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**New Study Reveals an Increasing Number of Citizens in South Louisiana
Seeking Emergency Food Assistance**

***Study on Emergency Food Distribution Reports 262,800 Clients Are Served Annually
by Second Harvest Food Bank Across 23 South Louisiana Parishes;
Including Nearly 82,000 Children and 40,000 Seniors***

(New Orleans, LA) February 2, 2010 --- A study released today by Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana (GNOA) and Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization, reports that more than 262,800 people, including 82,000 children and 40,000 seniors, receive emergency food assistance each year through Second Harvest Food Bank and its 235 faith-based and nonprofit member agencies. Second Harvest Food Bank reaches approximately one half of the population in poverty in the 23 south Louisiana parishes it serves, stretching from the Mississippi border to the Texas state line.

Hunger in America 2010 is the first research study to document the significant connection between the recent economic downturn and an increased need for emergency food assistance. The number of children and adults in need of food and experiencing food insecurity has increased significantly nationwide. For Second Harvest Food Bank GNOA, *Hunger in America* provides a snapshot of the connection between economic uncertainty and food insecurity in south Louisiana in 2010.

"This study demonstrates that there is a growing need of emergency food assistance for hard working families in south Louisiana," says Natalie Jayroe, President and CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana. "Our member agencies are reporting longer lines and increases in the number of first-time clients who are newly unemployed, or under employed, and who need help to feed their families. In these times of recovery and recession, families are faced with making choices between putting food on the table and paying for rent, utilities, healthcare and other basic needs."

Second Harvest Food Bank GNOA serves an estimated 41,800 people each week who receive emergency food assistance from a food pantry, soup kitchen, or other member agency. Second Harvest Food Bank also plays a critical role responding to the extraordinary needs that occur during times of disaster – efforts that are not captured in the *Hunger in America 2010* report.

Nationally, more than one in three client households are experiencing very low food security—or hunger—a 54 percent increase in the number of households compared to four years ago.

An estimated 5.7 million people receive emergency food assistance each week from a food pantry, soup kitchen, or other agency served by one of Feeding America's more than 200 food banks, including Second Harvest Food Bank. This is a 27 percent increase over numbers reported in *Hunger in America 2006*, which reported that 4.5 million people were served each week.

Louisiana faces many challenges from chronic and intergenerational poverty. The recent Food Research and Action Center study, "Food Hardship: A Closer Look at Hunger," estimates that more than 22 percent of the population in Louisiana faces challenges accessing food. Louisiana ranked among the top five states with the highest percentage of the population facing "food hardship." More than 30% of households with children face food hardship according to the report. According to USDA data, Louisiana ranks highest in the nation in percentage of children five years old and younger at risk for hunger.

"It is morally reprehensible that we live in the wealthiest nation in the world where one in six people are struggling to make choices between food and other basic necessities," said Vicki Escarra, president and CEO of Feeding America. "These are choices that no one should have to make, but particularly households with children. Insufficient nutrition has adverse effects on the physical, behavioral and mental health, and academic performance of children. It is critical that we ensure that no child goes to bed hungry in America as they truly are our engine of economic growth and future vitality."

The methodology incorporated into the 2010 study includes data collected from February through June, 2009. Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana conducted face-to-face interviews with 472 people seeking emergency food at food pantries, soup kitchens and other emergency feeding programs, as well as interviews with more than 157 agencies that provide food assistance.

Nationally, Feeding America collected quantitative and qualitative feedback from 61,000 face-to-face in-depth interviews with people seeking emergency food assistance and more than 37,000 agency surveys, making this study the largest, most-comprehensive ever conducted on domestic hunger.

USDA reported in November 2009 that an estimated 49 million people, including 17 million children, are at risk of hunger in this country. *Hunger in America 2010* reinforces the dramatically increasing need for food assistance in the United States.

Among the key findings in the Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana report:

- 31% of all households served by Second Harvest Food Bank GNOA had children under 18 years of age, 10% of which had children 0 to 5 years old.
- 30% of client households included a person who was over 65 years of age, 63% of which were living with "food insecurity."
- The average monthly income for households served by Second Harvest Food Bank GNOA member agencies was \$850; the average household size was 2.3 people.
- 30% of client households have at least one member in poor health.
- 80% of those served by Second Harvest Food Bank GNOA had a high school education or less.
- 25% of client households had a member who was employed; 60% of those who were unemployed had not worked in more than 2 years.

- 47% of clients served by Second Harvest Food Bank GNOA report having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities; 31% had to choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage; 28% had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine and medical care.
- 97% of client households did not receive any form of general assistance, welfare, or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families in 2007 or 2008.

A summary of the Hunger in America 2010 findings for the 23 south Louisiana parishes served by Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana is available at www.no-hunger.org. The full national report is available on Feeding America's web site at [Hunger in America 2010](http://www.feedingamerica.org/Hunger-in-America-2010).

About Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana

Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana is leading the fight against hunger in south Louisiana through food distribution, education, advocacy and disaster response. Annually, Second Harvest serves approximately 262,800 people through 235 nonprofit and faith-based agencies across 23 south Louisiana parishes – from the Mississippi border to the Texas state line. In any given week, nearly 41,800 people access emergency food services through Second Harvest Food Bank member agencies. Second Harvest Food Bank is a member of Feeding America (formerly known as America's Second Harvest National Food Bank Network). To learn more or donate food, money or time, please visit www.no-hunger.org.

About Feeding America

Feeding America provides low-income individuals and families with the fuel to survive and even thrive. As the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity, our network members supply food to more than 37 million Americans each year, including 14 million children and 3 million seniors. Serving the entire United States, more than 200 member food banks support 61,068 agencies that address hunger in all of its forms. Feeding America is based in Chicago. For more information on how you can fight hunger in your community and across the country, visit <http://www.feedingamerica.org>. Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/FeedingAmerica or follow our news on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/Feedingamerica>.

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