



Groups try to 'make ends meet'

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By Richard Gootee

The increase in food prices and other necessities made a Friday networking conference for area groups that fight hunger essential, said Mary Blair, executive director of the Tri-State Food Bank Inc.

"Everything is going up except paychecks. There have been a lot of layoffs," Blair said.

Blair said local organizations have yet to see the peak of demand for food this year because food pantries typically are people's last resort.

"Once they run out of those (other) types of resources, that's when we're going to see it hit us, with everybody hitting the food banks for assistance," she said.

The Evansville-based food bank serves 33 counties and 250 to 270 feeding organizations in the Tri-State.

Blair said about 120 people attended the conference, titled "Making Ends Meet." Most of the attendees were representatives from groups relying on the food bank. Those groups distribute food directly to those in need.

In the morning, members heard speakers from the Homeless Youth Coalition, state Rep. Dennis Avery, D-Evansville, and Ann Eubank of Food Stamp Outreach.

Later, the conference offered small sessions on a variety of topics, including presentations from Indiana, Kentucky and Illinois government agencies dealing with hunger issues.

Carl Johnson from Faith Tabernacle Church in Metropolis, Ill., said the exchange of ideas during smaller afternoon sessions taught him the most.

Raising awareness

The first small session he attended addressed the new Hunger Awareness Month in September. Previously, only a Hunger Awareness Day was recognized.

Connie Bingham, who is working to form a Tri-State chapter of Parents Without Partners, said rising food costs especially hurt single parents.

"A lot of us single parents cannot financially afford our utilities, and rent and stuff like that, so we're giving up a lot of our food buying to pay for our rent," said Bingham, who has an 8-year-old daughter, Kiley.