



Map the Meal Gap reveals first-ever Tarrant County details on food Insecurity by county, congressional district

1 in 6 residents food insecure

Of food insecure residents, more than a third do NOT qualify for government nutrition assistance and may have to rely on private charities for food

FORT WORTH, TX (March 25, 2011) – **Tarrant Area Food Bank and Feeding America**, the nation’s largest domestic hunger-relief organization, recently released a landmark study, MAP THE MEAL GAP, providing the first detailed report on the extent that families are struggling with hunger in every county across the nation, including TARRANT COUNTY, which is one of 13 North Texas counties served by Tarrant Area Food Bank.

Across Texas, an average of 1 in 5 residents struggles with food insecurity and/or hunger. **In TARRANT COUNTY and across the United States**, that number is 1 in 6 residents; 17.1 percent in Tarrant County, 16.6 percent nationwide.

Food insecurity refers to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s measure of lack of access, at times, to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life for all family members. Any degree of food insecurity can lead to malnutrition and chronic hunger, which jeopardize a person’s health, and, in the case of the seriously ill or the very young or very old, can even threaten one’s life.

“What is most revealing about the MAP THE MEAL GAP study,” said Bo Soderbergh, Tarrant Area Food Bank executive director, “is that a relatively large percentage of people who are food insecure have household incomes that make them ineligible for nutrition assistance programs such as SNAP [Food Stamps] and free and reduced-cost school meals [National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs].”

IN TARRANT COUNTY:

- **More than a third (41 percent) of the food insecure residents do NOT QUALIFY** for government nutrition programs. These families often must rely on local hunger-relief charities such as the ones Tarrant Area Food Bank serves in Arlington, Fort Worth, Northeast Tarrant and throughout the rest of the county.
- **More than half (51 percent) of the county’s food insecure residents do qualify**, based on income, for SNAP (Foods Stamps), free and reduced-cost school meals and other government nutrition programs, all of which bring dollars into a community in the form of purchases at grocery stores, hiring of staff to administer the programs and other activities.
- **The estimated number of meals** during one year that food insecure Tarrant County residents, as a group, go without—due to lack of resources—total more than 48 million.

In TARRANT AREA FOOD BANK'S 13-COUNTY SERVICE REGION:

- **More than one-third (39 percent) of the food insecure residents do NOT QUALIFY** for government nutrition programs and often must rely on charitable food assistance programs. They also may need better wages and employment opportunities to help them meet their basic needs.
- **About half (52 percent) of the region's food insecure residents DO qualify**, based on income, for SNAP (Foods Stamps), free and reduced-cost school meals and other government nutrition programs.
- **The estimated number of meals** during one year, that the 13 counties' food insecure residents—as a group—go without due to lack of resources, total over 78 million.

MAP THE MEAL GAP in Congressional Districts

This study also provides critical information that has never been previously available—food insecurity rates for Congressional Districts. Previously, food insecurity data was only available at the state level in the USDA's annual report, "Household Food Security in the United States."

MAP THE GAP further analyzes each district's food insecure population to determine their income eligibility for public nutrition assistance. This data has the potential to redefine the way service providers and policy makers address areas of need.

The findings of MAP THE MEAL GAP are based on statistics collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Census Bureau, and food price data from The Nielsen Company. The study was supported by The Howard G. Buffett Foundation and Nielsen.

A summary of the findings, an interactive map of the United States, and the full report are available on Feeding America's web site at www.feedingamerica.org

Tweet about Map the Meal Gap using #MealGap.

Join the national conversation on hunger and learn more about Feeding America:
<http://blog.feedingamerica.org/>.

Join the national conversation on hunger and learn more about Feeding America:
<http://blog.feedingamerica.org/>.

ABOUT TARRANT AREA FOOD BANK

Founded in 1982 as a private, nonprofit collector and distributor of donated food, Tarrant Area Food Bank provides food to 350 hunger-relief programs in 13 counties surrounding Fort Worth. Each month, the partner charities provide emergency groceries for up to 45,000 families and serve more than 565,000 meals and snacks.

Since 2008, the Food Bank's partner charities have seen requests for food aid rise an average of 35 percent or more. In fiscal year 2007-08, Tarrant Area Food Bank distributed 13.4 million MEALS WORTH of food to its partner charities. In 2010-11 the amount of food distributed to partner agencies is projected to go over an equivalent of 19 million meals; that's a 43 percent increase in two years.

As a member of Feeding America, Tarrant Area Food Bank is in full compliance with that national network's standards of operation and performance. For more information, visit tafb.org. Find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter at TAFoodBank.

-more-

ABOUT FEEDING AMERICA

As the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity, Feeding America provides donated food to a nationwide network of regional food banks that supplies 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 63,000 agencies that address hunger in all of its forms. For more information, visit <http://www.feedingamerica.org>. Find us on Facebook and Twitter at FeedingAmerica.

#