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## CERRETA: Feeding the hungry

Americans are 'food insecure,' too

Denise Cerreta  
 Thursday, October 9, 2008

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It was no surprise when noted psychologist Abraham Maslow told us in 1956 that food was No. 3, behind water and air, on his hierarchy of needs for survival. What has been a surprise since then is how hard it has been for some of our fellow humans to get any. That's why the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization was established in 1945. A World War had just ended and millions were starving in its wake.

Still, even thirty-four years later, the problems of the underfed were still looming. And so, in 1979, the Food and Agricultural Organization created World Food Day. By then, the organization had been working for several decades to increase food sufficiency in the worst affected nations. But in its own resolution establishing World Food Day, U.N. founders acknowledged: "There was still no evidence of a reduction in the incidence of hunger and malnutrition. Food aid and external assistance for agriculture were well below estimated requirements, and a fully effective system of world food security had still to be established." World Food Day was created to draw attention to the needs of the starving and underfed around the world.

Fast-forward two more decades and surprisingly, things are not much better. Warring factions within failed states often use food as political weapons, as evidenced in Zimbabwe and Darfur. Elsewhere, the problem isn't the ability to produce food, but transporting it. Meanwhile, biofuels have put our food supply in competition with our fuel supply, pushing up prices for corn. In still other places, food quality is in question as fears over food safety standards spark food hoarding and cause commodity prices to soar.

The result is that great masses of people around the world are defined by the



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 Displaced Chadians, who face sl  
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United Nations as "food insecure," which means they eat, but not nearly enough to maintain physical and mental health. Five years ago, the Food and Agricultural Organization reported that 798 million people worldwide didn't have enough to eat. But if you think such terms apply only to people a world away, think again. Our own U.S. Department of Agriculture, in 2006 said that 11 percent of Americans are food insecure. That's more than 30 million people who don't consistently have access to sufficient quantities of food. The Federal School Lunch Program and the Federal Food Stamp Program were created with the idea that all Americans should have enough to eat.

But for Americans unfamiliar with what food insecurity looks like, think of the woman who always shows up for "Happy Hour" and manages to take home a napkin full of hot wings every night. Or the family that makes secret trips to the food bank early Saturday morning. Or the child who is on the playground when the rest of the kids are eating their lunches. Or the guy scrounging in the dumpster.

We all have a right to food. Which is why it is thrilling that Salt Lake City is joining One World Everybody Eats and a coalition of restaurants for World Food Day 2008. On Oct. 16, many of the city of Salt Lake's eating establishments will contribute proceeds from specially created and sized menu items to the charities of their choice. The purpose of our participation is to raise awareness of the issue of food insecurity locally, nationally and globally. And those food service related entities that are not restaurants but part of the industry's supply chain have also offered to donate money.

One World Everybody Eats is dedicated to doing its part to end world hunger by reducing food waste as well as helping others around the country start their own community kitchens - which in turn will reduce food waste.

It is happening. And we encourage restaurants around the nation to follow Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker's lead to help more people eat, more families thrive and more communities overcome the scourge of food insecurity.

*Denise Cerreta is founder of One World Everybody Eats.*

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