



2045 Harvest Way
Allentown, PA 18104
Phone: 610.434.0875
Fax: 484.821.2278
www.shfblv.org

For Immediate Release

**CONTACT: Janet Ney
610-691-5620**

NATIONAL STUDY FINDS MORE THAN ONE IN FIVE LEHIGH VALLEY AREA HOUSEHOLDS ARE UNABLE TO AFFORD AN ADEQUATE DIET

Lehigh Valley, PA, August 11, 2011 – More than 1 in 5 households with children in the Lehigh Valley area struggle to afford enough food, according to a report released today by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). The study was organized along the geographic boundaries of U.S. Congressional districts in order to demonstrate the importance of public policy in addressing the issue. The Fifteenth District, represented by U.S. Rep. Charles W. Dent, includes all of Lehigh and Northampton counties. The study covered 2008 through 2010 and was obviously impacted by the current economy.

In other districts served by the Second Harvest Food Bank of Lehigh Valley and Northeast Pennsylvania, the Eleventh Congressional District, represented by U. S. Rep. Lou Barletta, one in four families with children struggled to have an adequate supply of food and in the Tenth Congressional District, represented by U. S. Rep. Tom Marino, more than one in five households with children were similarly challenged.

Pennsylvania reported alarming rates of food hardship—the inability to afford enough food—among children across all 19 of its Congressional Districts. Of the nation’s 436 Congressional districts, the First District, represented by U.S. Rep. Bob Brady ranks second-worst for food hardship among households with children. Other southeast Pennsylvania districts also fared poorly. (See the chart below.)

“Children are the innocent victims of this nation’s failure to provide for the neediest people among us,” said Ann McManus, Director of the Second Harvest Food Bank of Lehigh Valley and Northeast Pennsylvania. “This report reminds us that the safety net of food and nutrition program needs to be strengthened so that everyone, especially children, can have an adequate diet. But, the threats that are looming as Congress contemplates drastic domestic cuts are real. Congress needs to realize that SNAP (formerly known as food stamps), the Women Infants and Children’s Supplemental Feeding Program (WIC), school meals, and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) need to be fully funded.”

Data from the report came from a Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index project, which has interviewed more than 1 million households since January 2008. Households were asked: “Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?” In the U.S. as a whole, 18 percent of all households polled responded yes; in households with children, that figure reached more than 23 percent. In Pennsylvania, food hardship among households with children is nearly 22 percent.

“America is failing its families with children. Here at the local level we are doing the best we can, but there is no way our best is enough without effective public policies,” says Alan Jennings, executive director of the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley, whose agency operates the Second Harvest Food Bank.



He continues that “children, and adults, who are not getting enough good food to eat are less productive, less able to go about their daily tasks. The risks to their health and well-being have consequences for all of us. We shouldn’t be surprised if, 15 years from now, the children on whom we turned our backs, turn their backs on society.”

*The following table lists food hardship rates for every Congressional District in Pennsylvania.

Food Hardship Rates for Households with Children in Every Congressional District in Pennsylvania

Representative	Food Hardship Rate 2008-2010
Robert A. Brady	49.6
Chaka Fattah	32.2
Mike Kelly	26.3
Jason Altmire	18.9
Glenn Thompson	24.8
Jim Gerlach	14.7
Patrick Meehan	15.0
Michael Fitzpatrick	11.9
Bill Shuster	21.2
Tom Marino	22.4
Lou Barletta	26.0
Mark Critz	22.7
Allyson Schwartz	14.6
Michael Doyle	25.4
Charles Dent	21.6
Joseph Pitts	18.1
Tim Holden	19.7
Tim Murphy	17.5
Todd Russell Platts	19.6

For the full report, visit www.frac.org.

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