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Contact: Mark Mitchell, Manager, Marketing & Communications
Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank
Direct Line: (330) 777-2309
Cell Phone: (330) 697-4473
markm@akroncantonfoodbank.org

NEW USDA STATISTICS CONFIRM ESCALATING HUNGER CRISIS IN NORTHEAST OHIO

Akron, OH, Nov. 16, 2009 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service (USDA) reported today that 1.5 million Ohioans are food insecure, meaning that they lack consistent access to adequate amounts of nutritious food. In total, 49 million Americans, including nearly 17 million children, are food insecure. The 2009 report on Household Food Insecurity in the United States paints an alarming picture of the pervasiveness of hunger in our nation.

Demand at the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank is up approximately 23 percent over this time last year, according to Dan Flowers, president and CEO of the Foodbank.

The new data reinforces recent findings from a research study conducted by Feeding America, the nation’s leading hunger-relief organization of which the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank is a member, reflecting a dramatic increase in requests for emergency food assistance. Conducted in September, the Feeding America study shows uniformly that its network of food banks witnessed an average increased need of nearly 30 percent this year.

“These are alarming numbers. It is tragic that so many people in Northeast Ohio do not have regular access to food,” said Flowers. “It is important to note that the USDA numbers reflect the state of hunger in 2008. Since then, the economy has significantly weakened, and there are likely many more people struggling with hunger than this report states.

“We continue to work on the front lines feeding more than 163,000 people each year, through area food pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency feeding centers – more than 400 agencies in total,” said Flowers. “These establishments, many of which are grass root and faith-based centers operated solely by volunteers, serve as an oasis for the people who seek relief weekly to help feed themselves and their families. Emergency food assistance is a critical link in the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank’s response chain to help people through times of crisis.”

“National socio-economic indicators, including the escalating unemployment rate and the number of working-poor, lead us to believe that the number of people facing hunger will continue to rise significantly over the coming year,” added Vicki Escarra, president and CEO of Feeding America. “Research on previous economic recessions indicates that people who fall into the grips of poverty in a time of recession often times never recover. Many of those people are likely to be in need of our services now or in the future.”

Escarra observes, “Feeding America and its network food banks, including the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank, will continue to work closely with our partners at USDA to ensure that the public and charitable sectors are keeping pace – as best we can – with the dramatically increasing needs for food assistance.”

About the Akron –Canton Regional Foodbank

The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank feeds people and fights hunger by providing food and other essential products to more than 400 community organizations that operate food pantries, hot meal sites and other hunger relief programs in Carroll, Holmes, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit, Tuscarawas and Wayne counties. In 2008, the Foodbank distributed over 16 million pounds of food, providing 11.5 million meals locally for people in need. For more information on how you can fight hunger in your community visit www.akroncantonfoodbank.org. Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/akroncantonfoodbank.

Feeding America

Feeding America provides low-income individuals and families with the fuel to survive and even thrive. As the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity, our network members supply food to more than 25 million Americans each year, including 9 million children and 3 million seniors. Serving the entire United States, more than 200 member food banks support 63,000 agencies that address hunger in all of its forms.

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