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NEWS RELEASE

Hunger Touches 168,000 People in Alameda County *New Report Finds National Resources to Reduce Hunger Go Unused*

Oakland, Calif. (11/19/03) -- California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA), a statewide anti-hunger organization, released *Touched by Hunger: A County-by-County Report on Hunger and Food Insecurity in California* today.

Based on a survey of low-income adults conducted by UCLA, the report shows an estimated 53,000 Alameda County residents have been identified as hungry or food insecure. This survey, however, did not capture the struggles of the other 115,000 household members living with these adults.

“The hunger of one adult almost always indicates a problem for the rest of the household. National research shows that when one adult is affected, most, if not all, other adults are hungry or food insecure,” says Ken Hecht, Executive Director of California Food Policy Advocates. “Children are a little different. Generally, hungry parents try to protect their kids from hunger – but they are not always successful.”

Federal nutrition programs do exist to address hunger, but the report finds they are severely underutilized. For example, in Alameda County, 70,706 children are eligible for a free or reduced-price breakfast, yet 54,285 aren't getting breakfast at school. If these kids ate breakfast at school, it could bring as much as \$10,577,266 in federal money into the county to fight hunger. Full participation in the Food Stamp Program could bring the county as much as \$46,102,996.

In addition to food distribution, the Alameda County Community Food Bank educates individuals and families about federal nutrition programs. The Food Bank's Hunger Hotline, which connects low-income callers with local food pantries and soup kitchens, also provides information about the National School Lunch Program, Summer Food Service Program, food stamps and other government programs.

In an effort to increase food stamp enrollment rates, in 2003 the Food Bank began a partnership with the Alameda County Social Services Agency, Public Health Department, Homeless Action Center, Head Start and other service agencies and organizations to pre-screen clients for food stamps.

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“Food stamps and other federally-funded programs provide essential nutrition assistance for working poor families who are unable to make ends meet,” says Suzan Bateson, Executive Director of the Food Bank. “This report highlights that state leaders should be looking toward federal nutrition programs as a way to reduce hunger in California.”

Bateson hopes this new data will remind leaders about the value of government nutrition programs. “By ensuring that every eligible child gets school breakfast and lunch and that every eligible family gets food stamps, California will support a healthier economy and healthier communities,” she said.

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Copies of the report can be found at <http://www.cfpa.net/press>