

The Record

THE TRUSTED LOCAL SOURCE

ESTABLISHED JUNE 5, 1895

John Borg
Publisher 1922-1948

Donald G. Borg
Editor 1932-1975

Stephen A. Borg
Publisher

Frank Scandale
VP/Editor

Alfred P. Doblin
Editorial Page Editor

Mala K. Lawrence
Assistant Publisher

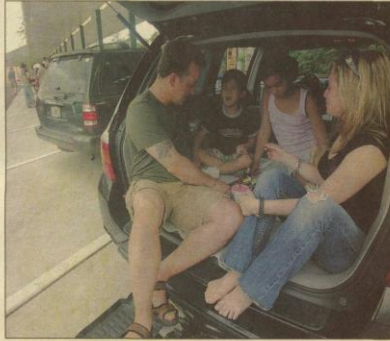
Frank Burgos
Managing Editor

Thomas Morgan
VP/Advertising

EDITORIALS

No picnic

Summer brings strain on food pantries



Chowing down at the Sonic Drive-in.

WE HAVE officially crossed into summer, when thoughts wander to leisurely meals consumed outdoors. Maybe it's the current economic crisis that makes people want to instinctively turn around and park in a time that seems, from here, safer and more stable.

Witness the hoopla over Sunday's opening in Hasbrouck Heights of a Sonic Drive-In — a throw back to the 1950s, complete with roller-skating waitresses and parking stalls. Some customers arrived at 2 a.m. Others drove from as far away as Connecticut. A burger and shake can be a powerful draw.

Drive-ins and barbecues, these define summer, when New Jersey strawberries and corn, blueberries and tomatoes are abundant and delicious.

But this summer in particular, life is no picnic for a lot of people.

For those who cannot afford to buy food, this season can be more treacherous than others. Children do not eat breakfast and lunch at school. Child care may cost more. The air conditioning and the gas tank demand constant feeding. And this summer, more people have been laid off from jobs — or had their work scaled back — making it extremely difficult to pay mortgage bills, utility bills and food bills.

"We have many people coming here for the first time," says Thelma Fedele, director of community and government relations at the Center for Food Action in Englewood.

The center's Carlstadt location has seen a 50 percent rise in demand from May of last year; Palisades Park has gone up 44 percent and Hackensack 32 percent.

For the pantries, summer means a donation slowdown. Donors go on vacation, school food drives are inactive and church and synagogue food drives are fewer.

Now would be a good time to give to food pantries, which need high-protein items like tuna and peanut butter. They could also use supermarket gift cards — even just \$5 — so clients can buy fresh fruit and vegetables. Or, if you have a garden, you can log on to ampleharvest.org, brainchild of a West Milford gardener, and find a nearby food pantry to which you can give your extra vegetables and fruit.

At Paterson's CUMAC/ECHO food pantry, the number of senior citizen clients has steadily increased. In May two years ago, 209 senior citizens received food. This year, 309 did. The pantry serves over 2,000 people a month, and those numbers are on the rise, too.

Globally, the combination of the economic crisis and the high cost of food have had a disastrous effect. The United Nation predicts this year for the first time more than 1 billion people will face chronic hunger. That is one-sixth of the world's population.

Governor Corzine's funding for food pantries and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's food program have helped enormously in this state. Unfortunately, it is not enough.

"They tell you the economy is recovering a little. We won't have any sign of this for at least a year or two. I'm beginning to wonder if our numbers will ever go down to where they were," said the Rev. Patricia Bruger, CUMAC's executive director.

Please donate this summer. Even a small amount will make a difference.