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Foodlink urges public to help raise awareness during Hunger Action Month

Orange plate display a visual reminder of hunger's prevalence in our region

ROCHESTER – The sea of orange plates scattered across Foodlink's front lawn tells a story.

Each plate – 156 of them – represents 1,000 food insecure people in Foodlink's 10-county service area, which stretches from the lakeshore to the Pennsylvania border. That's 156,000 people, including nearly 53,000 children, who live in households that don't have reliable access to enough healthy food.

"Food insecurity can be found in every corner of our community," said Foodlink Executive Director Julia Tedesco. "While we understand that ending hunger is a year-round commitment, September provides us with a greater platform to raise our voice and draw attention to a critical issue that touches thousands of our neighbors."

Feeding America's annual awareness campaign, Hunger Action Month, takes place each September. It aims to mobilize the public across all 50 states in an effort to raise awareness of the fact that 42 million Americans, including 13 million children, are food insecure, according to the USDA.

"I've spent many days on the road this past year, visiting food banks, food pantries, and meal programs and meeting people who are facing hunger," said Diana Aviv, CEO of Feeding America. "I've seen firsthand the anguish that food insecurity and hunger can cause. It is always heartbreaking to meet a mother or father who fears that they will not be able to feed their children. They know that their children cannot reach their full potential if they don't have enough to eat."

September marks the 10th year the Feeding America network of food banks has organized this annual call to action. This year, the campaign will focus on the strong connections between hunger and health, and asks people to consider how it must feel to live with an empty stomach, which puts a healthy life and a promising future at risk.

Foodlink has already obtained a Hunger Action proclamation from Mayor Lovely Warren and Rochester City Council, and other local governments are expected to follow suit. Two major Foodlink events also take place in September. The **Festival of Food** (Sept. 18) is Foodlink’s annual fundraiser that attracts more than 1,000 people to the City of Rochester Public Market for a sampling of the region’s best food and drink. **Fill the Bus** (Sept. 8-23) is an annual food drive at Wegmans – in partnership with 13 WHAM ABC – that collects food for Foodlink’s Backpack Program, which helps alleviate childhood hunger.

Hunger Action Day, the second Thursday in September (Sept. 14), is a day when efforts across the country are focused for greater impact. Foodlink staff will wear orange on this day (and every Thursday throughout the month) to show our support and urges the public to do the same. There is also a way engage with the Feeding America network on social media through the “Empty Plate” campaign. To find out how, and to learn more about ways to engage with Foodlink throughout Hunger Action Month, visit www.foodlinkny.org.

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About Foodlink

Foodlink is a regional food hub and the Feeding America food bank serving Allegany, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates counties. Our operations alleviate food insecurity by distributing food to a network of human service agencies and target the root causes of hunger through our state-of-the-art commercial kitchen and dozens of food-related programs.

Last year, Foodlink distributed 17.4 million pounds of food, including 4.9 million pounds of produce. Foodlink’s nutrition educators empower people to make healthy choices and our food access programs provide new access points to nutritious food in underserved communities. Our innovative approach directly addresses diet-related health disparities related to food insecurity. Learn more about our mission to end hunger and to leverage the power of food to build a healthier community at www.foodlinkny.org.

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