

2 R R. War on poverty

All about food stamps: Why county has none

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Food stamps, rare as collector's items for Santa Cruz County residents, are being talked about again.

Twice in the past four years the process for starting food stamp programs was set in motion in the county. Twice disenchantment with its restrictions led potential recipients to turn against it.

But now the time seems ripe to try again, some believe.

Because of food stamps' value for the elderly living on limited incomes, Project SCOUT (Senior Citizens Outreach) has set as its goal the initiation of a program in the county.

Project members held a luncheon at the Miramar Friday to try to convince others of the value of such a program. Among those they hoped to convince were: State Senator Donald Grunsky; Albert Leslie, Assemblyman Frank Murphy's administrative assistant, and Ray Ansel, county welfare director.

As it turned out, Ansel is and has been receptive to the idea and had been ready to start it twice before, but found support for it faltering as federal restrictions surrounding food stamp issuance became tighter.

Addressing the group was Charles Teal, state consultant for the Food Stamp Program. Teal said 36 of the state's 51 counties have programs going or starting, serving 1,418,871 people.

He said the purpose of food stamps was to increase a person's buying power for food products and "to improve nutrition among economically needy households." People who qualify for stamps (on a sliding income scale) get them at a discount such as \$71 for \$108 worth of stamps for a family of four with an income of \$264 a month.

That extra "bonus value, paid for by the federal government, brought \$17 million of federal funds into the state in Dec. 1971, said Teal.

A second purpose of the program is to expand U.S. agriculture consumption. Stamps cannot be used for import products such as coffee, tea, cocoa, bananas.

The only program the county is now using is a donated food operation, which uses surplus food commodities to help the poor. Teal said this program is not supposed to provide proper nutrition to a diet, merely to be a supplement to it. Also, it brings in no federal money to the county.

People buying stamps — unless they make under \$20 a month — have to pay part of the cost themselves. Those on welfare who qualify, can have a certain amount deducted from their check and receive stamps instead.

The Department of Agriculture, which heads the program, not only pays the total cost of the "bonus" stamps, but reimburses the counties using the program for 62½ per cent of the cost of certifying non-welfare applicants and for setting up quality controls.

The Department of Health Education and Welfare reim-

burses 50 per cent of the cost of certifying welfare applicants, Teal added.

So why doesn't the county have the program if it's such a great deal?

Ansel provided part of the answer with the local history of food stamps.

In 1968 the county did apply to the federal government to approve food stamp operation in Santa Cruz County. That approval took two years in coming, Ansel said, though he could not explain the delay.

Meanwhile, various restrictions were being introduced in congressional bills to tighten issuance of food stamps, mainly, said Ansel, because of what were considered abuses of the program by "hippies" and some welfare recipients.

When Ansel prepared to budget the food stamp program into his county welfare program for 1970,

First look at Soquel budget

A proposed \$1,679,331 preliminary budget for 1972-73, calling for a dime increase in the tax rate, was submitted to the Soquel Elementary School District Board of Trustees Tuesday night by Superintendent Richard Van Deren.

The budget is based on an overall operating tax of \$3.17, as compared to \$3.07 for the current year. The total does not include the tax rate for retirement of construction bond issues.

School board members gave the proposed budget only a quick look Tuesday and set May 23 for an intensive budget session. The board will meet at 7:30 p.m. in the Curriculum Materials Center.

Van Deren said he has added \$20,000 to the maintenance and operations department because maintenance has been slighted in the austere budgets of the past two or three years.

Among other expenditures he mentioned was \$10,000 for cafeteria services. He said the district expects to obtain a \$7,500 grant for these services from the federal government, leaving the district with a net bill of \$2,500 if its proposal is accepted.

An \$8,000 item was included in the budget to have an outside firm conduct an educational audit of the district, Van Deren said.

He pointed out that the district now expects to have about \$80,000 in the undistributed reserves at the end of the school year. This is approximately \$10,000 short of the district's goal, he said.

\$360 fine for drunk driving

Gerald Edward Blackmun, 25, of 1710 46th Ave. No. 1, Capitola, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor count of drunk driving at a hearing in Santa Cruz municipal court Friday and was fined \$360.

In addition, he was placed on summary probation for one year by Judge Donald May.

he found more and more disenchantment with it among potential recipients. He said after meetings with various community and social service groups, he learned they felt that the way food stamps were being restricted might make the program of less value to them than the surplus food program it would replace.

Ansel said the whole process repeated itself the next year with the desire for food stamps being expressed up until budget time, when worries about who would qualify for them changed minds again.

He said, however, he was ready to budget in food stamps for the coming year if there is solid evidence people want it. He said the cost of administering the program would be about the same as the cost of the present surplus food program.

"The county welfare department has never bucked food stamps," said Ansel. "We're for whatever will most help the people."

He said the only problem facing the county now is that it may have to resubmit its application to the federal government, which means that it would have to go to the supervisors and other governmental bodies before it gets to Washington. Senator Grunsky said he would do what he could if the application had to be resubmitted.

The program still has certain tough restrictions on who can get stamps, Teal noted, but some of the rules were found to have been harming those needing the stamps more than keeping others from misusing the program. Hence, a court injunction was issued against the rule requiring all persons living in a household receiving stamps to be related.

The idea was to cut down on people living in hippie communes from getting stamps, but in effect limited elderly non-related people living together from getting stamps also.

Project SCOUT members believe that restrictions or not, there is evidence the elderly and poor in the county want food stamps. They will soon be presenting the board of supervisors with a list of signatures of those needy persons who do.

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Here's What Believe & Know

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