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I am contacting you with an opportunity for your municipality to participate in *IZE* on Food Security Week across Butler County, March 22-29, 2020. Since 2012, each semester the Slippery Rock University student organization Student Nonprofit Alliance has hosted a week of programming that focuses on a selected social issue. We call the week *IZE* because we want to help our campus community *RealIZE* the importance of understanding the issue, *EmpathIZE* with those persons impacted by the issue, and *MobiIZE* to change the current reality.

IZE has been so valuable to our own campus that last spring I approached Butler Community College and the County Commissioners with the idea of expanding the *IZE* week in Spring 2020 to a county-wide event. BC3 and the Commissioners recommended we focus on hunger and food insecurity within our county. We were awarded a grant called “Bringing Theory to Practice,” a national program through the American Association of Colleges and Universities. Since October, the *IZE* steering committee, comprised of representatives from both campuses, Butler County, the Chamber, and several nonprofit organizations, have been planning *IZE* on Food Security and Food Justice across Butler County. It will take place March 22-29, 2020. On Friday, March 27 we will host a county-wide, cross-sector conference for 125 people at the Butler Memorial Hospital conference center so participants better *RealIZE* the impact food insecurity has on county residents, identify best practices that are effectively addressing the issue, and *MobilIZE* to use our collective talents and resources to recommend strategies through which we can *come together* as a county to identify workable solutions moving forward.

Our committee has discussed strategies that might move *IZE* week beyond our two campuses to raise awareness and engagement within communities and organizations across the county. The ideas of Orange Ribbon Week (orange is the color for hunger awareness) and the “Stick a Fork in Hunger!” campaign were suggested as ways to engage businesses, faith-based organizations, K-12 school children and families, civic and social groups, nonprofit and social service organizations, local governments, and the general public in finding solutions to the rising issue of food insecurity and hunger in Butler County. Individual organizations are challenged to design projects that raise funds and/or food to assist the various hunger relief programs across the County. Perhaps a friendly competition among mayors to see which County municipality can collect the most non-perishable food items or raise the most funds designated for County hunger relief. Please see the attached “Stick a Fork in Hunger!” brochure for challenge guidelines, project ideas and information about how your group can register your initiative.

I am reaching out to you because, as a public servant, you understand all too well the impact that food insecurity has on people in your municipality. County residents are fortunate to have elected officials, like you, who work tirelessly *every* day to enhance the quality of their lives. The *IZE* Week steering committee is hopeful that your staff and residents will be willing to 1) share best practices for addressing food insecurity at the March 27 conference, 2) attend the conference to help develop viable, cross-sector strategies to fight hunger, *and* 3) accept the challenge to organize a Stick a Fork in Hunger! project during *IZE* week to raise awareness among and resources from your employees and residents to support food security across Butler County.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss how *IZE* Week 2020 might be of interest to Butler County’s amazing local governments! Feel welcome to contact Steering Committee members: Alice Del Vecchio at alice.delvecchio@sru.edu or 724-738-4192; or Nichol Zaginaylo at nichol.zaginaylo@bc3.edu, or 724-287-8711 ext. 8338.

Yours in Service,

Alice Del Vecchio
Chair, Department of Philanthropy, Nonprofit Leadership, and Public Affairs
Faculty Advisor, Student Nonprofit Alliance



RealIZE how food insecurity impacts our neighbors
EmpathIZE with persons who are food insecure
MobilIZE to change the current reality in Butler County

Food insecurity refers to the USDA’s measure of lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. Food-insecure households are not necessarily food insecure all the time. Food insecurity may reflect a household’s need to make trade-offs between important basic needs, such as housing or medical bills, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods. In Butler County

- 10.4% of our residents are food insecure**
- 16.3% of our children are food insecure**
- 34% of our college students food insecure**

IZE on Food Security and Food Justice is organized by Slippery Rock University and Butler County Community College through a national grant from Bringing Theory to Practice. Dozens of programs, events and activities will be held between March 22 and 28 on the two campuses as well as at sites across the County to strengthen awareness about and to identify solutions that will drastically reduce food insecurity and hunger in our County by 2025.

County businesses, government and social service agencies, local governments, K-12 schools, faith-based organizations, civic and social clubs as well as individuals and families are invited to get involved in **IZE** Week 2020 events so they can increase their understanding of this issue, work together to find strategies that work, and be part of the solution by supporting existing hunger relief services within our County. Indeed, we are better together and, together, we *can* reduce food insecurity and hunger in our communities.

See opportunities below to see how you and/or your group can get involved in *IZE* Week 2020:

#1 *Stick a Fork in Hunger!* challenges Butler County individuals, families, businesses, social and civic groups, nonprofit and faith-based organizations, local municipalities and K-12 schools and youth groups to take action during **IZE** Week 2020 to reduce food insecurity across Butler County. Consider organizing a clever project to raise funds to support our County’s hunger relief organizations, sponsor a nonperishable food drives or virtual food drive, volunteer with a hunger relief organization or even host a free nutrition and cooking workshop. Below are ideas to get your group started. Really, the possibilities to help are only limited by your imagination!

- *Make info about hunger relief services available to residents*
- *Organize a friendly competition among government departments to collect food/funds to hunger relief*
- *Establish a central food collection site where residents can bring nonperishable food items*
- *Your mayor challenges another to a nonperishable food item collection*
- *Host a town meeting about hunger*

Register your project on Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/stick-a-fork-in-hunger-butler-county-ize-on-food-security-tickets-95012758719> or scanning the QRC will take you directly to the Eventbrite *Stick a Fork in Hunger!* page.



#2 Help fill a box truck with nonperishable food items to support the work of our County's hunger relief programs. Bring the food or funds raised from your project to the ***Stick a Fork in Hunger! Celebration*** on Saturday March 28 from 9-11 a.m. at The Venue on Main Street. 152 N. Main Street in Butler and celebrate what happens when we come together to make a difference!

#3 ***Harvesting Ideas for Food Security across Butler County*** is an all day conference that will be held at the Butler Memorial Hospital conference center on **Friday, March 27, 2020** from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.. Persons attending the conference will be able to meet with people who are making strides to reduce food insecurity, view SRU and BC3 college student research, and work together to shape viable solutions that will reduce food insecurity in our County. The conference is FREE and includes lunch. Please register by March 23. To register, please go to Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/harvesting-ideas-for-food-security-and-food-justice-across-butler-county-tickets-89892096681> or scanning the QRC will take you directly to the Eventbrite Harvesting Ideas Conference page.



#4 Follow us! for the up-to-date schedule of ***IZE*** Week 2020 events at SRU, BC3 and across the County.

IZE Week



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@IzeWeek

