



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Anti-Hunger advocates launch year-long School Breakfast Challenge at Ending Hunger Through Citizen Service conference**

**Newark, Del.** (April 7, 2014) – Two-hundred-fifty anti-hunger advocates gathered at the Christiana Hilton today for the second annual Ending Hunger Through Citizen Service conference. The highlight of the day-long event was the official launch of the School Breakfast Challenge.

Delaware Department of Education Secretary Mark Murphy officially launched the challenge this morning, announcing that a total of \$20,000 is available to schools that increase participation in the school breakfast program.

In the 2012-2013 school year, only 52.1 percent of children in Delaware who received free or reduced-price lunch also participated in school breakfast.

"We know for our children to be able to learn well, their minds need to be free from worrying about hunger pains. Ensuring our children receive nutritious meals is a vital component of their academic health," Murphy said.

Cash prizes will be available in the following categories:

#### **Districts**

- Highest overall participation percentage – cash prizes for first place (\$4,000), second place (\$2,000), third place (\$1,000) and fourth place (\$500).
- Highest increase in participation – cash prizes for first place (\$4,000), second place (\$2,000), third place (\$1,000), and fourth place (\$500).
- Implementation of an alternative breakfast program or adding breakfast where it was not offered before. Honorable mention

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- Highest overall participation percentage. There will be cash prizes for first place (\$2,500).
- Highest increase in participation percentage. There will be cash prizes for first place (\$2,500).
- Implementation of an alternative breakfast program or adding breakfast where it was not offered before. Honorable mention

Winners will be announced at next year's Ending Hunger Through Citizen Service conference, and funding must be used to purchase equipment to improve the infrastructure of their nutrition programs.

Governor Jack Markell applauded the School Breakfast Challenge and emphasized the state's commitment to ensuring the all Delawareans, especially children, have access to nutritious foods.

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"While Delaware's economy continues to improve, we know the recovery hasn't reached all of our neighbors," Markell said. "We will keep the safety net strong for individuals, families and, especially, children who are vulnerable to hunger. One critical area of our focus is our schools, recognizing that without consistent access to food, children's physical, emotional and educational growth are in jeopardy. The School Breakfast Challenge is another important step to move us closer to a hunger-free Delaware."

Administrator of the United State Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Nutrition Services Audrey Rowe discussed USDA's important role in alleviating hunger for millions of Americans.

"I want to commend the many school districts in Delaware who have brought breakfast into the classroom," said Rowe. "We hear from teachers who say that when kids eat healthy foods they do better in school. When kids get lots of healthy food choices and exercise at school, they learn good habits for life."

In addition to the launch of the school breakfast challenge, anti-hunger advocate Joel Berg, Executive Director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, provided keynote remarks that focused on the country's collective will, including government's, to end hunger.

"Saying we can end poverty and hunger by removing funding is like saying we can get rid of drought by removing water," said Berg.

Four panels throughout the day focused on community-based advocacy, federal nutrition policies, healthy food access and funding for anti-hunger programs.

"The biggest bang for a federal dollar is SNAP benefits," said Ellen Teller, Director of Government Relations for the Food Research and Action Center. "However, the SNAP program is the bull's-eye on Capitol Hill. Anti-hunger advocates must be agile and play defense again the attacks."

Panelists informed attendees that both national and local advocacy efforts are an important part of the political process as it relates to programs for low-income households."

"When the stimulus funding ended last November, that meant an annual \$16 million reduction in SNAP benefits, which is more than the entire annual budget of the Food Bank of Delaware," said Secretary Rita Landgraf of the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, which administers the SNAP program in the state. "Food is paramount to keeping people safe and healthy in their communities. That's why we are committed to working with Gov. Jack Markell, our congressional delegation, state legislators and federal officials to find long-term solutions to meeting the basic food needs of vulnerable Delawareans."

"Today was truly inspiring," said Food Bank of Delaware President and CEO Patricia Beebe. "To have so many individuals from all sectors show their support for a community free of hunger was humbling. We know that we have what it takes to end hunger in our state. Now we just need the political will to make it happen. Hunger is unacceptable in this country."

To learn more about the School Breakfast Challenge or to sponsor it, please contact Dan Reyes, Coalition to End Hunger Coordinator at the Food Bank of Delaware, at (302) 292-1305 ext 206 or [dreyes@fbd.org](mailto:dreyes@fbd.org).

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