

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News from the LOUISIANA FOOD BANK ASSOCIATION



★ *Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana* ★
★ *Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank* ★ *The Food Bank of Central Louisiana*
★ *Food Bank of Northeast Louisiana* ★ *Food Bank of Northwest Louisiana*

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FOOD BANKS HEAD TO STATE CAPITOL TO SECURE CONTINUED FUNDING IN LIGHT OF ECONOMIC DOWNTURN WITH RECORD OF SUCCESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

PROGRAM PROVIDING MORE THAN 14.8 MILLION MEALS TO THOSE IN NEED AT END OF SECOND YEAR

- *All money spent supported state economy; spent with LA farmers, fishermen and vendors*
- *Faith-based agencies key component in chain of support for Louisiana's hungry*
- *Effects of economic downturn hits home as food banks face increased need and decreased supply*

April 23, 2009 – The Louisiana Food Bank Association (LFBA), comprised of the five regional food banks in Louisiana, will approach the state for \$18 million to purchase nutritious food from Louisiana farmers, fisherman, vendors and wholesalers to serve hungry Louisianans. Today, LFBA will go before the House Appropriations committee to report on the success and accountability of the Louisiana State Nutrition Assistance Program (LANIAP) and raise awareness of the unprecedented need for food and funds to address the new face of hunger in Louisiana.

With last year's \$5 million state funding of the LANIAP program, the LFBA purchased more than 9 million pounds of food and provided more than 7 million meals. With the funds entrusted by the state, the LFBA has reached over 400,000 of the 850,000 people facing food insecurity in Louisiana. By the end of fiscal year 2009, the LFBA estimates it will have provided more than 14.8 million meals to those in need in coordination with a state-wide agency network of 431 organizations, the majority of which are faith-based, and partnerships with groups including the U.S. Rice Federation, LA Farmers Bureau, and Louisiana farmers, fishermen, vendors and wholesalers.

"The economic downturn, increasing cost of living, and rising number of unemployed and underemployed in our state is creating more and more demand for food assistance through food banks and emergency feeding organizations throughout Louisiana," says Jayne Wright, president of the Louisiana Food Bank Association. "With \$18 million, we can purchase more than 27 million pounds of nutritious, Louisiana food to support our farmers, fishermen, manufacturers and vendors, and distribute approximately 21 million meals to hungry families, children and seniors."

"We are pleased that our legislators understand that hunger is an everyday crisis in Louisiana," adds Wright. "We are grateful for the past support of the Legislature and understand that this will be a challenging budget year for Louisiana. However, we are also confident that our lawmakers will continue to work with the Louisiana Food Bank Association to further our mission of feeding hope."

UNPRECEDENTED NEED

- **Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana** has increased food distribution to meet the heightened level of need in south Louisiana across the 23 parishes it serves. In FY 2009, food distribution will increase by approximately 33 percent to 24 million pounds and nearly 19 million meals to help working families, children and seniors cope with the recovery, recession and increased cost of living in Louisiana.
- In 2009, the **Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank** has experienced a 26 percent increase in need throughout the 11 parishes it serves. The rising cost of food, fuel, mortgages and rents, and increasing unemployment, and even underemployment, are creating an increase in demand. First-time users, employed persons, growing numbers of children and others represent a *new* face of hunger in Louisiana.
- The demand for emergency food assistance has increased approximately 20 percent at the **Food Bank of Central Louisiana** in Alexandria. From FY 07 to FY 08, the amount of donated food has decreased by 36 percent. Without LANIAP resources, it is possible that the Food Bank of Central Louisiana may be faced with food shortages that would result in turning away families, children and seniors in need for the first time in the history of the organization.
- The **Food Bank of Northwest Louisiana** in Shreveport has experienced a 20 percent increase in need due to shifting populations across the seven parishes it serves. This increase is in addition to the unmet needs that already existed.
- Member agencies of the **Food Bank of Northeast Louisiana** in Monroe have recently reported running out of food during typical food distributions due to the 10 - 30 percent increase in the number of individuals seeking food assistance. The need across the 12 parishes served by the Food Bank of Northeast Louisiana has never been greater with a rising unemployment rate, the result of the closings of a major regional manufacturer, regional insurance office and two paper mills, among others.

WHY NOW?

- Federal nutrition assistance does not adequately meet the need in Louisiana. As the country continues to experience a recession, resources will increasingly be directed away from Louisiana and toward areas suffering higher unemployment, even though unemployment has increased here as well, and further economic downturns within the state are projected.
- The LANIAP initiative uses state funds to buy food grown, made or sold in Louisiana -- helping a struggling sector of the economy devoted to agriculture, fishing, food manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing.
- Feeding America (the national food bank network) estimates that need has increased throughout the country at an average rate of 35 percent.
- Louisiana has the second highest rate of poverty in the United States and the highest death rate among children due to chronic health issues, many due to malnutrition and / or inadequate diet options.

THE LOUISIANA FOOD BANK ASSOCIATION

- There are five food banks in Louisiana that are members of the Feeding America national network:
 - Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana (GNOA)
 - Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank (GBR)
 - Central Food Bank of Louisiana (CLA)
 - Food Bank of Northeast Louisiana (NELA)
 - Food Bank of Northwest Louisiana (NWLA)

- Together, the five food banks of the Louisiana Food Bank Association serve all 64 parishes in Louisiana through more than 431 agencies. Approximately 62 percent of these agencies are faith-based; the remaining are nonprofits.
- Since September 2005, more than 150 million pounds of food have been distributed to people in need throughout the state of Louisiana.
- As Hurricanes Gustav and Ike approached in 2008, the five food banks mobilized to meet the emergency:
 - Second Harvest of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana alone distributed 2.5 million pounds in the 30 days following the storms.
 - The Food Banks of Central, Northwest and Northeast Louisiana helped to fill the gaps in shelter supplies.
 - Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana and the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank worked with the Governor's Office of Homeland Security, USDA, FEMA and the Louisiana Departments of Agriculture, Social Services and Natural Resources. Moreover, GNOA and GBR were often the first nonprofits to supply food to the affected parishes.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED WITH LANIAP FUNDING?

- The Louisiana Nutritional Assistance Program is on schedule to provide more than 19.1 million pounds of food and more than 14.8 million meals by the end of its first two years of operation.
- The distribution of food was coordinated through a strong network of faith-based organizations and thousands of dedicated, community volunteers of all ages.
- The Louisiana Nutritional Assistance Program provided more nutritional food than in previous years including:
 - fresh produce (assorted vegetables and fruits)
 - sweet potatoes (fresh and canned)
 - additional canned vegetables, meats and potatoes
 - assorted dry beans, white and brown rice
 - poultry and fish
- With nutritional Louisiana foods, the LFBA provided food items to Louisiana's two most vulnerable populations: children and seniors.
 - Proper nutrition is vital to the growth and development of children, particularly for low-income children.
 - Many Louisiana seniors are living on fixed incomes that often force them to choose between paying for healthcare or prescriptions and buying groceries.
- Purchases of the nutritional food items were from Louisiana farmers, wholesalers, fishermen, and vendors.

WHO RECEIVES FOOD FROM THE FIVE LFBA FOOD BANKS?

According to a 2006 statewide hunger survey (rendered before Hurricanes Katrina, Gustav and Ike, and published by America's Second Harvest), the following demographics illustrate the diversity of residents who seek assistance from Louisiana food banks:

- 28% are children under 18 years old
- 6% are children age 0 to 5 years
- 13% are elderly
- 29% of households include at least one employed adult
- 75% have incomes below the official federal poverty level during the previous month
- 27% are homeless

Today, the population in need in each of these categories is higher than ever before.

WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED WITH FULL FUNDING OF THE LOUISIANA STATE NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LANIAP)?

- With \$18 million, the Louisiana State Nutrition Assistance Program (based on present food costs) would be able to purchase a total of 27 million pounds of and provide more than 21 million meals throughout all 64 parishes. (See attached What Can Be Accomplished spreadsheet.)
 - \$16.1 million will be used directly to buy products from Louisiana farmers, fishermen, wholesalers, manufacturers and vendors.
 - \$1.9 million will be used to provide transportation and storage for the food to be distributed, to strengthen the food banks' outreach to faith-based and nonprofit partners, and to coordinate state-wide emergency relief efforts.
- Faith-based organizations and nonprofit organizations throughout Louisiana continue to struggle to meet the needs of the recession, recovery, poor health outcomes, unemployment, and the increased cost of living in Louisiana.
- According to Governor Jindal's Solutions to Poverty (STOP) executive order, "real economic costs resulting from a high rate of poverty are borne by Louisiana's overall population, and negatively affect the state's educational, workforce, and economic development potential." The LANIAP initiative emphasizes the partnership of the faith-based and nonprofit community with government agencies to address and overcome the issue of poverty in Louisiana.
- The five food banks of the LFBA work on programs to ensure that children get the nutritious food they need so they can focus in school, that seniors with diabetes and other chronic illnesses have the food they need so they can afford their medicines, and to relieve the stress on all Louisianans struggling build a better life for their families.
- Assistance from the State of Louisiana helps LFBA purchase more nutritious food for low-income families – food that would help the fight to lower obesity and nutrition related illnesses like diabetes and hypertension.
- As demonstrated after Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, the LFBA has focused more attention on its role in disaster relief – a role that is critical to the state's emergency plan, yet remains an unfunded mandate.

HOW DOES THE LOUISIANA STATE NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WORK?

- The Board of Directors of the LFBA maintains an approved a list of nutritious, Louisiana food products eligible for purchase.
- The LFBA Board of Directors allocates state funded food purchases to ensure that all residents in need are reached throughout Louisiana's 64 parishes.
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana (GNOA) serves as the fiscal agent for LFBA. GNOA manages LFBA funds separately and produces an audited schedule of LFBA funds annually.
- Reports from each food bank are compiled by Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana on a quarterly basis. Each quarter, GNOA submits a comprehensive report to the Louisiana Department of Agriculture.
- The food banks of the Louisiana Food Bank Association purchase food collectively through a single program manager to maximize the efficient use of the funds.
- Monthly, LFBA's five food banks also report the geographic distribution of LANIAP food, provide a list of local agencies that distribute the food, and the number of people who have received LANIAP food.

To arrange interviews or for more information, please see the contact list at the top of the press release to access spokespersons and LFBA members in your area.

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