

Voice of the Poor

November, 2009

www.voiceofthepoor.org

www.stvincentdepaul.net

State Budget Outlook Grim

Voice of the Poor's expert on state legislation and ongoing budget projections is St. Gregory's Tom Finnerty. Tom reports that Arizona's dismaying revenue projections for 2010 and 2011 have led to additional proposed cuts in programs needed by low income residents in these tough times.

Most recently, as requested by Governor Brewer, Tony Rodgers, Director of AHCCCS, outlined cuts of another 15% to the department's programs. Believe it or not, KidsCare health care (serving 42,000 low income children) has been put on the chopping block! If approved, this would make Arizona the ONLY state in the nation NOT to participate in SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) which gives states \$3 federal dollars for every \$1 dollar contributed by the state.

What can you do? Contact your state legislators (2 representatives and 1 senator) and let them know that eliminating KidsCare is NOT an option. Urge your elected representatives to support ways to increase revenue for our state. (Governor Brewer has called for a vote by citizens on a one cent increase in sales tax for 3 years. The legislature was unable to provide the votes required to get this on the ballot).

Go to www.azleg.gov and scroll down to "Find My Legislators" OR call the Capitol Info Lines at (602) 926-3559 (Senate) and (602) 926-4221 (House), tell them where you live and ask for phone numbers for your elected representatives. Call their offices, leave a message!

Thank you to Arizona Association of Food Banks for the Update

Arizona Food Stamp Production Way Up

In August, 2009 there was a record 919,778 Arizonans participating in **SNAP** (Food Stamps)—a 36.1% increase over August of 2008, *making Arizona one of eight states with an increase over 30%*! Arizona's food banks served more people with more pounds of food this past August—over 13.5 million pounds, an increase of 95.6% in total pounds of food distributed compared to 6.9 million pounds in August 2008. A big reason for the increase is that Arizonans can now apply for SNAP benefits online at **Health-e-Arizona**, a full-service assistance website in both English and Spanish.

Positive Changes in WIC

WIC helps pregnant women and mothers of children five and under purchase staples such as milk, bread, and eggs. Since October 1, participants have been given vouchers specifically for fresh or frozen vegetables and whole grain breads and cereals, and fewer vouchers for sugary juices and high-fat milk.

VOP will next meet on Mon., November 16 at 3:30 in Vincentian Support.