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Hunger in America Report Reveals Food Bank of South Jersey Served Nearly 200,000 Individual Clients in 2013

Residents Receiving Assistance from South Jersey's Largest Emergency Food Provider More than Doubled Over Four-Year Period

(South Jersey – September 24, 2014) – According to the recently-released *Hunger in America* Study compiled by Feeding America, the scope of the Food Bank of South Jersey's (FBSJ) mission in supplying the needs of the food-insecure in Camden, Gloucester, Salem, and Burlington counties has increased by 110 percent since 2009.

Largely through its partner network of emergency pantries and shelters, FBSJ provided more than 10 million pounds of food assistance to 196,300 clients last year – more than double the 93,400 serviced just four years previously.

The dramatic spike speaks to the lasting impact of America's 2008 recessionary downturn as well as to FBSJ's ability to scale its reach through facilities expansion, operational efficiencies, added programs, and broader interaction with community partners who help fund and deliver its mission.

Significant data points from the *Hunger in America* Study, the nation's largest and most comprehensive insight into charitable food distribution in the United States, revealed the following about FBSJ's client profile:

- 55,900 of clients served were under the age of 18
- 53% of households reported having to choose between purchasing food or purchasing medicine/paying medical bills
- 68% of households reported having to choose between purchasing food or paying for heat/utilities
- 36% of households reported one person working within the past year, with those not working predominantly retired, disabled, or in poor health



The Food Bank of South Jersey exists to provide an immediate solution to the urgent problem of hunger by providing food to needy people, teaching them to eat nutritiously, and helping them to find sustainable ways to improve their lives.



“The *Hunger In America* study confirms the rise in coping strategies among the food-insecure, decisions that no one should have to make,” stated FBSJ CEO Val Traore. “It is commonplace for low-income families to sacrifice the quantity and quality of their food to cover costs for other life essentials, like having heat and getting medicine. We see this trade-off all the time. And when winter hits with the ferocity that it did last year in the northeast, the challenge for those struggling only intensifies. They understandably turn to us.”

Since the last *Hunger In America* Study released in 2010, FBSJ has expanded the physical footprint at its Pennsauken headquarters by 30%, adding critically-needed space for food storage/distribution and administrative functions. It has also developed nine direct services programs like Hope Mobile (a massive pantry on wheels), School Pantry, and Summer Feeding (daily meals for school-age children during school recess). Education has also been emphasized through a series of *Healthy Living Initiative* programs that provide nutrition and cooking instruction to those in need and empower them to adopt healthier eating behaviors.

Traore notes that the household demographics information captured in the 2014 *Hunger In America* study points to the need to develop even more services based on diverse client profiles.

“Six percent of the households in our network have a member serving in the military, with 18% indicating past military service,” stated Traore. “Twenty-three percent of households include grandparents. Nearly 20% of our clients have some college, or higher. The faces of hunger in America and in South Jersey are many. We stand ready to help – sharing food, education, and hope.”

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About the Food Bank of South Jersey

The Food Bank of South Jersey (FBSJ) is the leader in providing safe and nutritional food to people in need throughout South Jersey. FBSJ distributes food, provides nutrition education and cooking courses, and helps food insecure families and seniors find sustainable ways to improve their lives. To learn more visit www.foodbanksj.org.

About the Hunger in America Report

Hunger in America is a series of quadrennial studies that provide comprehensive demographic profiles of people seeking food assistance through the charitable sector and an in-depth analysis of the partner agencies in the Feeding America network that provide this assistance. It is the largest study of its kind.



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