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**HUNGER-FREE MINNESOTA LAUNCHES UNPRECEDENTED PROGRAM TO FIGHT HUNGER**

*Funding will sustainably add 100 million meals annually for Minnesotans*

**MINNEAPOLIS (June 7, 2011)** – Hunger-Free Minnesota launched a three-year initiative today with sights set on sustainably adding 100 million meals annually for hungry adults and children in the state. The organization was joined by corporations and community partners from across Minnesota that have pledged support. Hunger-Free Minnesota leaves the starting block with \$3 million in financial support, a significant start toward the \$20 million needed for phase one of the three-year target.

The Hunger-Free Minnesota plan outlines specific, high-impact initiatives that will expand existing programs and increase efficiencies within the emergency food system, the Minnesota Food Support Program and Child Nutrition Programs. Its success relies on a statewide network of diverse leaders to fight hunger locally and collaboratively.

Hunger in Minnesota has doubled in the last five years, affecting people in all parts of the state – urban, suburban and rural. One in 10 Minnesotans runs out of food resources before the end of every month, missing an average of 10 meals every 30 days. The impact of hunger reaches beyond those who are missing meals. Hunger-associated costs total more than \$1.2 billion annually in Minnesota.

“Hunger-Free Minnesota is generating new dollars to help address issues of hunger throughout the state,” said Ellie Lucas, chief campaign officer, Hunger-Free Minnesota. “Our plan focuses on enhancing existing programs and executing innovative solutions to close the gap in missed meals. The starting line and goals are clearly defined, and the initiatives measurable. We’re excited to announce that we’ve reached the first financial milestone toward our ultimate goal of \$20 million to support the first phase of this program.”

The formation of Hunger-Free Minnesota grew from efforts to more clearly define the scope of hunger in the state. [Five targeted studies](#) conducted between 2008 and 2011 helped to quantify the need for improved resources, the economic impact of hunger, barriers to access and the articulation of an end-goal. With initial support from Cargill and General Mills, Hunger-Free Minnesota worked with The Boston Consulting Group to develop an action plan that analyzed various strategies and determined those with potential for the greatest impact.

Founding partner Second Harvest Heartland has been behind the effort from the beginning. “Hunger-Free Minnesota is approaching the issue of hunger in a way that hasn’t been done before,” said Rob Zeaske, executive director, Second Harvest Heartland. “There is a lot of excitement about this, not just within our own state, but nationally. Other states recognize the unique and practical approach that Hunger-Free Minnesota is taking, and see the potential to replicate success in their states.”

Founding partners include all six Feeding America Food Banks in Minnesota (Channel One Food Bank in Rochester, Minn.; Great Plains Food Bank in Fargo, N.D., North Country Food Bank in Crookston, Minn.; Second Harvest North Central Food Bank in Grand Rapids, Minn.; Second Harvest Northern Lakes Food Bank in Duluth, Minn.; and Second Harvest Heartland in St. Paul, Minn.), Hunger Solutions Minnesota and the Greater Twin Cities United Way. Corporate partners that have committed their support to date include some of Minnesota’s most prominent, community-oriented corporations, including Cargill, General Mills, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, and a pledge to invest from the Greater Twin Cities United Way.

“Hunger is a complex problem that cannot be solved by one entity alone,” said Emery Koenig, senior vice president of Cargill. “Public-private partnerships can be a powerful force. As a food company, Cargill has an important role in fighting hunger in our communities around the world, including right here in Minnesota. We’re proud to support this unprecedented statewide effort.”

Hunger-Free Minnesota is a statewide initiative to fight hunger in our communities. It unites a coalition of corporations and community hunger-relief partners in a fight against the devastating and debilitating effects of hunger. For more information or to join the coalition for a Hunger-Free Minnesota, go to [www.hungerfreemn.org](http://www.hungerfreemn.org).

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