

# Growth & Sprawl of Human Needs

## Factsheet - 2009 Candidates Forum

Compiled by WhatcomCounts.org



### Hunger

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#### Rate of Hunger

In 2007, 15% of Whatcom County residents did not have enough food to eat and experienced hunger during the last year. <sup>1</sup>Of those who experienced hunger in the last year, 44% reported not having enough food, not being able to afford a balanced meal, or skipping a meal *almost monthly*. <sup>1</sup>

In 2007, those who were more likely to be affected by issues of hunger included respondents:

- Younger than 40
- Unemployed respondents
- With incomes less than \$35K
- Who said their health is fair/poor
- With a high school education or less
- With no health care coverage



#### Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch

In 2005-2006, 38.5 % of students in the Whatcom County school districts are eligible for free or reduced price school lunches. <sup>2</sup>



#### Percent People with Basic Food Assistance

In 2005, 13% of people in the county received assistance from the Washington Basic Food Program. <sup>3</sup>



#### Increased Demand for Food

Between January and August of 2009, the Bellingham Food Bank had 67,450 client visits, a 39% increase from the 50,278 client visits during the same period in 2007

### Housing/Homelessness

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#### Wage Needed to Afford 2-Bedroom Apartment

In Whatcom County, the Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$790. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities, without paying more than 30% of income on housing, a household must earn \$31,600 annually. Assuming a 40-hour work week, 52 weeks per year, this level of income translates into a Housing Wage of \$15.19. <sup>4</sup>



#### Minimum Wage Work Hours Needed to Afford 2-Bedroom Apartment

In 2009, a person working 40 hours a week at minimum wage in Whatcom County has to work 71 hours to be able to afford to rent a modest two-bedroom home, down from 72 hours in 2007. <sup>4</sup>



#### Increased Demand for Housing Resources and Services

In August of 2008, the Opportunity Council's Community Resource Center served 389 people via phone and in person with information regarding local services, landlord tenant law, eviction prevention, housing, and community voicemail. This is an increase from 220 people served last year. As of June 2008 the Opportunity Council Homeless Housing programs which include motel vouchers, eviction prevention, rental assistance, and transitional housing have served 924 adults and children. In 2007 a total of 1,125 people were served.



#### Homeless Population

The 2009 homeless population is as diverse as the larger community population: they are old, and young, male and female, unaccompanied individuals, and families. Of the 1,328 homeless people counted in Whatcom County this year: 20% are less than 10 years old and 44% are female. Of the homeless families with children 67% are single-parent families. Compared to 2007 and 2008, Homeless Count partners counted similar numbers of homeless persons and households this year. <sup>5</sup>

## Healthcare

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### Health Insurance Coverage

In 2009, according to the Office of the Insurance Commissioner, approximately 15.5% of Whatcom Co. residents were uninsured. Data from the WA State Population survey suggests that 68% of uninsured are "low income" or have household incomes below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Based on this assumption we can determine that approximately 20,000 or 10.5% of Whatcom Co. residents are both low income and uninsured.



### Cost as a Barrier to Care

In 2007, 16% of people reported not being able to receive care due to the cost during the past year. This is double what it was in 1996.<sup>1</sup>

In 2007, respondents who were more likely to be unable to afford to go to the doctor include:

- Those who have no health care coverage
- Those who earn less than \$20K per year
- Respondents who report their health status as fair/poor
- The unemployed



### Increased Demand for Health Insurance Advising and Application Assistance

In the first half of 2009, the Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access (WAHA) served 1369 clients, an increase from the 1241 clients served during the first half of 2008.



### Increased Usage of the Emergency Room

In the past ten years, St. Joseph Hospital has seen a rise in the number of visits to the emergency room from about 34,500 in 1997 to over 57,000 in 2007. The reliance on the ER for non-emergent care is health care issue in Whatcom County.



### Government Sponsored Health Care

In 2009, over 58,500 people in Whatcom County were enrolled in Medicaid. Almost a third of the population (31.75%), including kids and seniors, depend on this government sponsored health care. (WAHA)

## Early Learning

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### Average Monthly Price of Full-time Preschool Child Care

In 2007, the median annual cost of full-time preschool childcare. In Whatcom County was \$7,176. For a family with an infant and a preschooler in full-time care, the annual median cost represents 28% to 32% of the county's median household income for 2007.<sup>6</sup>



### Importance of Early Learning to Business Leaders

"Most business leaders do not have specific information about the proportion of children in their communities without access to early learning opportunities. Instead, they know these opportunities are lacking because they see the consequences: struggling students and unprepared new graduates." Exploring Early Learning with Business Leaders in Washington State – United Way April 2008 Report on Opinion Research



### Washington State Enrollment in Early Learning Programs

To succeed in school, children need educational opportunities to prepare them to enter kindergarten emotionally, socially, and intellectually prepared to learn. In Washington State, almost 60% of 3-4 year olds were not enrolled in a nursery school, pre-school or pre-kindergarten education program in 2006.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> DOH Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2007

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)

<sup>3</sup> Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

<sup>4</sup> National Low Income Housing Coalition

<sup>5</sup> Whatcom County Homeless Count, April 2009

<sup>6</sup> Licensed Child Care In Washington State: 2006

<sup>7</sup> EveryChildMatters.org