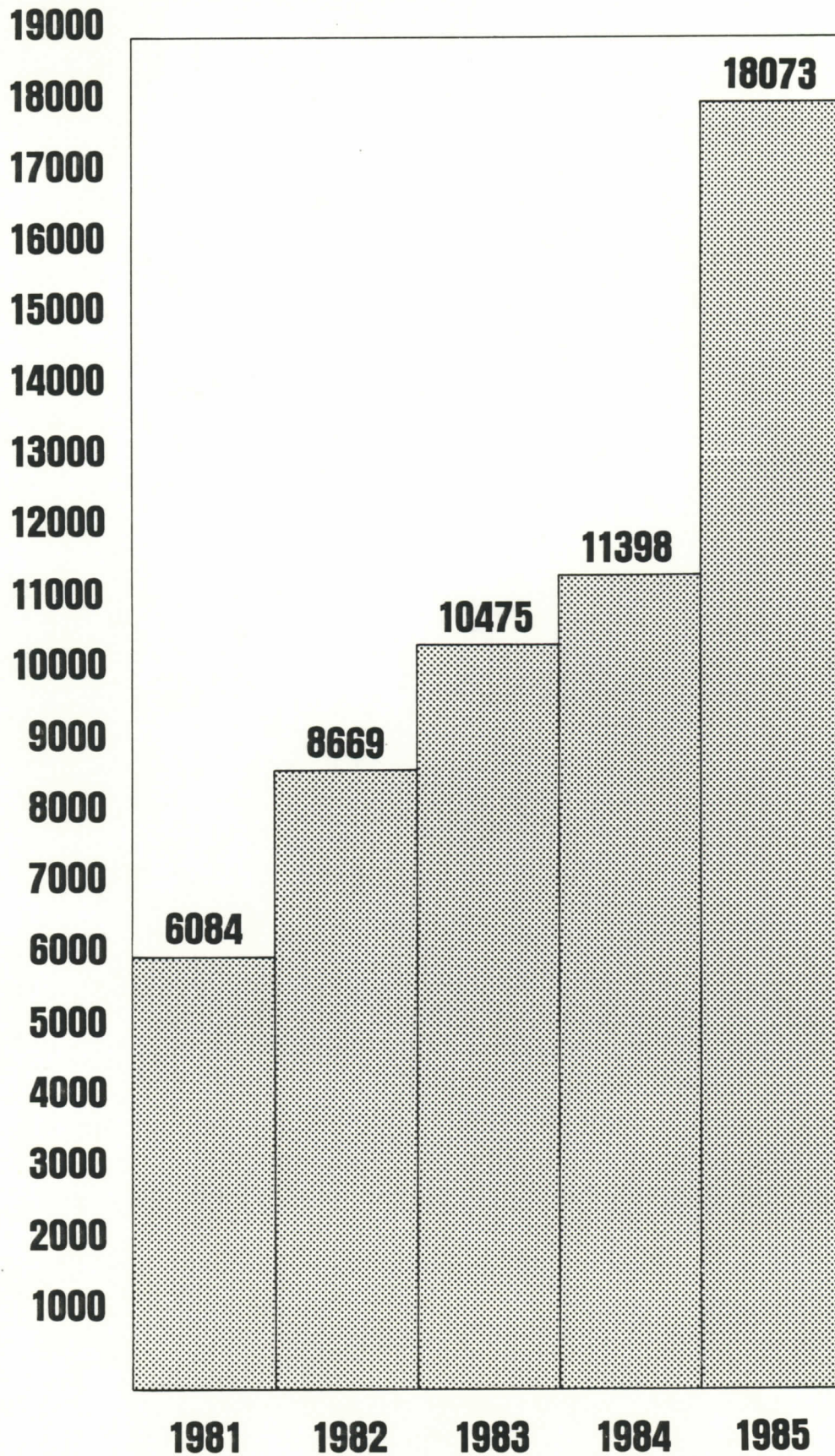
The true extent of hunger is not known. The greatest evidence regarding its increase lies in the steady upward demand for emergency food. Among hunger experts and advocates it is the commonly held opinion that people's lack of knowledge of where to go for emergency food and restrictions on how often they can get food keeps the true scope of the hunger problem

well hidden. Crossroads is not the only pantry experiencing a major increase in usage. In Salt Lake County, pantries are being forced to reduce hours, close early, and shutdown due to the shortage of food and the staggering demand of people in need.

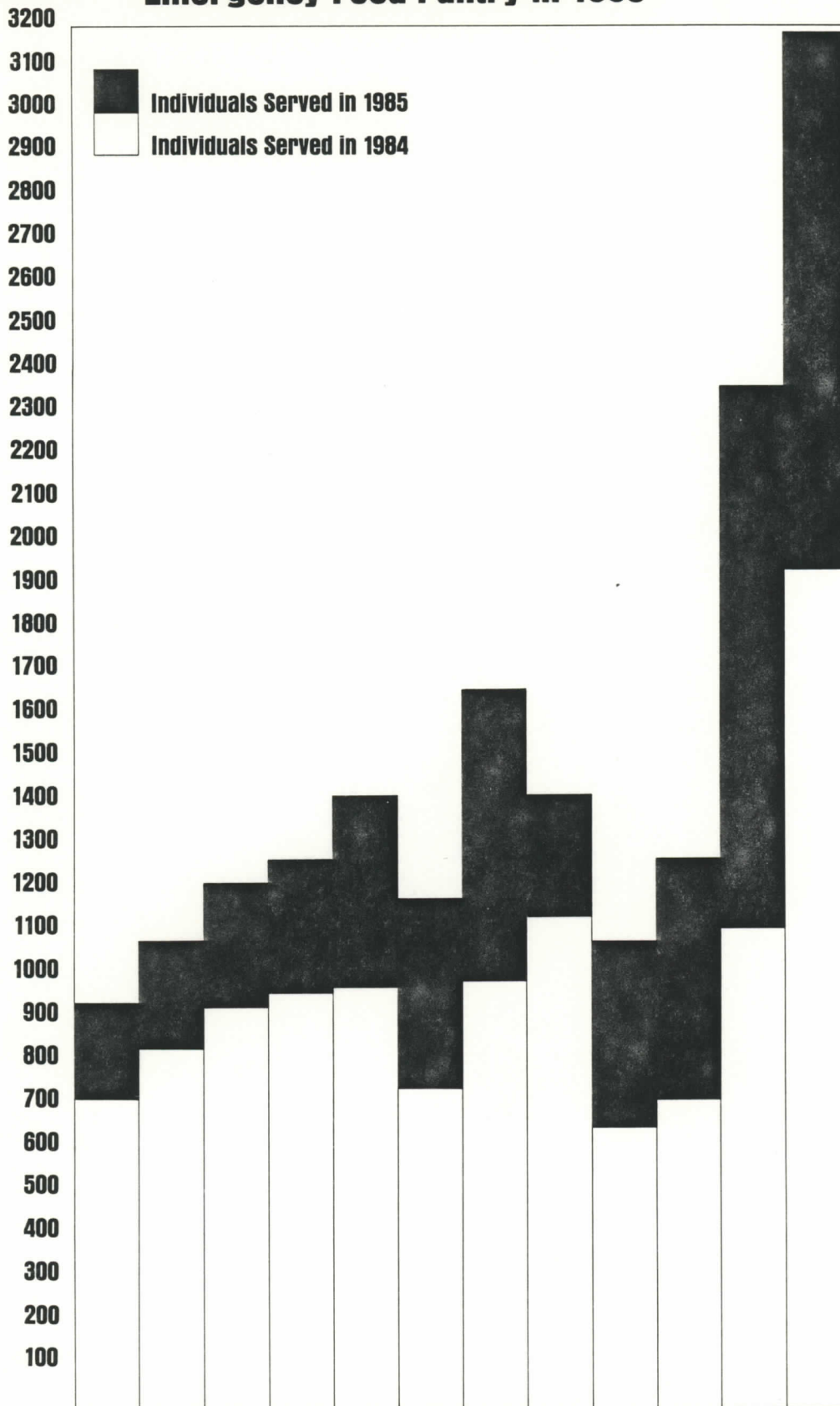
According to statistics collected by the Utah Food Assistance Providers (UFAP), the overall increase in the need for food assistance at Salt Lake County pantries between 1984 and 1985 was an astounding 28%. (See Chart on Page 27) A separate survey done by UFAP in September 1985 overlapped the time period of the Study. Comprising the months of May, June, and July of 1985, this survey showed that the average overall increase in people using food pantries and on-site feeding programs was over 48% as compared with the same period in 1984. In January of 1986, UFAP members reported a continuing increase in demand for emergency food service. At Crossroads Urban Center, the increase was 64%, while at the five food pantries operated by the Salt Lake Community Action Program (SLCAP) more individuals were seen by each pantry. The SLCAP pantries had increases ranging from 422% at Westside CAP to 32% at South County CAP. As this alarming trend continues, the members of UFAP are worried that they simply will not be able to continue meeting the demand for emergency food.

GRAPH 1

Crossroads Pantry Usage 1981-1985



GRAPH 2 Monthly Case Load Statistics for Crossroads Urban Center Emergency Food Pantry in 1985



	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
1985	935	1080	1218	1266	1417	1181	1664	1416	1079	1266	2360	3181
1984	721	833	928	958	969	738	991	1132	650	712	1108	1938

UTAH FOOD ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS
Statistics for Salt Lake County Emergency Food Pantries

Annual Statistics: 1984 vs. 1985

<u>Pantries</u>	<u>Reporting Dates</u>	<u>Households Served</u>	<u>Individuals</u>
Crossroads Urban Center	Calendar 1984	3,451	11,398
Case Load Increase: 59%	Calendar 1985	5,561	18,073
Salt Lake County Community Action Program	10/83 - 9/84	3,360	NA
Case Load Increase: 51%	10/84 - 9/85	5,085	NA
St. Mark's Episcopal	Calendar 1984	1,782	3,658
Case Load Decrease: 18%	Calendar 1985	1,814	2,993
SOCIO ^a	Calendar 1984	1,426	5,539
Case Load Increase: 12%	Calendar 1985	1,583	6,190
NAACP ^b	Calendar 1984	2,025	3,279
Case Load Increase: 55%	1/85 - 6/85	1,516	2,535
Indian Walk-In Center ^c	Calendar 1984	1,673	NA
Case Load Increase: 52%	Calendar 1985	2,536	6,280
St. Paul's Episcopal	Calendar 1984	NA	NA
	Calendar 1985	NA	1,482
Utah Rural Development Corporation (Midvale)	Calendar 1984	NA	NA
	Calendar 1985	144	537
St. Therese Catholic Parish (Midvale)	Calendar 1984	NA	NA
	Calendar 1985	667	NA
Baptist Concern Center	Calendar 1984	309	NA
Case Load Increase: 14%	Calendar 1985	353	NA
St. Joseph's (West Jordan)	Calendar 1984	85	NA
Case Load Increase 2%	Calendar 1985	87	NA

^aSOCIO is scheduled to be defunded by Salt Lake County due to cuts in Community Services Block Grants (CSBG) from the federal government.

^bThe NAACP pantry was closed permanently at the end of June 1985 due to lack of funding.

^cThe Indian Walk-In Center stands to lose annual CSBG funding of over \$13,000 on July 1, 1986. Services will have to be cut.

PERCENTAGES ARE BASED ON INDIVIDUALS SERVED WHEN AVAILABLE

III. THE HUNGER STUDY

ORIGINS OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

Many advocacy groups in other states are documenting hunger in their communities. Prior to, and since, the President's Task Force on Food Assistance (1984) which documented that hunger does exist, groups have been gathering information regarding hunger. We were keenly aware of the hunger survey work done in other areas and learned that only one study was based on face-to-face interviews with low-income people seeking assistance at an emergency food pantry. The on-site study, conducted in East Harlem, New York gives a comprehensive view of the people served at emergency food pantries. Another study by the Anti-Hunger Coalition of Texas (1982) interviewed 24 families and eloquently put a face on hunger. Utah decision makers, business and civic leaders, as well as the community at large, are not interested in hunger in other states. Many people in Utah feel that we are a unique area, not affected by hunger. The staff and members of Crossroads Urban Center know differently.

In 1984, some of Crossroads' staff and members of the Board of Directors met with several faculty members and graduate students from the University of Utah Graduate School of Social Work. Out of that meeting came the decision to compile the client information available through Crossroads' pantry, as well as to do an exploratory study. The purpose of the study is threefold: (1) To document hunger and other stress statistics on families receiving emergency food; (2) Evaluate existing services at Crossroads to assist in service assessment and improve-

ment, and help ascertain a realistic view of the "safety-net" provided by Crossroads; (3) Inform the public and Utah's decision makers about the information we have compiled, thus generating additional resources for the poor, while at the same time eliminating barriers to adequate food assistance. The research instrument, which was designed with the assistance of the University of Utah Graduate School of Social Work, consisted of a questionnaire divided into five parts: use of Crossroads and other food pantries, demographic information, stressors, current food situation, and two open-ended questions. (See Page 53)

Between March and June of 1985, a random sample of clients, coming to Crossroads to obtain a three-day supply of food, were asked if they would be willing to participate in a 30-45 minute interview regarding hunger in Salt Lake County. At the end of each interview, the family was paid \$10.00 for their time and expertise. Funding for their reimbursement was obtained through the Junior League of Salt Lake City Community Fund. In retrospect, the researchers wish they had developed a separate instrument to assess the effect of poverty and hunger on the children seen at Crossroads Urban Center. We are unable to determine the long-term effects of their going without food and sometimes shelter. We can only speculate as to the physical damage, as well as the effect on the child's sense of self-esteem and security.

Another limitation of the study is the assessment of the specific needs of homeless families. Of the total caseload, 12% of the families with children who came to Crossroads in 1985

were homeless. These were most often two-parent families ineligible for welfare. They were the people least in touch with the available resources from the community. They were also the group most often delayed or denied benefits by the Utah Department of Social Services. Every homeless family had at least one member suffering from depression, which was most often untreated. Other areas needing more study are that of the untreated depression and lack of medical coverage among the hungry.

CLIENT PROFILE

A composit of the "most typical" Crossroads Emergency Food Pantry client could be composed as follows:

She is a thirty-three year-old, caucasian, single female who is coming to the pantry for the second time this year. She most likely has not used other food pantries in the area, and is unaware of where else she could go for food assistance. The young woman is the mother of two preschool children. She lives on approximately \$312 a month.¹¹ The source of this income is Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). She lives alone with her small children in a rented apartment. She has moved twice in the past year, and is constantly faced with rent increases, eviction, and utility shut-off notices.

There have been major changes in the family composition in the past three months. Moving in with family or friends or a part-time job have negatively affected benefits. The mother is suffering from an untreated clinical depression. The children often have colds, flu, and infections. Food shortages most often occur at the end of the month when food stamps are gone, and

there is little or no food on hand at home. The mother is well aware of the affect that going without food has on both she and her children. She states that both she and the children are more tired, irritable, and unable to cope when hungry. The mother frequently goes without food in order to feed her children.

¹¹The average AFDC grant for a family of three is \$376 per month, but many families coming to Crossroads have reduced grants.

IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

AN OVERVIEW

There were 189 people interviewed for the total hunger survey. We spoke to both individuals and couples. Fifteen interviews were not completed, however, because of the mental state of the client. The survey bears out both the national and Utah pattern of the feminization of poverty, with 134 women seeking Crossroads' food assistance compared to only 55 men. The survey also reaffirmed Utah poverty data by clearly showing that minorities represent a disproportionate percentage of those suffering from hunger. Fifty-seven percent of the people interviewed were caucasian, and forty-three percent were minorities. The average age of the adults in the family was 33, but the range was from a 14 year-old teenage mother to a 77 year-old widow. An overwhelming number of the families we met had infants and preschoolers, with almost 200 children under six, and 64 of school age or teenagers. This concurs with overall data for 1985 at the food pantry, which saw 3,250 children five or under representing 21% of the total caseload. The average family size is 3.4 with a range of one to twelve family members.

The average monthly income for these families is \$312 per month. Nineteen percent of the families surveyed had no income at all for the month prior to the interview. The range of income went from zero to \$700 per month, with the exception of two families who made approximately \$1,000 per month. While 28 families had no source of income, 47% of those who did have income received AFDC, a form of assistance generally available

only to single parents, 24% received income from full or part-time employment, 19% were helped through other forms of government assistance (SSI, General Assistance, Workman's Compensation), 7% had income from trade, barter or loans, and 3% supported their families through illegal means.

WHAT BRINGS SOMEONE TO CROSSROADS

A majority of families coming to Crossroads' emergency food pantry have some source of income. Their reason for coming is, of course, lack of food, but the causal factors are varied. Two-thirds of the households had recent changes in their circumstances. These changes included 45% who had a change in family composition, such as birth, death, divorce or separation, 28% who had a job loss, 15% who experienced relocation or eviction, and 13% who experienced a major health problem involving a family member. The other major reasons identified by survey participants for seeking assistance at Crossroads were problems with public assistance programs. These problems were mainly with AFDC or the Food Stamp Program, and were divided between government program inequities or unfairness in the system as it stands, and violations of the law on the part of Social Services through delay or improper denial of benefits.

The interviews confirmed that, in low-income households, food appears to be a flexible budget item; an item that is often the first thing cut. Rent, utilities, and medical bills are all fixed amounts that must be paid, but the food budget is variable and people often skimp on food to make ends meet.

QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES

Food

The primary reason a family comes to Crossroads is because they have an immediate need for food. A third of the families interviewed had no food on hand at all. Although no two situations were exactly the same, the other two-thirds of the families stated that they had staples, such as rice, beans, flour, canned goods or powdered milk, but not enough to fulfill meal needs. It was of particular interest that most people could itemize the exact amount of their food inventory down to the number of bread slices or eggs. Children listening in on their parents interviews occasionally would supplement the answers by saying things such as, "The cereal box is half full." A majority of the families receive some form of federal food assistance from food stamps or WIC, but food assistance programs are often misunderstood and are constantly changing. Program participants often come to Crossroads when their food stamps are delayed, or when benefits are reduced. Several of the families interviewed were subsequently assisted by a Crossroads' Anti-Hunger Advocate who intervened on their behalf when benefits were delayed, reduced or denied contrary to federal mandates. Many women on AFDC had food stamp benefits reduced when they tried unsuccessfully to move off welfare and into the job market.

Of the people who come to Crossroads, 67% have not used another food pantry or soup kitchen. When asked what they would have done if the pantry had not been open that day, 47% said

they did not know what else they would do, 21% said they would try to find another pantry, 11% said they would go to family or friends, 9% said they would use illegal means to feed their family, 6% said they would sell blood or pawn something, and 6% said they would go to Social Services.

A vast majority (86%) of the survey respondents had gone without food; most said they had gone without food for two or three days. The primary reason for going without food was to make sure the children could eat. Over and over parents said, "My kids come first, I will do anything so my children can eat." Often both parents skipped meals throughout the month, as well as skipping food for days on end when the end of the month was approaching.

When people in the study described what happens when they go without food a clear pattern emerged. Two-thirds of the adults said they had emotional as well as physical changes. They described becoming cross and short-tempered, and claimed to experience more anger, worry, and frustration. Many described feeling weak, a loss of energy, and a lot of guilt. Some described early symptoms of starvation, and thought constantly of food.

The parents were asked whether their children behaved differently when they went without food. Unfortunately, every parent said yes! The parents talked of crankiness, whining, and fighting among the children. Of even greater concern were responses of withdrawal, listlessness, inactivity, and inability to cope. Every parent in the survey said they had watched their children go without food. This was the question that elicited

the most emotional response from parents, and many adults began to cry while discussing how differently their children behave without sufficient food.

Shelter and Utility Service

The high cost of housing and utilities was often the reason people gave for food shortages. The study participants had moved an average of two times in the past year. The range was from one to thirteen moves within the past year. One woman had been in the same home for 50 years, while there was also a man who laughed and said he was always moving on a daily basis. A fourth of the moves were the result of an eviction notice.

Over half of the families had received one or more utility shut-off notices in the three months preceding the interview. People said that next to food, any extra money would be spent on utilities. Over and over we heard parents talk about the hardship of providing shelter and utilities, and how frequent moves and shut-off notices added to the overall stress and tension in the family.

Ironically, in a state where people are counseled to turn to their families first when seeking assistance, we found that people were penalized by government programs for turning to their families. Over one-third of the families had moved in with relatives. The interviewers heard repeated stories of the loss of food stamp benefits when this occurred, and then the subsequent move out on their own again. This move resulted in a restoration of food stamps at the expense of emotional support from the family. During times of financial crisis, parents

described their older children as aware of the fear their parents had of utility shut-offs. The frequent moves or the homelessness of the family gave the children in our study a far more insecure "home" life than the average Salt Lake child must face.

Health

When asked if they or their family members were depressed, 118 people (63%) answered in the affirmative. It was difficult for the interviewers to talk about depression upon hearing some of the individual stories. Only a handful of clients were receiving professional help for their depression, and more than two-thirds of the respondents had no form of health insurance. Those on AFDC appeared to fare the best regarding health care coverage, while two-parent families fared the worst.

Depression was evident in those interviewed, from the listless two-year old whom the mother said doesn't talk anymore or explore new places, to the single father who states that he has had a 20 pound weight loss in the past three months. Others described symptoms of depression including a marked increase in worry and guilt, an inability to concentrate, and trouble falling and staying asleep.

Physical illnesses and health problems were another area of major concern. Colds, flu, and infection were listed most often, with accidents and emergency surgeries second. People also talked about teeth, gum, and bladder problems. Miscarriages and problem pregnancies were mentioned as well. Diagnosed illnesses that occurred most frequently included arthritis, diabetes, ulcers, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Although we cannot conclude that inadequate diet caused the above mentioned prob-

lems, it is significant that they were identified 75 times throughout the interviews.

In a study published by the West Virginia Food-Law Project in January of 1983, the link between inadequate resources for the poor and self-concept was described:

"What kind of self-esteem does a person have who finds themselves [sic] in a situation where they cannot meet their own or their families' [sic] basic survival needs, and, in order to get these needs met, must go through the confusing maze of red-tape of government bureaucracies or go beg for a handout at the charity-oriented organization, and [sic] all too many times, to be deemed unworthy - not "truly needy" for services? There is an implied distrust of human beings in arbitrary eligibilty guidelines - which serves to breed more distrust and a "learning to work the system" syndrome[,] which in turn only leads to chronic despair at ever being a "worthy" member of society and of [sic] victims blaming themselves for their failure and sin of being poor or uneducated. (Why are there rising rates of alcoholism, mental illness, drug abuse, crime rates and other self destructive activities?) And why must there be eligibilty guidelines? We maintain that it is because there are never enough resources to provide for people's basic needs."¹²

¹²The West Virginia Food-Law Project, Hunger in West Virginia (Gassaway, 1983), p. 26.

V. A CALL TO ACTION

"Even if one American child is forced to bed hungry at night, or if one senior citizen is denied the dignity of proper nutrition, that is a national tragedy."

President Ronald Reagan (August 1983)

The researchers of this report could not agree more with the President's assessment of hunger in the United States. Moreover, the fact that hunger in this country simply does not have to exist makes the findings of this study even more abhorrent and disgraceful than Mr. Reagan indicates. The bottom line is that people (many of them children) are suffering needlessly, and this is happening on a daily basis right here in Utah. The results of our research could not be more clear on this point, and how we respond to this tragedy in our midst is truly the measure of our community.

The recommendations that follow amount to a call to action on behalf of Utah's hungry, and are organized in sections directed toward specific groups and agencies in Utah. The suggestions come out of conversations with the hungry, who are the real experts on hunger in our community. They can be ignored, but only to our shame.

Religious Congregations and the Public

1. The religious community of Salt Lake should take the lead in addressing hunger in our community by organizing and participating in a week long emphasis on the plight of the hungry in Utah. This effort could culminate in a "Hunger

Sabbath," which would focus weekly worship services on hunger in our state and what people can do about it.

2. During the growing season, there should be extensive efforts in the community to grow fresh produce for the hungry. These gardening efforts should be undertaken both by individuals, and by churches, civic groups, and other community organizations as collective endeavors. This produce would then be distributed through the emergency food pantry network.

3. Continuous support must be given to those who are striving to meet the emergency food needs of our community. Donations of food, time, and money are essential yearlong to maintain the emergency food network.

4. Only through the efforts of the religious community and the public can we support the hungry and lobby for change through the adoption of the recommendations contained in this report. We must be vocal and consistent as advocates for the less fortunate in our community. In the sections that follow, specific decision makers and public officials are identified who can begin the process of change that must occur to alleviate hunger in Utah.

Private Sector and the Business Community

The private sector in Utah should work together with those in the non-profit sector to meet the needs of the hungry by:

1. Donating staff time and other resources necessary to organize

a network of volunteers to support the emergency food pantry network and other basic services for the poor and disadvantaged in our community.

2. Providing the financial support to offer a 100% standing match for funds raised specifically for the emergency food network through the non-profit sector. Programs involving this type of matching donation are working well all across the country.

Local Government

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City of Salt Lake
Salt Lake City/County Building
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111
Telephone: (801) 535-7704

Chairman Mike Stewart
Salt Lake County Commission
407 Salt Lake City/County Bldg.
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111
Telephone: (801) 535-7307

1. The City of Salt Lake should take the lead in establishing a comprehensive municipal food policy combining innovative new approaches in feeding the hungry with long term strategic planning in conjunction with Salt Lake County. This food policy should be an effort to incorporate the needs of those experiencing food problems into the overall municipal and county planning process at every level, including transportation, housing, health, regulatory activities, and emergency preparedness. We recommend the report issued in October 1985 by the U.S. Conference of Mayors entitled Municipal Food Policies as a starting point for this effort.

2. Creative solutions must be explored immediately at all levels of local government to help meet the needs of the hungry through

emergency services. Examples of ideas which could be examined are central collection points throughout the City for food donations (i.e. - fire stations, schools, etc.), special food drives in public schools, and the proclamation of a "hunger awareness week" to be held the week prior to the weekend of the Hunger Sabbath.

3. Local School Boards should begin working toward maximum participation in the federal School Breakfast Program in order to insure a more nutritionally adequate diet for children in low-income families.

The Governor and the Legislature

Governor Norman H. Bangerter
State of Utah
Office of the Governor
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114
Telephone: (801) 533-5231

Utah House of Representatives -
(801) 533-5801

Utah Senate - (801) 533-5701

1. The Utah Legislature should immediately move to raise and maintain AFDC grant levels that allow families that depend on this income to subsist at the poverty level and keep pace with the cost of living. The State of Utah should also exercise the option to begin AFDC benefits at the time of verified pregnancy instead of initiating benefits after the seventh month of pregnancy.

2. The AFDC-U program, which provided AFDC assistance to unemployed two-parent families in Utah until 1981, should be reinstated by the Legislature as a means of reducing long-term

hunger and homelessness.

3. Increased funding should be made available by the State to insure that welfare recipients seeking to gain employment are provided with the services and support necessary to achieve self-sufficiency, without risking the loss of what little security they have in the process. This means adequate daycare, meaningful training programs, and an end to retrospective budgeting as a means of figuring benefit levels, which often leads to non-existent income being counted against AFDC recipients when grants are calculated, thereby providing a disincentive to seek employment.

4. The Emergency Work Program (EWP) should be expanded in order to provide families and single individuals who want to work the ability to earn an income year-round until such time as they have the opportunity to enter the regular job market.

5. The public shelters in Salt Lake should be guaranteed stable and adequate funding from local, State, and federal revenues. Furthermore, the State should institute a policy on homelessness which allows for stays at public family shelters of at least six weeks, coordinated services for the homeless, cooking facilities, meaningful job opportunities, and provision for treatment of physical and mental illness when necessary.

6. Many who live in the Salt Lake City area pay 50% to 60% of their income for housing costs, while the majority of residents pay only 25%. The State of Utah should use its resources to create innovative housing alternatives which combine a number

of approaches including the development of cooperative housing, housing rehabilitation programs, and matching grants to non-profit agencies and municipalities for locally based community development projects.

7. Utility bills for gas and electricity are too high to allow many of the poor to eat adequately. In other states, the legislatures and public service commissions have adopted a Guaranteed Service Plan (GSP) which limits utility bills to a specific percentage of available household income. Utahns should examine the GSP as a partial solution to the crisis of high utility bills in low-income homes.

Utah Department of Social Services (DSS)

Norman G. Anngus
Executive Director
150 West North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84145
Telephone: (801) 533-5331

1. The DSS should actively promote the Food Stamp Program through outreach to potential clients in order to improve the participation rate in Utah to at least 50% of those eligible for the program.

2. The DSS should move to simplify application procedures for public assistance in Utah, including food stamps and AFDC. There should be no administrative barriers to participation in federal food programs, and these programs must be run in accordance with federal regulations. The proposed 17 page applica-

tion for assistance currently scheduled for use in Utah should be abandoned. (The present application is only four pages long.)

3. The rights of clients participating in public assistance programs must be protected at all times in order to insure that people in need do not suffer needlessly.

4. Distribution of the maximum amount of USDA surplus commodities available to the State should continue, both to support emergency food providers and as a means for low-income people to supplement their food budgets.

The Utah Congressional Delegation

United States Senate

Sen. Orrin Hatch
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
Telephone: (202) 224-5251

Federal Building #3438
125 S. State St.
Salt Lake City, Utah 84138
(801) 524-4380

Sen. Jake Garn
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
Telephone: (202) 224-5444

Federal Building #4225
125 S. State St.
Salt Lake City, Utah 84138
(801) 524-5933

United States House of Representatives

Rep. James Hansen (Dist. 1)
1113 Longworth Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
Telephone: (202) 225-0453

324 25th St.
Ogden, Utah 84401
(800) 662-2523

Rep. David Monson (Dist. 2)
1022 Longworth Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
Telephone: (202) 225-3031

Federal Building #2311
125 S. State St.
Salt Lake City, Utah 84138
(801) 524-4394

Rep. Howard Nielson (Dist. 3)
1229 Longworth Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
Telephone: (202) 225-7751

88 West 100 North
Provo, Utah 84601
(800) 245-1426

1. Utah's Congressional Delegation should immediately begin working toward changes in federal food stamp regulations that reflect the importance of the extended family, instead of the status quo, which discourages people from turning to their families by reducing and eliminating available benefits when they do.

2. Representatives from Utah should take the lead in calling for an end to retrospective budgeting whereby benefits are calculated based on income received two months previous, even when that income is no longer being received by the household. Families with children should never be left without income.

3. The USDA should be instructed to seek every opportunity to distribute government surplus commodities to those in need. There is no justification for hunger in our country as long as we are paying to store food that is going unused.

VI. QUOTATIONS ON HUNGER BY THE HUNGRY

At the end of each interview we asked an open-ended question: "Some people in our country, as well as right here in our city, say that there is no hunger in America. If you could talk to those people today, what would you want to tell them?" No two answers were the same, but we did find four common themes. The first theme was an invitation by study participants for people to come and see how they lived. The second was a message that both the government and/or the rich are unwilling to see and solve problems. The third theme we found was that people felt that Americans should help those at home first, and a fourth response was anger or expletives. While statistics can speak for themselves, people speak best for themselves.

Come and See How I Live

A painfully thin father with his equally thin children stated, "Oh, yes, there is hunger in our country, and I am your first example."

"They would find out if they were to come here and see the people ask for food. Anyone who makes the laws could come and see me - see how an old person in our community lives. You would need to call first, but I would like them to see."

"Seeing is believing - please come and spend a few days with me."

"I would invite them to come to my house and stay with me for a few days, to see how I live and how little I have. I would just hope that I could feed them."

A young mother of four whose husband is in jail said, "There is hunger. There are times that we, like now, have things all happen at once, we don't have money to go around for food."

"When you are a single parent it is very hard to provide for your children, whether you go to work or stay home."

"My children hide food and hunt all over the house for it. I would like you to be a single mother with three little kids, one of them a brand new baby. It feels like you are fighting a losing battle every day - all day long it is a constant fight."

"I hate coming here, but I do it for my kids. It is so hard and embarrassing, but I can't stand to see these little guys going hungry." After her mother answered the question, a six-year old added, "I'm hungry, I'm hungry right now."

"I believe that people in the U.S. are going hungry every day. I see people getting food from garbage cans almost every day in the summer months."

The Government and the Rich Won't See and Solve the Problems

"People just don't care - they turn their backs."

"There is plenty of food in this area, but lots of food is being wasted - more probably goes into a dumpster than is eaten, but laws won't allow us to get that food."

"I can't believe what is given for food stamps - it's almost impossible to get good food. Lots of people are stealing to feed their kids."

A homeless father of two preschoolers said, "I would say my main objective would be to have them reevaluate the system. Check it out, is food being distributed fairly? Are those who really need it getting it? Every time we ask for help, we get less. Less of less of less is not much. We get less and our problems get more. We go deeper and deeper in the hole. A three-day supply of food for a family of four living in a shelter. I would say lets take politics out of caring and take the rules and regs out and put in love, understanding, and real caring."

"To whom it may concern: My children are hungry right now because I lost my job and the welfare system is very slow at recognizing hunger."

A single parent who lost her job while trying to get off welfare (and thus has her benefits calculated for two months as if she were still employed) says, "How do you expect us to live on \$160 a month with no food stamps, with so many bills to pay. That is why I have to go to a place like this. It drives me crazy to stay home, but if you lose everything, if you try to get off welfare, if you lose your job you won't try again. I don't want to work again and then have my kids suffer."

Utahns Should Help Those at Home First

"We are the World, too."

A fifty-five year-old woman in tears says, "I see hunger every day. I see people every day on the street and in my building. Things we sent to other countries should be given to our own first. I've seen those people on TV and I feel sorry for them, but there is hunger here - take care of our own people."

"Please don't get me wrong, this is hard to say. Instead of shipping food to other countries, we need to be taking care of our own, then if there is anything extra, send it over."

An eighteen year-old mother with a three day-old baby said, "I feel sorry for mothers in Africa. We are better off here because you can go to places like Crossroads for help."

"Americans are too proud to admit they have hungry people. People should know that simply because someone works doesn't mean that there is always a cash flow. Some jobs simply do not pay enough."

Anger

"This needs to be talked about, if we don't feed our kids we will have hell to pay. We need to think about the effects on the kids - a scary problem."

"I would really like to yell at some Mormons, they have a whole warehouse that looks like a grocery store, yet they help only those who are 'worthy.' I felt so angry and disgusted today when they turned me away. How can people who believe in God so much, just turn someone away because of religion?"

"Just because people are hungry they aren't criminals, don't turn them down for help - you might be next."

VII. CONCLUSION

People come to Crossroads Urban Center's emergency food pantry as a last resort. By the time a family comes to Crossroads for food assistance they have generally run out of other options. It is hard to see a young woman skipping meals because she is waiting for the seventh month of her pregnancy in order "to be pregnant enough" to receive welfare. It would be a great relief not to see the couples who say they both give blood twice a week to pay for groceries. We don't want to see the homeless families, including babies, drifting through the door at Crossroads, or the man who said, "If this pantry hadn't been open I would have been into the dumpsters."

Unfortunately, we do see these people on a daily basis and in record numbers. We see families lose their food stamps when forced to move in with relatives. We see administrative barriers that discourage people from receiving assistance. We see adults and children suffering from mental illness, but going without treatment. What we saw most during this study was the needless suffering of the low-income population of Salt Lake. Even though it is difficult to accept the existence of hunger in Utah, it is even more difficult to ignore the increased need in our community.

The most crucial need is for meaningful change in programs and regulations which affect the poor and disadvantaged at the government level. According to the Physicians Task Force on Hunger in America, "the U.S. can eliminate hunger in five or six months at a cost of \$5-7 billion," while utilizing existing

programs.¹³ Those who are forced to exist on the margin of our society should be able to live without the pain of constant hunger.

The immediate need is for the emergency food network of Utah, including food banks, food pantries, and on-site feeding programs, to be guaranteed sufficient resources to meet the ever increasing need for emergency food assistance. Occasional "band-aids" will not keep our hungry fed. Not only must the immediate needs of the emergency food network be supplied, but sufficient resources must be placed in areas that promote on-going support from the private sector and help to make this network truly self-sufficient and stable.

When we see things that we do not care to see or acknowledge, we have two choices. We can ignore those who are forced to live in the shadow of hunger and pain and simply pretend they do not exist, or recognize the fact that Utahns are suffering and respond with compassion. What the researchers of this report want to see is both additional resources and legislative and policy changes to provide for people's basic food needs. We have the resources in Utah right now to build shelters and provide affordable low-income housing to solve the problem of homelessness, to fund food pantries and eliminate hunger in Salt Lake, to fund two-parent family AFDC and provide jobs to eliminate the need for such programs altogether. Many people believe that a society can be judged by how it treats its

¹³"Physicians Task Force Says Hunger in U.S. is 'Growing Epidemic'," Nutrition Week, February 28, 1985, p. 2.

weakest members. The measure of compassion in Utah will be our response to the hunger no one wants to see, but that together we will solve.

VI. SURVEY QUESTIONS

CROSSROADS URBAN CENTER HUNGER STUDY

I. Use of Crossroads and other food pantries:

1. How often have you used the Crossroads Food Pantry?
2. What would you have done had the food pantry not been open today?
3. Where else have you gone for food assistance?
4. Have you or your family used other food pantries in the Salt Lake area? If yes, how long did the food last?
5. Is there anything that we at Crossroads could do to better serve you and your family?

II. Demographic Information (from application*)

- *1. Sex: M F
- *2. Age:
- *3. # in Family:
- *4. Race:
- *5. Ages of children:
6. Who lives in the household now?
7. Have there been any major changes in the family in the past three months? If yes, explain:
- *8. What has been your income for the past month?
- *9. What is the source of this income?
10. Have you applied for, and been denied, any form of government assistance?
11. Have you been cut from any government assistance?
12. Have you lost a job while on assistance?
13. How did losing a job effect you grant the following month?

III. Stressors

1. What health problems, if any, are your family now facing?
2. Are there any diagnosed illnesses in the family?
3. To your knowledge, is anyone in your household suffering from depression? If so, please explain.
4. Do you have any form of health insurance?
5. How many times have you moved in the past year?
6. Have any of these moves been the result of evictions?
7. Have you received any shut-off notices?
8. Have you had to move back with family, or in with friends?
9. Do you think that you act differently when you go without food? If yes, please explain.
10. Do your children act differently when they are hungry? Tell me about it.

IV. Current Food Situation:

1. What food do you have on hand right now?
2. Do you ever have to go without food? If so, how long?
3. Have you ever had to go without food so that someone else could eat? Could you tell me about it?
4. Do food shortages usually occur at a particular time? If so, when?

5. If you had more money to go around, would you buy more food?
If no, what would you use the extra money for?
6. During the past three months are there food items you normally purchase that due to a money shortage you have had to cut back on? If yes, what types of food have you had to cut back?
Meat Vegetables Fish Dairy other
7. Some people in our country, as well as right here in our city, say that there is no hunger in America. If you could talk to those people today, what would you want to tell them?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add that you think might be helpful to our study?

Interviewer's personal impressions and or actions:

