

LOS ANGELES REGIONAL



Fighting Hunger. Giving Hope.

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**FOOD PANTRY DEMAND REACHES RECORD AS LOCAL ECONOMY
IMPACTS LA COUNTY FAMILIES**

Foodbank volume increases by 41% as hundreds of thousands of residents seek food assistance from charities and from the County of Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES, Calif. – (September 16, 2009) The Los Angeles Regional Foodbank, which supplies food to local food pantries throughout Los Angeles County, is currently shipping 1 million pounds of food per week, the equivalent of 750,000 meals, in an effort to keep up with the growing demand. The latest policy brief released today by the Foodbank shows that local food pantries are experiencing a 34 percent increase in demand compared to this time a year ago, which is significant considering that September 2008 is viewed as the month when the recession escalated due to the meltdown of several large financial firms.

From May to August 2009, an average of 251,298 people received assistance from food pantries each month, 8.6 percent increase from the previous period (January through April 2009).

The Los Angeles Regional Foodbank, which distributes food to 544 charitable agencies providing service from 902 agency sites throughout Los Angeles County, has increased volume by 41%, the equivalent of 5 million meals, year to date compared to last year to meet the demand; however, there still remains a gap between the overall demand for food assistance and the supply of food.

"The demand for food assistance has reached record proportions in Los Angeles County," said Michael Flood, President and CEO of the Los Angeles Regional Foodbank. "As a result of state budget cuts and rising unemployment rates, hunger is becoming more critical problem. We are actively recruiting new pantry locations to increase distribution and are seeking help from the community through donations and volunteering."

Given that the Foodbank has a finite amount of food to distribute, the service provided by the federal Food Stamp Program is another critical aspect of food assistance. In July 2009, 795,037 residents of Los Angeles County received Food Stamp benefits, a 24.8% increase from December 2007 when the recession began.

"The dramatic increase in the Food Stamp Program caseload during the current recession is clear evidence that more and more families are struggling to keep food on the table," stated Phil Ansell, Director of the Bureau of Program and Policy of the LA County Department of Public Social Services. "The Food Stamp Program is the first line of defense against hunger and every eligible household should access this critical federal benefit. In Los Angeles County, families and individuals can get a food stamps application and information about the program by calling 877-597-4977."

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To view the full Policy Brief, visit www.lafoodbank.org/stats.htm.

September is Hunger Action Month, so there are many ways that LA residents can get involved to support the Foodbank in its efforts to meet the record demand for food assistance, including:

- LA County Fair “Ralphs Food Drive Fridays”: Guests must bring five Ralphs private label canned products on Fridays for a free Fair admission good that day only, noon- 6 p.m. only, Sept. 5 - Oct. 4. The canned products will be collected by the Foodbank.
- Attend the year’s largest hunger-relief concert “Rock a Little, Feed a Lot” at Club Nokia on September 29th, a benefit for the Los Angeles Regional Foodbank and Feeding America as part of Hunger Action Month. Tickets are available at www.ticketmaster.com
- Participate in the *Skip a Lunch, Feed a Bunch* campaign at www.lafoodbank.org/ssl/feedabunch.htm
- Volunteer at the Foodbank, organize a food drive or donate funds. Visit the Los Angeles Regional Foodbank web site at www.lafoodbank.org to learn more

For information on how to find a local food pantry, visit <http://www.lafoodbank.org/city.asp>, and for more information about the Food Stamp Program, visit <http://dpss.lacounty.gov/dpss>.

*The **Los Angeles Regional Foodbank** is a non-profit, charitable organization established in 1973 and is one of the largest food banks in the United States. Through a network of 544 charitable agencies providing service from 902 agency sites, the Foodbank supplies enough food for 750,000 meals each week throughout Los Angeles County. The Foodbank is a partner with Feeding America. For more information, visit <http://www.lafoodbank.org>.*

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