



TRANSCRIPT

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of
**Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman,
Jim Towey, Director, White House Office of Faith-Based &
Community Initiatives, George Jones, Executive Director, Bread for
the City, Larry Jones Founder & President of Feed the Children,
Pam Erickson, Director of Procurement & Corporate Relations,
Operation Blessing and Wanda Webster Stansbury, President,
Management Interventions, Inc.**

**At Bread for the City
Washington, D.C.
September 17, 2003**

SECRETARY VENEMAN: “Great. Thank you very much. First, I would like to say thank you very much to all of you for coming, and thank you, George, for that introduction, and thank you for the tour and really, I especially thank you for what you're doing here.

“I also want to thank Jim Towey, who is director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. He has agreed to join us this morning, he may have to leave a bit early, but we're very pleased that we, at USDA, work so closely with this office to try to find ways to reach out and participate in community faith-based initiatives.

“I want to thank all of your staff, George, for what they're doing to let us not only make this announcement today but what they're doing with all the people all around this city. We know that what you do is valuable. We know that the services that you provide in terms of people in need and we're grateful, especially, to the hundreds of volunteers who provide meals to so many thousands of people every year who are low-income residents of this area.

“As you know, one of President Bush's first acts, when he took office, was that he established this White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

“In his inaugural address and in his announcement of those initiatives, the President said, "Compassion is the work of a nation, not just a government. It is more than the calling of politicians. It is the calling of citizens."

“The USDA is committed to our programs such as the school lunch program, the school breakfast program, the food stamp program, the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, or what we call and we'll refer to as TEFAP, and the Women, Infants and Children program, commonly referred to as the WIC program.

“All of these programs, which we administer through our Department, directly assist those who are in need.

“We are also deeply committed to the President's goal of empowering communities, faith-based institutions, and volunteers, to make them better able to help their neighbors and those who are in need.

“In fact many of the USDA programs that I just mentioned already partner with faith-based and community organizations to deliver the services that we provide through our Department. It is in that spirit today, that I am pleased to announce USDA's national nonprofit humanitarian initiative.

“Under this one-time initiative, the Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation will provide nonfat dried milk from its surplus inventories to qualified nonprofit applicants.

“These nonprofit faith-based and community organizations will then agree to provide this commodity in the form of their meal services or directly to the needy recipients.

“USDA is making the product available on a first come, first served basis. The amounts under this initiative include 4 million pounds per month of instantized--that would be this--nonfat dried milk which is fortified with vitamins A and D, in 25.6 ounce and four-pound bags. Then there will be 25 million pounds of non-fortified nonfat dry milk in 25-kilogram bags, and 10 million pounds of non-fortified nonfat dry milk in two-pound bags.

“The instantized milk, this type, is easily mixed for drinking, for, as fluid milk, while the nonfortified milk is better for cooking and baking, and the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service is also going to make recipes available for good uses, to use this excellent protein source of the nonfat dried milk.

“Recipients under this initiative will order a minimum of a 40,000-pound truckload. The Commodity Credit Corporation will begin accepting applications and orders immediately, and all of them are due, the applications are due by September 30th.

“We realize that the timeframe is somewhat short, but the deadline pertains only to the agreement and the order request process, which can be done quickly and easily, and then the review and the approval and the distribution process will take place in a timely manner thereafter.

“Applicants can find the agreement and the order forms on the USDA Web site at www.usda.gov.

“USDA's Food and Nutrition Service already offers about 42 million pounds of nonfat dry milk through nine other programs and outlets, about 27 million pounds in the emergency food assistance program. TFAP, alone, could provide sixty different agricultural commodities.

“The National [inaudible] Initiative operated by the Farm Service Agency with the cooperation from our Food and Nutrition Service will complement these already-existing programs.

“This initiative is truly an example of government at its best, and helping those who need it most.

“With this commodity, we are helping meet the nutrition needs of the disadvantaged while reducing surplus government stocks of nonfat dry milk. Many, many thanks, again, to Bread for the City, for hosting us today and for their invaluable service to this community.

“I now want to again introduce Jim Towey, the President's Director of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Thank you all again for being here today. Thank you for allowing us to participate at this event.

[Applause.]

MR. TOWEY: “Thank you very much, Madam Secretary, for your leadership and the President's. In December, he signed the executive order establishing an Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. He did it at the Department of Agriculture and I think the reason he did this is because he saw a few things. One, he saw the vast potential for faith-based and community organizations to be mobilized as arms of compassion addressing hunger issues in our country. I think the second reason he did it is because he has so much confidence in Secretary Veneman's leadership, and being able to do something novel like this, it's going to bring so much nutrition and good to people who are in need, and I think mobilizing faith-based organizations in that process is exciting.

“Being here today at this great program, George, and to see what you're doing every day in this community with [inaudible] to feed the hungry and to welcome people who are in need of company, it's exciting, all these bags of food

going out and to see how many lives and how many families are going to be touched--it's extraordinary. Feed the Children and Operation Blessing, and interventions, to see how they're going to come together to provide technical assistance, because a lot of the faith-based groups, they work out of church basements, synagogues, shelters, and so forth--a lot of them have never participated in a USDA program before. It's exciting.

“They're going to get technical assistance from experienced hands because they know how to provide food and services here to people in their neighborhoods. So this is an exciting initiative. It's exactly, I think, why President Bush turned to Secretary Veneman, and of course I'm grateful to Juliet McCarthy and your staff has been so helpful to us at the White House, to keep us in the loop of all the exciting things you're doing, and will continue to do in our soup kitchens.

“When you look at the food pantries in America, two-thirds of them are run by faith-based groups, and when we look at the homeless shelters--I visit soup kitchens frequently—but we see the enormous contributions these faith-based community groups are making in America.

“With armies of volunteers that never show up on a balance sheet, that shows it works, like today, downstairs. We see these women coming and working, and have been working and giving of their heart for people in this community. It's exciting to see. So we're grateful for your leadership, Secretary Veneman, to these organizations that are participating in this one-time program.

“I have five kids at home under ten, so we [inaudible] 48 million pounds of—

[Laughter.]

MR. TOWEY: “Thank you, again for inviting me here to be with you, George, and with all these good people here that care so much about the hurting. I know the President's excited about this kind of partnership and what it does.

MR. JONES: “Well, again, it is our pleasure, at Bread for the City to sort of align ourselves with anything that's going to help the hungry. I think we wanted to give some of the other partners in this initiative a chance to introduce themselves and talk a little bit, so I'll ask Wanda Webster Stansbury of Management Interventions to talk about her role in this.

MS. STANSBURY: “Thank you. The question about milk could be answered "soon." We're excited at Management Interventions to be a partner with the Department of Agriculture under [inaudible] of Secretary Veneman, the authors of faith-based, the White House Office on Faith-Based, Jim Towey, and our partners at Operation Blessing to Feed the Children. Management

Interventions is an urban issues consulting firm and over the past 20 years we have found as our primary mission breaking the cycle of poverty in America as we know it, and this initiative will give us help to fulfill a mission to reach out to underrepresented faith-based and youth-based organizations that are on the forefront of the war on America's hunger, to inform them, give them technical assistance, to navigate them through the process of completing the application, to make this whole experience and this initiative user-friendly for them.

“We want to see, as I'm sure the Secretary of Agriculture does, the numbers increase of grassroots organizations that are feeding people, that have food pantries, that have feeding programs, that can be real frontline distributors engaged in this process.

“We have a staff of volunteers, and as well as my organization, who are waiting back in New Jersey to get their marching orders to reach out across our nation from Mississippi to Maine, to Dallas, to Montana, to Chicago, all over the country, to reach out to our extensive data base of faith-based organizations, to help them to understand the process and to become a real strategic partner.

“We're also looking for innovative ways [inaudible] recipes, to engage people in thoughts of using -- and be partners in how this milk can be utilized.

“So we're excited to be a part of this partnership and are looking forward to getting the information so we can get out there and begin to take a very "hands on," practical approach to engaging communities that may normally not be a party to a partnership for the first time in this very exciting faith-based initiative. Thank you.

MR. JONES: “Thank you. Next, I'm going to call on Pam Erickson, who's the director of procurement and corporate relations at Operation Blessing.

MS. ERICKSON: “Thanks. It's an honor and privilege to be here today to represent the network of nonprofit organizations stretching across the country, organizations that include soup kitchens, pantries, and churches. There are programs that reach out to those that are not only hungry but also those that have fallen on hard times, and it's a tremendous encouragement to know we have products available for those that are out of a job temporarily or those that are under stress or a family with, or have some illness. So this is going to be an incredible blessing for us to be able to have this as part of what we can do for the community.

“We also see that there are lots of times, there are mothers with little children that come for the milk of course, this will be an incredible blessing for

them. We had a visit recently of a young mother that had her baby in her arms, and the mother actually was in tears the baby was wrapped not in diapers but paper towels. So the needs out there are tremendous and we're so excited that we're going to have the opportunity to be part of something that will be nutritionally sound, and so I again want to say thank you on behalf of all of the nonprofits that will get this milk and the impact, Madam Secretary, is going to be immeasurable and the value of this is priceless. Thank you.

MR. JONES: "And the next, and final person is Larry Jones, who's founding president of Feed The Children and of course I was impressed when I heard that he has done so much great work for the last 25 years to, again, to try to fight this issue of hunger throughout the country--we're really proud and pleased to have Larry join us.

MR. JONES: "Thank you, George, Madam Secretary, we're really excited about what's taking place today because Feed The Children started with surplus wheat, and now we're going to be getting surplus nonfat dried milk and we're really, we're so privileged to be here, that we were--that we can be a part of this day, because I know that the charities out there, the faith-based ministries are so excited about what's getting ready to take place.

"We deliver to five thousand different agencies who, in turn, deliver to over 50,000. Now some of you are probably saying: How do you do that?

"Well, I want Madam Secretary to know that we've been to her hometown of Modesto, California, working with two different agencies there and the way that we do that is we have--this is a Feed The Children truck and this is what you call "wheels of compassion," and we have 52 of these, and so today we're putting at your disposal--you came here and you're going to leave with 52 trucks to take this nonfat powdered dry milk to all 50 states, and of course I realize some are not in the Lower 48 but we want you to know that this is going to make a phenomenal difference and the government has stepped up today to say this is what we're going to do with the 48 million pounds, and we want you to know we're stepping up today and saying we can deliver what you're giving us.

"Thank you so very much [inaudible].

[Laughter.]

MR. JONES: "[inaudible] they'll bring you the key when you get outside.

[Laughter.]

SECRETARY VENEMAN: "Thank you very much.

MR. JONES: “Well, again, I guess I want to close by saying it's just a pleasure to be a part of this initiative. Actually, the USDA has been a part of Bread for the City feeding programs for many, many years. I've been here eight years and I know every day that I've worked in the center, we've had some product from USDA that was a part of our bags that go out to the now 4500 families that we serve each month, and so this is just an extension of that support and collaboration that USDA has offered to us in the past, at least eight years, and even though these commodities will probably go directly to some of the largest food distributors [inaudible] trickle back down to the local food banks like ours. So we look forward to getting our share of the nonfat dry milk and passing it on to the many lower-income families who've been returning to us each month for assistance with food.

“So with that being said, thank you all for coming, and thank you, Madam Secretary, for all of your support.

[END OF RECORDED SEGMENT.]