



PRESS RELEASE
December 1, 2009

CONTACT: Michael Cerio
(401) 942-6325 x 213

**RI Community Food Bank Releases “Status Report on Hunger”
as the State’s Prevalence of Hunger Reaches 10-Year High**
One in Ten Rhode Island Households are Helped by SNAP Benefits

PROVIDENCE, R.I. The prevalence of hunger in Rhode Island has reached its highest level in ten years, according to the USDA. This is just one of the major findings of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank’s recently released Status Report on Hunger in Rhode Island, an annual publication released during the week of Thanksgiving.

Joined by Senator Jack Reed, the Food Bank released its report examining the economic causes of food insecurity and hunger, the soaring demand for food assistance and the importance of good nutrition for long-term health. The report also features information and data on the positive steps being taken to improve the access and availability of nutritious food to local families in need. Recommendations for improving the problem of hunger are also included.

Among all Rhode Island households, 11.7 percent – which equals 50,000 families – are food insecure and do not have the ability to afford adequate food. Quite simply, these families do not have enough to eat, states Andrew Schiff, Chief Executive Officer of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. What is most frightening, however, is that these figures are from December 2008. Since then, 20,000 more Rhode Islanders have lost their jobs, finished Schiff.

According to a USDA study, and what may be the most disturbing figure released by the Food Bank’s report, is that 18,000 of these families suffer from hunger and routinely miss meals.

We are in the midst of a severe economic crisis that is straining family budgets throughout Rhode Island and across the country. In an effort to ensure families are getting timely assistance to help meet their basic needs, the Recovery Act provided more than \$20 billion for critical investments in nutrition programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), including an estimated \$60 million in SNAP benefits for Rhode Islanders, said Senator Reed.

Not only do these programs enable families and seniors to put food on the table, but they also pump money back into our economy which helps save jobs and sustain local businesses, finished Reed.

As the state’s economy declined, a record number of Rhode Islanders enrolled in SNAP. During the past year, overall participation grew by 27,800 people and SNAP benefits now help one out of every ten Rhode Island households. Families, especially ones with children, are turning to food pantries and other emergency programs to put food on the table, added Schiff. Hunger takes a toll on the health and development of children. Continuing to make better use of government nutrition programs, like SNAP and WIC, is an investment in our future, finished Schiff.

The Rhode Island Community Food Bank is a non-profit organization located in Providence, RI. The Food Bank solicits, stores and distributes food products donated by supermarkets, wholesalers, food processors, local farmers and community food drives. The food is then distributed to the Food Bank’s network of more than 300 member agency programs. In the past fiscal year, the Food Bank distributed 9.5 million pounds of food. For more information about the Food Bank, please visit www.rifoodbank.org.

#