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**“Healthy Options, Healthy Meals” Conference a Success!**

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The Greater Cleveland Food Bank held its 5th annual agency conference with more than 250 representatives from our member agencies on Thursday, May 28, 2015. The event was held at the InterContinental Hotel.

The day included a keynote presentation given by Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn. Twenty-three years ago, while chairman of the Cleveland Clinic’s Breast Cancer Task Force, Dr. Esselstyn grew disappointed in the way he and his colleagues were treating cancer and heart disease. He realized the fatty American diet was, in all likelihood, responsible for heart disease and many western cancers, which are infrequently seen in other parts of the world where much less fat is consumed. Dr. Esselstyn adopted a plant-based diet, cutting out oil, fish, fowl, and dairy, and has since began working with patients on consuming this diet to improve their health conditions, with much success. The Food Bank was thrilled to be able to host him.

The lunch speaker was Coach Ted Ginn, Sr. who shared his perspective on what it means to give back to the community, and how he strives to live by those principles. There was also a vendor fair and additional sessions that included topics covering nutrition myths, the link between hunger, nutrition and mental health, and an introductory session to understanding diabetes.

The conference also included the Agency Recognition Event. Several awards were given for agencies’ extraordinary commitment and innovation throughout the year. This year's winners included:

Mobile Pantry of the Year: All Faiths Pantry

Advocate of the Year: Rev. Leroy McCreary, People’s Community Church

Program of the Year, Ashland County: Ashland First United Methodist Church

Program of the Year, Cuyahoga County: Lee Seville Miles Hunger Center

Program of the Year, Geauga County: Burton Congregational Church

Program of the Year, Lake County: Association to Help the Lord’s Work

Program of the Year, Richland County: Woodville Grace Brethren

 The top honor, the Ed Worley Award, was given to Denise Dworning, the director of the Vineyard Community Church choice pantry. Since Denise began managing the pantry, they have distributed nearly 1.2 million pounds, providing over 965,000 meals to more than 80,000 people.

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*The Greater Cleveland Food Bank is the largest hunger relief organization in Northeast Ohio, providing 45.6 million meals in 2014 to hungry people in Cuyahoga, Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, Ashland and Richland counties. Our mission is to ensure that everyone in our communities has the nutritious food they need every day. We do this through both food distribution and SNAP outreach effort. For more information please visit: GreaterClevelandFoodBank.org*