



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES



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Delaware Anti-Hunger Coalition engages community to end hunger through state's first-ever Ending Hunger Through Citizen Service conference

Newark, Del. (April 16, 2013) – More than 250 anti-hunger advocates gathered at the Christiana Hilton yesterday to learn best practices for ending hunger in the state of Delaware. The Ending Hunger Through Citizen Service conference, a series of nationwide conferences supported by ConAgra Foods, aims to expand and intensify the role of volunteers in fighting hunger.

The all-day conference, sponsored locally by the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services and presented by the Delaware Anti-Hunger Coalition, focused on ways to increase access to and participation in children's nutrition programs, innovative strategies for providing more nutritious foods and recruiting and applying volunteer talent.

Six workshops throughout the day focused on advocacy and policy efforts to end hunger, recruiting and applying volunteer talents, effectively ending hunger through school-based child nutrition programs, government nutrition programs and connecting local agriculture to community-based programs and available funding for anti-hunger programs. The day wrapped up with a screening of the anti-hunger documentary, *A Place at the Table*. The film follows the lives of three households struggling with hunger.

New York City Coalition Against Hunger Executive Director Joel Berg is featured in the film and was amongst the day's speakers. He said, "In the 1960s and 1970s, Americans built social movements that successfully pressured the government to build the modern nutrition safety net, which, by the late 1970s, almost entirely ended U.S. hunger. But we've gone backwards since as the safety net has been slashed. The good news is that we can finish the job and end U.S. hunger by using citizen service to press for the public policies necessary to get the job done. Policy volunteerism works."

"United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition programs play a critical role in helping struggling American families improve access to healthy foods," said USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Janey Thornton. "But it takes the efforts of concerned citizens to help us reach those families."

Senators Tom Carper and Chris Coons and Congressman John Carney were joined together for the opening session of the day. All three agreed that hunger does not belong in the United States.

"We all have a stake in improving the health and wellbeing of our children, beginning with how we teach them how to eat and exercise and take responsibility for their own health," said U.S. Sen. Tom Carper. "The important work the partners in the Coalition are doing shows that combating hunger and providing good nutrition is a collective, community effort and one in which I'm proud to support."

"Thousands of Delawareans – men and women, many of whom work full time, as well as children – go to sleep at night unsure of where their next meal will come from," said Coons. "That is a moral challenge we must meet and a wrong we must right. Even in these times of tight budgets and program cuts, our values demand that we put a circle of protection around the most vulnerable of our neighbors. I will keep fighting to protect SNAP and other nutrition programs that Delawareans depend on."

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“Ending hunger in Delaware is an ambitious goal. But it can be done,” said Congressman Carney. “Children who go to school hungry struggle to learn, and adults constantly worried about their next meal can’t be healthy, productive members of our community. The new partnerships formed at this conference, and the existing ones strengthened today, are key to ensuring that all Delawareans have access to healthy, affordable food. I encourage anyone looking to contribute their time or resources to a worthy cause to consider Delaware organizations working to end hunger.”

A panel of public policy and government leaders also shared information on how the public can engage in the public discourse to address issues as they relate to hunger.

“Too often, we see the harm that comes to people who are hungry, whether it’s children who have trouble concentrating in school, or seniors who have to choose between medication and food,” said panel participant and Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Services Rita Landgraf. “During the economic downturn, we saw the demand for food assistance double in Delaware. The safety net helped to protect tens of thousands of people, many of whom faced periods of hunger for the first time in their lives. Today, the Anti-Hunger Coalition can help our state focus on the policies and coordinate the resources that will reduce hunger in Delaware and eventually eliminate it.”

AARP State Director Lucretia Young started the morning volunteerism panel by presenting the Food Bank of Delaware with a check for \$5,000 to help end hunger in the First State.

“On behalf of AARP and AARP Foundation, I am pleased to support the innovative work of the Food Bank of Delaware,” said Young. “They have had great success in alleviating hunger in a state where one in four utilize the food bank’s network of emergency food assistance. It is truly a national dilemma. Drive to End Hunger, a program of AARP Foundation, is a multi-year national effort to raise awareness and funds to help end hunger among people age 50+ in America. To date, Drive to End Hunger has donated more than 16.4 million meals and raised \$17.7 million through individual and corporate campaigns. AARP in Delaware looks forward to working with the Food Bank on this important issue.”

First Lady Carla Markell spoke about recruiting volunteer talent and the work she has done to heighten awareness of volunteering in Delaware. “Volunteering plays a critical role in the wellbeing of any community,” she said. “It is much easier to solve problems if we work together. Ending hunger is achievable, but all sectors – government, business, faith-based, education, community-based – must do it together.”

“The Ending Hunger Through Citizen Service initiative aims to help the community understand that fighting hunger means more than a single food drive or serving Thanksgiving meals at a soup kitchen, it takes year-round dedication and an effort to increase access to foods, educate families about available programs and using our collective skills, resources and political will to end hunger,” said Food Bank of Delaware President and CEO Patricia Beebe.

To learn more about the Delaware Anti-Hunger Coalition, please visit <http://deantihungercoalition.wordpress.com>.

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