

## **Landmark New Study Reveals an Unprecedented Number of Northeast Ohio Residents Seeking Emergency Food Assistance**

***Largest, Most Comprehensive Report Ever Conducted On Emergency Food Distribution Reports***

***10 Percent Increase in Clients Served Annually***

**Akron, Ohio--- February 2, 2010 ---** A landmark study released today by the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank and Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization, reports that an estimated 40,600 people receive emergency food assistance each week from a food pantry, soup kitchen, or other agency served by the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank—a 28 percent increase from 2006. Thirty-one percent of those served are children.

This is the first research study to capture the significant connection between the recent economic downturn and an increased need for emergency food assistance. The number of children and adults in need of food as a result of experiencing food insecurity has significantly increased.

Nationally, more than one in three client households are experiencing very low food security—or hunger—a 54 percent increase in the number of households compared to four years ago.

In the eight counties served by the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank, 85 percent of households served with children in the home report having low to very low food security.

An estimated 5.7 million people receive emergency food assistance each week from a food pantry, soup kitchen, or other agency served by one of Feeding America's more than 200 food banks, including The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank. This is a 27 percent increase over numbers reported in *Hunger in America 2006*, which reported that 4.5 million people were served each week.

“With unemployment rates in Ohio skyrocketing, and the economy still in crisis, many families that are already struggling are forced to choose between paying for rent, utilities, healthcare and other basic household expenses,” said Daniel R. Flowers, president & CEO of the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank. “The startling findings of this research underscore the importance of the Foodbank’s network and our absolute commitment to provide every possible resource to help feed those in need.”

“It is morally reprehensible that we live in the wealthiest nation in the world where one in six people are struggling to make choices between food and other basic necessities,” said Vicki Escarra, president and CEO of Feeding America. “These are choices that no one should have to make, but particularly households with children. Insufficient nutrition has adverse effects on the physical, behavioral and mental health, and academic performance of children. It is critical that we ensure that no child goes to bed hungry in America as they truly are our engine of economic growth and future vitality.”

“Too many Ohioans are struggling to put food on their tables,” U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown said. “When it comes to combating hunger, we cannot afford to take our eye off the ball. We need to continue to examine ways to address hunger in our communities. And we must continue to support food banks, which provide critical support to so many Ohioans.”

The methodology incorporated into the 2010 study includes data collected from February through April 2009. The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank conducted face-to-face interviews with people seeking emergency food at food pantries, soup kitchens and other emergency feeding programs, as well as surveys from 276 member agencies that provide food assistance.

Nationally, Feeding America collected quantitative and qualitative feedback from 61,000 face-to-face in-depth interviews with people seeking emergency food assistance and more than 37,000 agency surveys, making this study the largest, most comprehensive ever conducted on domestic hunger.

The USDA reported in November 2009 that an estimated 49 million people, including 17 million children, are at risk of hunger in this country. *Hunger In America 2010* reinforces the dramatically increasing need for food assistance in the United States.

Among the key findings in the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank report:

- The average monthly income of a pantry client is \$1,110
- 41 percent of households include at least one employed adult, an increase from 28 percent in 2006

- 23 percent of clients were late on their most recent rent or mortgage payments and 49 percent reported they had to choose between paying for food or utilities
- 83 percent of people served at shelters were homeless
- 21 percent did not have access to a working car and 27 percent regularly choose between food and transportation
- 36 percent of households report having at least one household member in poor health and 35 percent had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care

A summary of the findings is available at [www.akroncantonfoodbank.org](http://www.akroncantonfoodbank.org). The full national report is available on Feeding America's web site at [Hunger in America 2010](http://www.feedingamerica.org/Hunger_in_America_2010).

The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank is a non-profit organization committed to Feeding People and Fighting Hunger by providing food and other essential products to more than 430 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 2009, the Foodbank distributed 18.7 million pounds of food, providing 13.5 million meals locally for people in need. For more information visit [www.akroncantonfoodbank.org](http://www.akroncantonfoodbank.org).

### **About 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 37 million Americans each year, including 14 million children and 3 million seniors. Serving the entire United States, more than 200 member food banks support 61,068 agencies that address hunger in all of its forms. Feeding America is based in Chicago. For more information on how you can fight hunger in your community and across the country, visit <http://www.feedingamerica.org>. Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/Feeding America](http://www.facebook.com/FeedingAmerica) or follow our news on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/Feedingamerica>.

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