

Impact of A Tale of Two Cities

By Phyllis Agran, MD

A Tale of Two Cities (2014) produced by Jason Kane, a former fellow of the USC Center for Health Journalism demonstrates the impact of the media in promoting community action to address child hunger. More than one-fifth of U.S. children live in a family that experiences food insecurity and lacks consistent access to adequate nutrition. Although food insecurity is harmful to any individual, it can be particularly devastating for children due to their unique physical and developmental needs.

In October of 2015, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), our professional organization of over 65,000 pediatricians released the policy statement, "[Promoting Food Insecurity for all Children](#)". The policy statement identifies the short and long-term adverse health impacts of food insecurity, and recommends that pediatricians become familiar with and refer families to needed community resources. Importantly, the statement renews the call for protecting and increasing access to and funding for SNAP, WIC, school nutrition programs, and summer feeding programs at the federal, state and local levels.

Our Orange County Chapter of AAP received a Healthy People 2020 grant from our national organization to address local food insecurity. Our project, *No Child Hungry*, grew out of that grant. We developed a system to screen and refer food insecure families. Our first strategy was to promote use of the 2-item questionnaire for screening for food security in physician offices. Then, in collaboration with community partners, we developed a strategy to promote food access to families. We developed the "Need Food" business card that can be picked up in pediatric offices. Using a cellular device a parent can text "Food4u" for information in English, or "Comida" to 80123 to find local food resources. We have created a replicable model that is low cost, anonymously self-screens and can be done in pediatric offices. We piloted No Child Hungry at Clinic in the Park •Connect •Screen, •Educate, a community resource developed by Phyllis Agran, an AAP member in collaboration with the AAPOC. In a 15-month pilot period, we have distributed over 1,500 cards throughout Orange County, and have over 100 callers subscribed to the text messaging service to receive food resources and support. We are seeking funding to expand the program to include community venues where families receive services.

The impact of the media in educating our communities and calling for action was a significant factor in changing our practices. The 4th Edition of the AAP Bright Futures for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents includes screening for the social determinants of health, which includes food security as part of pediatric care.

For more information about No Child Hungry program visit the [program webpage](#) on the [AAP-OC website](#). For a quick referral, the [Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County](#) and [Waste Not OC](#) both use interactive maps on the web to guide individuals to locate food pantries, soup kitchens, and other food distribution locations within a specific zip code. For individuals without internet access, they can dial 211, an Orange County help hotline.