



Jonnycake Center
For Hope | *here to help*

Member Survey 2021

The Jonnycake Center surveyed close to three hundred households during the summer of 2021. Our intent was to determine our members primary goals for themselves and their families as we prepared to move into a facility. This document summarizes the major findings of two different surveys which were randomly assigned. The first survey focused on food, nutrition, and physical health. The second focused on the social determinants of health – wellness, community, housing, education, household finances, and more.

Key findings

➤ The majority of Jonnycake members are children (40 percent), followed by adults (38 percent) and seniors (22 percent). There is entrenched poverty and hunger among our visitors. Only 25 percent have been using our services for less than two years; thirty percent have been coming to the Jonnycake Center for ten years or more. Sixty percent of those surveyed come to the pantry every month.

➤ A majority of visitors receive SNAP benefits; eighty percent of those SNAP recipients say the benefits do not provide enough assistance to feed their household for the entire month.

Happening: Better access to Jonnycake Market

Shoppers are now able to come to the Jonnycake Market twice a month, or more if needed, to get a week's worth of groceries. Late afternoon and weekend hours will be extended.

➤ More than nine out of ten respondents rate the quality and variety of our food as excellent or good; no one said it was poor.

➤ Close to half (44 percent) of respondents want to eat healthier but say they cannot afford to do so. Almost one-third of those surveyed said they have a health condition that requires a special diet with many citing food allergies and diabetes as issues.

In the Works: Shopping Lists and Meal Kits

URI nutrition students will develop shopping lists for people with food allergies to guide them at the Jonnycake Market. Students will also create grab-and-go meal kits with key ingredients for a healthy meal that pantry shoppers can take and make at home.

In the Works: Healthy cooking and dining

The Center has been in talks with South County Health and Thundermist Health Center to develop a series of workshops and activities for members with diabetes and other significant health challenges. This will include offering the popular Food is Medicine cooking class as a core component of the collaboration. In addition, we are exploring community dinners for limited numbers of households to enjoy a healthy meal while socializing with their neighbors.

- The majority of respondents say they come to the pantry because government benefits or wages are not enough to make ends meet. Just under half say they have had to choose between food and other basic needs during the past year. Clothing, monthly bills, health, and housing were the top four issues identified as priorities when it comes to help from the Center or another agency.

Happening: Our member service staff will have underwear, socks, coats, and other basic clothing items on hand for children and youth while continuing to offer free clothing through our thrift store. We will also continue to secure funding for the Jeff Melish Fund for Basic Needs to prevent evictions and utility shutoffs, secure new housing, and assist with transportation.

- The vast majority of respondents received stimulus payments and/or some other form of Covid-related benefit. Food and monthly bills were the items most frequently paid for by these extra resources.
- Three out of four respondents want themselves and/or their children to be more active. Close to half of the members surveyed want more relaxation and leisure opportunities, and to lose weight.

New Initiative: Food, Fitness, and Fun

The Center is partnering with URI and the South County YMCA to provide two days of after school programming to middle-schoolers focused on nutrition, basic culinary skills, and physical activity.



In the Works: We will explore opportunities to offer physical fitness activities both inside and outside our new facility, such as yoga, a walking group, etc. We will continue to partner with the Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA of South County to ensure children and adults are active.

- Access to affordable, safe housing stands out as a major goal for households.

Happening: Our Jonnycake Neighbors program will continue to identify and overcome challenges in today's tight housing market. Landlord incentives, a Ready-to-Rent course, intensive housing search, and our own



service-enhanced housing opened new doors to more than thirty local households in 2021.

- Two out of three parents desire help providing their child(ren) with summer camp, sports, music lessons, or other enrichment opportunities. Parents are also eager to access help with college search and financial aid, navigating special education, finding a tutor or mentor, and finding opportunities for youth transitioning to adulthood.

Happening: The Center received a grant to hire a part-time youth organizer who will help create and place students in enrichment opportunities. We will continue to partner with the Boys and Girls Club of Newport and the Greater Providence YMCA for summer camp and after school programs. The RI Parent Information Network has agreed to offer workshops particularly around special education and URI faculty, staff, and students have committed to assisting with college search and application, as well as tutoring.

In the Works: Youth Training Program

The Center is collaborating with the Tomaquag Museum and its Indigenous Empowerment Network to replicate Beautiful Day's training program for refugee youth. Our program will recruit heavily from the Indigenous community in Peace Dale and South County.

- With respect to household finances, members want to further their own education, improve their credit, reduce monthly expenses, and access technology.

Happening: We are fortunate to have the Education Exchange, Washington County's adult education provider, as a neighbor. We will collaborate to ensure Jonnycake members are aware of the training and education programs offered at their site.

New Initiative: Credit Building Pilot

A new credit building program is planned for this spring. It will combine a small loan – backed by the Center - with financial coaching and online tools specifically to improve participant credit scores.



- Members expressed concerns about finding dental care and behavioral health services.

In the Works: We are exploring ways the Center can support individuals facing acute dental crises. We are also searching for more behavioral health specialists our members can access in the area.