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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ACTION AGAINST HUNGER™ 25TH ANNUAL FOOD DRIVE TO FILL
THE SHELVES AT 40 PANTRIES IN NORTHERN NEW JERSEY**

300,000+ Food Insecure in Northern New Jersey

WOODLAND PARK, N.J. — Sept. 19, 2016 — The 25th Annual [Action Against Hunger™ Food Drive](#) will be held throughout North Jersey on Sunday, Sept. 25, 2016, from noon to 4 p.m. The lead local emergency food pantries that will receive and distribute the food packages to people in need include Center for Food Action, Bergen County; CUMAC/ECHO, Passaic County; MEND, Essex County; and the Interfaith Food Pantry, Morris County.

“It’s been 25 years since the first Action Against Hunger Food Drive took place and, sadly, the number of food needy individuals continues to grow each year. In New Jersey, there are just over 1 million individuals who are among this group, and more than 300,000 live in the counties of Bergen, Essex, Passaic and Morris,”¹ said Jennifer Borg, president of the Foundation of Northern New Jersey, Inc., (formerly known as North Jersey Media Group Foundation). “The good news is that community efforts by donors and volunteers help fill the gap with this annual food drive, which has become a source of much-needed year-end relief for the pantries that distribute food and other resources to those in need.”

Last year, combined food and cash donations reached \$150,363.09. This year, the goal is to exceed that number by 10 percent to keep up with the increased demand described by food pantry leaders. Here is what they reported about the escalating need.

Bergen County

According to Jennifer Johnson, director of communications and community relations at the Center for Food Action (CFA), “CFA provides emergency food, homelessness prevention and utility assistance to tens of thousands of individuals and families living in northern New Jersey. Despite the affluence in our area, many families and individuals, including seniors, live

paycheck to paycheck, and all it takes is a serious illness, a car accident, a divorce or any other life-altering event to devastate even the best-planned budget. It is unacceptable that anyone should go hungry. At CFA we #SayNo2Hunger.”

Passaic County

“CUMAC and the pantry members of our Community Food Coalition fed more than 156,000 people in 2015, which would have been impossible without the generosity of our community,” noted Reverend Patricia Bruger, executive director of CUMAC/ECHO. “The Action Against Hunger Food Drive provides pantries with a much-needed boost to food supplies that have fallen to dangerously low levels during the summer months. Food received during the drive will allow Passaic County’s pantries to assist thousands of our struggling neighbors in meeting their basic nutritional needs. New Jersey residents facing food insecurity rely heavily on the donated groceries to supplement their limited resources as housing and energy prices continue to soar. Donations keep pantry shelves stocked and operational. We, and the individuals we serve, are so appreciative.”

Essex County

“As we move into the fall season, our 16 MEND pantries continue to be strained by the growing number of our neighbors needing our assistance with basic food requirements. Last year we had a record number of 107,000 children, men and women who were served here in Essex County,” commented Sharon Reilly-Tobin, coordinator of CCANNJ/MEND. “Marginal income, employment instability, the rising cost of housing, or a personal crisis such as divorce or domestic violence can result in food insecurity. These events create a crisis situation that impacts the money available for food. The most vulnerable are children and the elderly. For these groups, providing a healthy, well-balanced food package is essential but not always possible when food supplies are low. Making a donation to the 25th Annual Action Against Hunger Food Drive will allow MEND to continue to assist the thousands of people who must turn to a food pantry for help.”

Morris County

“We continue to see many people, particularly those in their fifties and sixties who previously worked in retail and manufacturing, who are still struggling to find adequate work or adjust to incomes that don’t cover rising housing costs,” said Carolyn Lake, director, community relations & development, Morris County Interfaith Food Pantry. “For many of these folks, we are their only source of help, and we continue to serve more than 2,300 people each month. The Action Against Hunger Food Drive helps us meet their basic food needs while we work with other resources to help them become self-sufficient.”

Cash Donations

Cash donations are the backbone of this effort, as pantries can stretch the dollar more than individuals can. Tax-deductible cash donations can be made online at www.ActionAgainstHunger.com or mailed to Action Against Hunger, P.O. Box 75, Hackensack, NJ 07602-9192. For more information about the drive, drop-off sites and how you can help, please visit www.ActionAgainstHunger.com or call 973-569-7683.

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Most-needed Items

Food items that can be donated on Sept. 25 include nonperishable nutritious foods such as canned vegetables, meats, fish and fruits; hearty soups and stews; pasta; white and brown rice; peanut butter; enriched cereals; oatmeal; pancake mix; powdered or evaporated milk; 100 percent fruit juice; baby formula; and low-sugar and low-sodium foods for those with special dietary needs.

Action Against Hunger sponsors include *1010 WINS*, Acme, Foodtown, The Record, Hackensack University Medical Center, Kings, Scott Graphics, ShopRite, and Stop & Shop.

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¹ <http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2014/overall/new-jersey>