



To the Editor:

As we head into March, we at the Community FoodBank of New Jersey welcome not only the arrival of spring, but also National Nutrition Month. The Community FoodBank, the state's largest anti-hunger and anti-poverty organization, is keenly aware of the link between hunger and health, and is actively engaged in the effort to distribute more fresh, nutritious food to those in need. This is especially true for the 1 in 5 children in New Jersey facing hunger. The American Academy of Pediatrics states, "Health begins where children live, learn, and play. When families can't afford the basics in life, it negatively affects their health."

Among those we serve, 75 percent tell us they have purchased inexpensive, unhealthy food as a way to cope. Chronic illness is also a fact of life, with 57 percent having a household member with high blood pressure, and 28 percent having someone with diabetes. These tough realities are coupled with the fact that more than three-quarters of our clients have had to choose between paying for medicine or for food.

We are responding by getting more fruits and vegetables to those who need them most. Thanks to our generous donors, we increased our collection of produce by nearly 15 percent over the past year, to more than 11 million pounds. But with more than one million people in New Jersey – including 400,000 children – struggling with hunger, there is much work to be done.

Despite the widespread affluence in the Garden State, hunger can be found in every county and every Congressional District in New Jersey. This National Nutrition Month, we encourage everyone to learn more about the issues of hunger and health, and to take action to bring food, help and hope to our neighbors who are going without.

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