

For the past 32 years, October 16th has marked World Food Day: an observance of worldwide food justice and food security issues commemorating the establishment of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations on October 16, 1945. Its purpose is to educate and gather political support towards ending hunger. Worldwide, it is estimated that 1 in 8 people suffer from chronic hunger – a staggering 842 million hungry people. Hunger and malnutrition come at a high cost. According to the FAO, worldwide one out of four children under the age of five is stunted and will never reach their full physical or cognitive potential. About 2 billion people worldwide lack vitamins and minerals that are essential to health and 1.4 billion are overweight, with increased risk of chronic disease. Inequitable distribution of resources, rather than lack of food, is to blame for current problems. Disharmonious food systems and misuse of agricultural resources also compound the issue. It is also estimated that 60% of the world's food systems are used unsustainably, which poses a great threat to future generations.

Hunger not only affects every corner of the world, but every region of the United States. At the local level, about 1.5 million New York City residents, 1 in 4 of which are children, live in households facing food insecurity in 2013. According to Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC) 2011 report, Food Hardship in America, the second highest rate of food hardship in the country is in the South Bronx at 32.7%. Food hardship is defined by the response to the following question: "Have there been times in the past twelve months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?"

At God's Love, our mission is to improve the health and well-being of people living with serious illness by alleviating hunger and malnutrition. We deeply understand the cascade of negative events that can occur when someone does not have access to appropriate and adequate food. We recognize that food and nutrition are fundamental in maintaining quality of life and yield positive health outcomes. These needs are basic human rights and not privileges.

This year's World Food Day 2013 theme is "Sustainable Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition". The focus on Nutrition – a focus on nutrient dense foods such as fruits, vegetables and legumes – is an important consideration that looks beyond caloric value. Vitamins and minerals, in addition to fats, carbohydrates and proteins, are needed on a daily basis to maintain health and prevent disease and must be taken into account when working to alleviate food insecurity and hunger. Our program recognizes this complexity as well. All of meals are designed to support the health of people living with serious illness. Our Registered Dietitians work with all of our clients and their families to help them make healthy dietary choices.

So how can you make a difference this World Food Day? Here are some suggestions. Volunteer your time. Use your consumer power to purchase local and sustainable products. Reduce food waste in your home. Compost. Join a World Food Day event. For more ideas visit worldfooddayusa.org or oxfamamerica.org.

