Lack of Access to Food Among Seniors Can Cause Severe Health Consequences

CLEVELAND OH (March 20, 2014) – A new research project, entitled Spotlight on Senior Health: Adverse Health Outcomes of Food Insecure Older Americans, finds that food insecure seniors are more likely than those who are food secure to have lower nutrient intake and to be at a higher risk for chronic health conditions and depression.

The study — released jointly by Feeding America and the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger (NFESH) — reveals that food insecurity is associated with a number of diseases and other negative health consequences. Food insecure seniors consumed fewer calories and fewer quantities of 10 key nutrients than food secure seniors.

When compared to food secure seniors, food insecure seniors are

- 60 percent more likely to experience depression;
- 53 percent more likely to report a heart attack;
- 52 percent more likely to develop asthma; and
- 40 percent more likely to report an experience of congestive heart failure.

“This study further illuminates that hunger is directly related to health, but especially among seniors, a very vulnerable population at risk of hunger,” said Anne Goodman, President and CEO of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. “So many have to choose between paying for food or medicine, and yet without enough nutritious food, how can they maintain good health?”

About 15% of the people served by the Greater Cleveland Food Bank are seniors. Each month, The Greater Cleveland Food Bank provides meals and groceries for nearly 26,400 seniors. This year a Mobile Meals program was launched which serves 500 meals to older adults each day. We are dedicated to providing nutrient-rich food to vulnerable older American who face hunger.

The research also shows that those 60 and older experience more severe health consequences as a result of food insecurity compared to younger adults, underscoring the critical nature in identifying solutions for seniors struggling with hunger.

Spotlight on Senior Health: Adverse Health Outcomes of Food Insecure Older Americans synthesizes research commissioned by NFESH and several other organizations interested in senior issues. It is based on analyses conducted by Dr. Craig Gundersen and Dr. James Ziliak of the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). Together, these two datasets provide information about food insecurity and the health and nutrition implications for individuals ages 60 and older living in the United
States. Gundersen and Ziliak conducted these analyses for their 2014 report entitled “Food Insecurity and Health among Senior Americans.”

The Executive Summary for Spotlight on Senior Health: Adverse Health Outcomes of Food Insecure Older Americans can be found here or at http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/spotlight-senior-health.aspx

About the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger
The National Foundation to End Senior Hunger (NFESH) identifies and assesses the challenge of senior hunger by funding senior-specific research, fostering local collaboration and engaging diverse partners. Through research, education and community partnerships the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger works to create the tangible and replicable solutions necessary to reverse the escalating number of seniors in the lifecycle of hunger. For more information visit: www.nfesh.org.

About Feeding America
Feeding America is a nationwide network of more than 200 food banks that leads the fight against hunger in the United States. Together, we provide food to more than 37 million people through 61,000 food pantries, community kitchens, and emergency shelters across America. Visit http://www.feedingamerica.org/.

About Greater Cleveland Foodbank
The Food Bank is the largest hunger relief organization in Northeast Ohio having provided nearly 39 million meals in 2013 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 efforts. The best and easiest way to help is to go online: visit us at www.GreaterClevelandFoodBank.org.

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