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## ***The Foodbank of Santa Barbara County's Hunger Study in 2010 Shows More People Living Below the Poverty Level and a Higher Level of Food Insecurity Than Ever Before***

**Santa Barbara, CA. February 2, 2010** --- A landmark study released today by the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County and Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization, reports that nationally 37 million people are requiring food assistance each year. This number is up by more than 46 percent from 2006. Locally, the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County is seeing an increase of nearly 20,000 more people needing food assistance and is now serving 145,000 people each year compared to the 125,000 in 2006.

This is the first research study to capture on a local level the significant connection between the recent economic downturn and an increased need for emergency food assistance. A staggering 47 percent of households served by the Foodbank have one or more adults employed in a family and still requiring assistance to put enough food on the table.

In Santa Barbara County 62 percent of households the Foodbank serves are living below the poverty level and 29 percent have an annual income of less than 10,000 dollars.

"These numbers not only show an increase in need," says Executive Director Erik Talkin, "They also tell us people are in desperate need of good food, nutritious food, so they may keep the jobs they have, or be healthy enough to go out and apply for the jobs that do exist."

40 percent of those interviewed during the study have been unemployed for more than two years. "We have parents skipping meals so their children may eat and seniors having to choose between food or utilities and medications," reiterated Talkin. "This could easily be your neighbor, or a child that goes to school with your children, or someone you might work with."

In Santa Barbara County 13 percent of households with children the Foodbank serves reported their children had skipped a meal. Food insecurity is at an all time high in the United States with 14 million children and 3 million seniors receiving emergency food assistance.

"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."

In Santa Barbara County the unemployment rate jumped from 8.3 percent in January 2009 to 9.3 percent in one year; with rates throughout the city's of Santa Barbara rising to as high as 14.4 percent in Santa Maria, 21.3 percent in Isla Vista, 22.8 percent in Montecito, 8.6 percent in Mission Hills and to 16.2 percent in Lompoc as of December 2009.

Locally, there are the many faces of the Foodbank, including individuals, seniors, children and the working families. Angelica Cavillo, 35, a single mom with two teenage boys has been a recipient of one of the Foodbank's 220 member agencies, Angel Food, since the latter part of 2006 when she was diagnosed with cancer. Cavillo was and is still running a licensed family daycare center but has lost two or three of her clients due to the economy.

She was not eligible for disability because, as she says, "I was lucky enough to have beaten the cancer and am cancer free for now and for that I am very thankful. I got well in time to find out I fell in the category of not being eligible for disability, which I paid into, since I wasn't sick for more than a year." After losing clients and fighting cancer Cavillo has used all the equity from her home to keep food on her table.

"Without the bags of grocery's I get from Angel Food, the food pantry, my kids and I would have to skip meals but so far we have been blessed," said Cavillo who still has two clients but would like to fill the spots to make more money. "I cut coupons, look for all the deals, buy in bulk and plan my meals around the groceries I get from the food pantry."

"Every morning I wake up and think 'how can I do this again?' but, then I see the news and the world and look at my boys and pick up my bag of groceries on Friday and take it day by day." She is convinced one day it will get better, although, she admits there are days when this positive attitude is hard to keep in site. "We're still together and the food pantry gives me hope and good and healthy food for my boys," said Cavillo, "For that we are very thankful."

Foodbank Member Agencies are charitable organizations that provide the food supplied by a food bank directly to the clients in need, through various types of social service and church programs. The Foodbank provides food, produce and other grocery products to 220 member agencies located throughout Santa Barbara County. The Foodbank's network of agencies includes emergency food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelter food programs. The Foodbank also serves children and senior centers, after school programs, and other programs that are considered non-emergency food programs.

The Foodbank of Santa Barbara County's *Hunger Study 2010* focused on those member agencies that provide Emergency Food Distribution, of which 31 percent are emergency food pantries; 11 percent are kitchens and 5 percent are shelters. 51 percent are non-emergency food programs.

For more information on the Foodbank of Santa Barbara's *Hunger Study 2010* please see the attached summary version with this press release for your convenience. It will also be posted on our web site at [www.foodbanksbc.org](http://www.foodbanksbc.org) on Tuesday, February 2. For the Feeding America Hunger Study 2010 please go to [www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org).

**About the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County**

The Foodbank is celebrating 27 years of providing a vital link between the multifaceted food industry and people in need of food. With warehouses in Santa Barbara and Santa Maria the Foodbank serves over 220 social service organizations and churches. More than 43 percent of those served are children under the age of 18. In 2009, the Foodbank distributed nearly 8.7 million pounds of food of which more than 3 million pounds was fresh produce to more than 135,000 people in need throughout Santa Barbara County. The Foodbank is committed to making fresh fruits and vegetables available to those in need as the best means of combating poverty-related health issues like diabetes and chronic obesity.

**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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