

## Social Security Relates to Our Cupboards

Misha Marvel  
Program Analyst  
Nutrition Consortium of NYS  
May 2005

“It’s supper time!” Remember when your mother would call you in from your play or chores to eat with family around the kitchen table? Remember when eggs were (literally) a dime a dozen? Instead of throwing half-empty containers away, do you stretch things to make them last?

If you do, you’ve probably been paying a lot of attention to the talk lately about the future of Social Security. How do we best save for our retirement? How much choice do we want? I’m not offering a comment about our retirement savings. But I do know that given the choice, most of us would remain in our homes and communities for as long as possible.

And we know how to help make this possible – by choosing to eat healthy food, picking activities that get us moving and getting regular health screenings, we can help prevent or delay many diseases and disease-related disabilities.

But these choices are not as easy as they seem. For many of us who sometimes are forced to decide between buying food or paying for medicine, utilities or other needs, we just want to not feel hungry – not worry about the quality of what we eat. For our senior citizens depending on Social Security, having food stamps can help them to choose healthier foods. In fact, for almost two million New Yorkers of all ages, the Food Stamp Program helps to stretch grocery budgets and can give people the choice to select food packed with good nutrition.

Like Social Security, the Food Stamp program is an entitlement program, which means that everyone who meets the eligibility criteria can receive benefits. As the main nutritional resource for seniors who are eligible, the food stamp eligibility guidelines are more generous for people aged 60 and older.

However, the majority of eligible seniors are not yet participating -- more than four out of five seniors in upstate New York and half in New York City of those potentially eligible are not getting food stamp benefits. Many do not apply because they are not aware that they may be eligible.

The Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP), available in many upstate counties and throughout New York City, helps to promote awareness about and increase access to the Food Stamp Program. Through community-based agencies, NOEP Coordinators provide free assistance to people with the food stamp application process.

As the Administration on Aging promotes during National Older Americans Month this May, let’s “Celebrate Long-Term Living” and help *all* New Yorkers age well and live well in our own communities. Think about your family members or neighbors who could benefit from the

additional nutritional assistance that food stamps provide. Encourage them to call their local department of social services for more information. You may also contact the Nutrition Consortium of New York State, Inc. at (518) 436-8757 x20 or [www.HungerNYS.org](http://www.HungerNYS.org) to see if there is a NOEP in your county.

*The Nutrition Consortium of NYS is a statewide private non-profit organization whose mission is to fight hunger in New York through outreach, public education, policy analysis and research.*