

Media Release

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Hunger Touches 132,000 People in Monterey County and the Region

New Report Finds National Resources to Reduce Hunger Go Unused

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 done by UCLA, the report shows an estimated 29,000 residents and the surrounding region have been identified as hungry or food insecure. This region includes San Benito County. This survey, however, did not capture the struggles of the other 103,000 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 Monterey County, 32,827 children are eligible for a free or reduced-price breakfast, yet 22,824 aren’t getting breakfast at school. If these kids ate breakfast at school, it could bring as much as \$4,389,857 in federal money into the county to fight hunger. Full participation in the Food Stamp Program could bring the county as much as \$12,393,022.

The report calls for local and state action to maximize the use of federal resources to address hunger. “Governor Schwarzenegger and the legislature can enlist federal nutrition resources in the fight to end hunger. One important step would be to require all schools in California to serve breakfast. This would not only bring resources into schools, but as the research indicates, would improve academic performance, as well,” says Hecht.

The Food Bank for Monterey County is the largest provider of emergency and supplemental food in the County, serving approximately 40,000 people monthly. As the need for food assistance continues to rise and food donations are declining, it becomes

critical to increase access and participation in the federal nutrition programs. Fully utilized, these programs could provide an essential component in the battle against hunger.

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