

Local News

October 15, 2011

Restaurants lobbying to accept food stamps

By Abbey Doyle
The Herald Bulletin

ANDERSON, Ind. — More than 10,000 households and 22,000 people in Madison County receive food stamps. But of the nearly \$3 million spent monthly in the county, only a small percentage of that is being spent by the homeless, elderly or disabled — the populations that restaurants are lobbying to be allowed to spend those federal dollars at their establishments.

Lois Rockhill, executive director of Second Harvest Food Bank of East Central Indiana, said the proposed change would be helpful for those populations.

"When you think of the elderly, giving them the option of going to a restaurant would allow them to stay independent longer," she said. "And for the homeless, they have no means of preparing food for themselves. Why not go to a restaurant for a hot meal? The only other options that exist are going to soup kitchens or a mission. This increases their ability to handle their own life better."

Rockhill said food stamp recipients who are disabled would also benefit from the proposed change.

"The argument against it is about obesity and nutrition issues," she said. "We all face those concerns and make our choices. I don't want to say that just because people have the option to go to a restaurant they are making a bad choice. We don't know what they are going to order, how often they are going to eat it."

Federal law prohibits food stamps to be used on prepared foods. But a provision put on the books in the 1970s allows restaurants to serve the three specialized populations and be paid with food stamps. Although the provision is there, most states don't allow it. Four — Arizona, California, Florida and Michigan — do allow restaurants to accept the benefits from the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

And restaurants are lobbying for more states to do the same.

"It makes perfect sense to expand a program that's working well in California, Arizona and Michigan, enabling the homeless, elderly and disabled to purchase prepared meals with SNAP benefits in a restaurant environment," Yum! spokesman Jonathan Blum told USA Today.

Some have raised nutritional concerns about the federal benefits being used at fast food restaurants like those operated under the Yum! Brand, such as Taco Bell, KFC, Long John Silver's and Pizza Hut.

"We want food stamp users to buy the most nutritionally adequate food," said Jenny Martin, nutrition coordinator at Community Hospital Anderson.

"The foods that tend to be cheaper and on sale are often the less healthy options. The goal with the food stamp program should always be to stretch the dollar to fit within the budget to last the whole month."

Eating out doesn't have to be unhealthy, she said, although the healthy options are often the most expensive.

"The food stamp dollar is not going to go as far," Martin said. "Instead, you can buy a bag of potatoes for \$3 or \$4 and it would last you the whole month. You can do the same thing with apples and you have fruit servings that will last a lot longer."

Martin said those using food stamps should be looking for non-convenience items that can be used for many recipes as opposed to something more expensive that will last for just one meal.

Another barrier from healthy foods for many food stamp recipients is what Martin calls food deserts. Many of those receiving SNAP benefits don't have reliable transportation and can't drive to a grocery store, instead they must shop at convenience stores that do accept food stamps but don't offer many healthy options and are much more costly.

Ken Adkins, president and CEO of LifeStream Services, said that a big part of overall health for older adults is not only nutrition but the ability for them to socialize.

"If a person can be out and in a restaurant with other people, that is going to impact them in a very positive fashion," Adkins said. "For older adults, I feel very strongly that this is a very good idea. It will impact them in a very positive fashion."

As far as nutritional concerns, Adkins said that isn't of the utmost priority for elderly adults.

"If I'm 85 years old and I want ice cream for dinner, you aren't going to keep me from eating it," he said. "If you don't like the way I eat at a restaurant, you probably won't like the way I shop. I'm not sure what difference it makes at 85."

And for elderly adults living alone to get to a grocery store, walk through the store to buy groceries and go home and cook a meal may not even be a possibility. With this program, at least those adults would have feasible options for hot meals, Adkins said.

"Just because you are on food stamps doesn't mean you should be forced to eat different than the rest of the country," he said. "How many Americans don't eat right? Just because you are 85 and have a limited income doesn't mean you should live your life differently."

Contact Abbey Doyle: 640-4805, abbey.doyle@heraldbulletin.com

Who is eligible for food stamps?

Who is eligible for food stamps?

To qualify, applicants must meet both nonfinancial and financial requirements. Nonfinancial requirements include state residency, citizenship/alien status, work registration and cooperation with the IMPACT Program. Financial criteria include income and asset limits.

The asset/resource limits are \$2,000 per household except for households containing a member who is disabled or age 60 or older; then the limit is \$3,250. Assets include bank accounts, cash, real estate, personal property, vehicles, etc. The household's home and surrounding lot, household good and personal belongings and life insurance policies are not counted as assets in the Food Stamp Program.

What food stamps can and can't buy

Yes

- Breads and cereals
- Fruits and vegetables
- Meats, fish and poultry
- Dairy products
- Seeds and plants that produce food

No

- Beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes and tobacco
- Nonfood items, such as pet foods, soaps, paper products and household supplies
- Vitamins and medicines
- Hot foods
- Food that will be eaten in the store

What is EBT?

Electronic Benefits Transfer is the electronic distribution of food stamp and TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) benefits to Indiana families. Benefits are accessed with a plastic Hoosier Works card. The card replaces paper food stamp coupons and paper checks. Food stamp and/or TANF benefits are credited to card accounts electronically.

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Discussion

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Gilly Beane Alexandria - Monroe High School
SO, SET UP THE FOOD PANTRIES TO ACCEPT FOOD STAMPS, IM SURE THEY WOULD LOVE TO HAVE THE EXTRA FUNDS COMING IN TO HELP ANYONE THAT NEEDS THE HELP. HECK WITH ALL THE EXTRA FUNDS FROM PEOPLES FOOD STAMPS THEY COULD EVEN EXPAND THE FOOD PANTRY SERVICES AND HAVE ALL DAY OPERATIONS LOL!

Reply Like Follow Post - 4 hours ago

Mandy Ferguson Miller Anderson, Indiana
Are you kidding me? I offend sorry, but this is absolute BS! I work hard enough for folks to enjoy MY tax money. Now your telling me someone on food stamps can eat at a restaurant, as a family that WORKS cannot because they do not have the money to do so? OMC...this is repulsive.

Reply Like Follow Post - Yesterday at 8:13am

Mandy Ferguson Miller Anderson, Indiana
Reminding folks of you I am NOT speaking of folks that truly need the help. I am speaking of people that have no intention on becoming self sufficient and with this little perk, it gives a person even more reason to NOT stop milking the system. Especially in this town.

Reply Like Follow Post - Yesterday at 8:18am

Carletta Morrison Wheeling Park High School
You know I couldn't even bother reading this whole article because its just CRAP....Let me first say I would like to know who much "Buckers" brings in off of FOOD STAMP soda purchase in Mad Co...that would be a good report to follow up on....Second I don't agree with this what so ever and will find a way or a group who want to lobby against this.....people in Anderson use stamps to sell to support their pill habits.... Ken I'm sure you have never been on FOOD STAMPS so your opinion really doesn't matter.

Reply Like Follow Post - Yesterday at 8:21am

Pamela Kelly Ogle Novotney Highland Senior High School
Yes I know of 2 people who sell their stamps for pills while their kids go hungry....When a report them, they really dont do a thing to prove it....Its endless....They should ask for ID when using their card also but they dont....This wont end till people keep reporting and standing up to whats wrong with our system....People on IS eat better than most cause they dont worry abt buying sale items, etc....

Reply Like Follow Post - 15 hours ago

Pamela Kelly Ogle Novotney Highland Senior High School
THIS IS RIDICULOUS! I'm not saying all but ALOT take advantage of the system and will continue till it changes and this change will not make it better!

Reply Like Follow Post - 15 hours ago

Angela Ogle Reynolds
wow, why do I work 7 lol They are making it to easy for the "lazy" people... this was only meant for the truly disabled... ridiculous! I Carma will get them and teach them later.

Reply Like Follow Post - 7 hours ago

Shyanne Blankenship Scharnowske
R U SERIOUS? Let's just give these people who make this a way of life another reason to NOT get out and work for a living...SMH!

Reply Like Follow Post - 15 hours ago

Pamela Kelly Ogle Novotney Highland Senior High School
Thats what im saying and it also means less food on the tables at home for the more important innocent ones, KIDS!!!! If they approve this then they will have to revamp and redo the groceries cause then hot foods everywhere will b allowed for purchase with food stamps.....Its total BS!!!

Reply Like Follow Post - 15 hours ago

Local News

Wheldon fans leave tributes at Indianapolis track

Dozens of fans have left flowers, candles and notes at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway gates in memory of two-time Indy 500 champion Dan Wheldon.

October 13, 2011 | Photo

Arrest log: Oct. 17
Arrests made by Madison County law enforcement on Saturday and Sunday, based on Madison County Jail records. Charges are recommended by arresting officers but are not final until the Madison County prosecutor reviews the case and files official charges.

October 16, 2011

What's Where: Oct. 17
A compilation of local events, as published Oct. 17 in The Herald Bulletin:

October 16, 2011

State Rep. Clere honored by Habitat for Humanity
There's a reason why state Rep. Ed Clere likens the legislative process to an unpredictable elevator. In the last session, his bill critical to the survival of the Habitat for Humanity home-building program in Indiana soared through the House before the session-stopping walkout by House Democrats put it in a dangerous stall.

October 16, 2011 | Photo

Getting Together: Motorcycle group says it emphasizes riders' safety
One hundred thirty-eight motorcycles lined up for the "Save the Jugs" ride last Saturday to benefit Marie's Hope, a program that offers free mammograms, Pap tests and osteoporosis screenings to indigent women in Madison County.

October 16, 2011 | Photo

Prayer rally breaks down barriers to Christianity
The topic of Christianity among youths and the obstacles that interfere with Christian behavior were discussed Sunday night during a prayer rally.

October 16, 2011 | Photo

Indy 500 winner Wheldon dies after massive wreck
Indianapolis 500 winner Dan Wheldon died Sunday at Las Vegas Motor Speedway after his car became ensnared in a fiery 15-car pileup, flew over another vehicle and landed in a catch fence just outside turn 2.

October 16, 2011 | Photo

Burning out Alzheimer's
A windy autumn afternoon didn't stop London Keys from riding his motorcycle 140 miles Saturday for the first Alzheimer's Burnout Poker Run and Hot Wing Eating Contest.

October 13, 2011 | Photo

'Body Safety' is topic of officer's talk
Sgt. Terry Hall, a 40-year veteran of law enforcement, will speak to parents, teachers and community members in Altoona, Indiana and Elwood on Monday in conjunction with his Body Safety program in the schools.

October 13, 2011

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October 13, 2011

More Local News Headlines

Arabians capture regional crowns

Photos from the Cross Country regional at the Muncie Sportsplex on Saturday where Pendleton Heights won both the boys and girls race.

October 15, 2011

Friday Night Football

Changing seasons

Chiefs defeat Colts 28-24
Argyls cage Tigers, 24-21

Herald Bulletin Videos

Herald Bulletin on YouTube

Anderson mayoral candidates address AARP
The three candidates vying to become the city's next mayor addressed a meeting of the Anderson chapter of the AARP Monday at the Anderson Public Library.

Remembering 9/11: Ten Years Later
Anderson residents, including two firefighters who visited New York City a month after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, reflect on their experiences and share their thoughts on how the country has changed since then.

Colts break camp

Photographer's pick

THE Photo/Aaron Piper
Tony Malone, Madison County Community Health Center CEO, introduces Rosetta Monfield. Monfield is the leader of the local board of directors for the Madison County Community Health Center Inc. and was just recently elected to serve a two-year term as representative for the national Association of Community Health Center Inc.

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Dozens of fans have left flowers, candles and notes at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway gates in memory of two-time Indy 500 champion Dan Wheldon.
Source: The Herald Bulletin Local News
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