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Nutrition Agencies in SLO Co. Receive USDA Grant

The Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County has announced that it has received a Hunger Free Communities grant from the USDA Food Nutrition Services in the amount of \$99,561. Authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, the grant funds research and planning designed to improve access to nutrition assistance for those in need.

According to Carl Hansen, Food Bank Executive Director, "We are the lead agency, but this grant is the result of a collaborative effort between non-profits involved in HEAL-SLO, the County Health Department, Cal Poly, and the local farming and business community. This is a planning grant to help us assess local hunger needs and resources, and establish a coordinated strategic plan to meet the needs of those who suffer from food insecurity. If we do our job well, a second and larger implementation grant may be forthcoming during the next two years to enact our plan and create a more effective county response to hunger and malnutrition." Kathleen Karle, Health Promotion Division Manager at the San Luis Obispo health Agency says, "The San Luis Obispo Public Health Department is thrilled that the USDA recognized our local need, and we look forward to working with our community partners on this worthwhile project."

San Luis Obispo County is one of only fourteen sites around the country to receive this new initiative that is aimed at helping communities increase food access by promoting coordination and partnerships between public, private and non-profit partners. USDA will be investing \$4.98 million in grants to 14 communities in eight states to end hunger and improve the nutrition of low-income Americans. Four of the grants are considerably larger because the grants will implement an already established strategic plan in their communities.

In 2009, over 50 million individuals in the United States, or 16.6% of the population, lived in food-insecure households. Children are most at risk. Over 17 million children lived in food-insecure households. These homes had difficulty providing enough food for all their members due to a lack of resources at some time during the year. Hansen says that SLO County reflects these national statistics, as there are about 40,000 food-insecure persons in our county with a population of 365,000, and about 13,000 of them are children. "There are many government and non-profit agencies that serve this population in our county. We try to collaborate wherever we can in providing healthy food and nutrition education. With this grant, we will be able to step back and analyze

what we are doing, and see what resources we are not utilizing fully, or populations that are not being served adequately.”

USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) oversees the administration of 15 nutrition assistance programs, including the Food Stamp Program, now called Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and child nutrition programs that touch the lives of one in four Americans over the course of a year. These programs work in concert to form a national safety net against hunger.

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Information: Visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/> for information about FNS and nutrition assistance programs, or for more information about this grant, go to: http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/outreach/grants/hfc_awards.htm

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