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Food Insecurity and Food Deserts

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Food Deserts: Their Causes and What Can Be Done to Mitigate Them

Calissa Cowan - University of Central Florida

Food deserts are simply caused by physical distance from struggling people to supermarkets, and how people who are struggling often reach the market. Programs designed to combat it include government programs such as Food Stamps, SNAP, WIC, and CarePlus. Studies indicate that food deserts are a product of economic disparity.

My course focuses on civil engagement to create noticeable change. So in this case, the best thing to do to help mitigate this issue is to work on enacting national changes to protect those in poverty by writing to your local and national legislators to initiate change. Another way would be to petition for more stores to accept benefits such as SNAP in low-income areas.

The impact on the community is best seen through the struggle of the individual. Often times, especially in the neighboring city to my university (Bithlo), individuals will bike upwards of 40 minutes just to strategically use their government benefits such as food stamps and WIC.

Through my own personal experiences I have not only learned how food benefits are actually distributed, whether government or volunteer association, but also have learned through my course the best way to create change is to enact legislation to ensure change is continuous.

Programs like Second Harvest would be ideal to fund to combat this issue. They often work with student leaders and are consistently in need of volunteers. They have a large book of materials for new volunteers to use to educate themselves on the shelf life of foods past the expiration date and what to look for

regarding food safety. Not only that but information on why they are collecting food in the first place and what/who the donations go. They are educators as well as servers.

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Thomas, B. (2010). "Food Deserts and the Sociology of Space: Distance to Food Retailers and Food Insecurity in an Urban-American Neighborhood." *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology, Open Science Index 43, International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(7), 1545 - 1554.

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