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Contact: Mark Cherrington, Director of Communications  
work: (860) 286 – 9999

## Number of Hungry People in Greater Hartford Drops for the First Time in Five Years

**National study finds improvement in region's situation**

Feeding America’s annual Map the Meal Gap study, a nationwide assessment of the state of food insecurity, was released today, and it finds that in Hartford and Tolland counties 137,480 people can’t be sure where their next meal is coming from, a decrease of 3,100 people compared to last year’s report—the first time the figure has dropped since the study began five years ago.

“Foodshare is very pleased to see this result,” said Mark Cherrington, Director of Communications for the region’s food bank. “It gives us hope that our new plan to address hunger on all fronts is working.” In 2013, the organization launched its Bridging the Gap plan, a community-wide effort to increase the amount of food available from all sources while also developing programs to build self-sufficiency, so fewer people need food assistance. And in 2014 the organization saw dramatic increases in those efforts. The number of volunteers increased by 60%, the number of people helped to apply for SNAP (food stamps) doubled, the amount of food coming from retail stores increased by 44% over 2012, and almost 100 of the organizations’ 300 partner programs were offering self-sufficiency services to clients.

“Though we’re encouraged about the direction of the number,” Cherrington said, “the number itself is still far too high. It means one out of every eight people in Hartford and Tolland counties is still at risk of hunger, and the overall number includes 42,830 children as well as seniors and working families. That is simply unacceptable. We have to reduce that number to zero, and to do that we need even more people participating in the effort.”

One way the organization is hoping to engage more community members is through the *Foodshare Walk Against Hunger*, taking place on May 3 in Hartford. The food bank relies on funding from this event to support Foodshare’s day to day work, and more than 4,000 people are expected to participate this year. You can visit [www.FoodshareWalk.org](http://www.FoodshareWalk.org) for more information.

*Map the Meal Gap 2015* is based on an analysis of statistics collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Census Bureau, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2013, the most recent year for which data is available. The study, commissioned by Feeding America, the national umbrella group for 200 food banks, is a detailed analysis of the nation’s food insecurity. An interactive map is available that allows viewers to explore the issue of hunger in Hartford and Tolland counties and across the country. The map, and full report, can be found online at [map.feedingamerica.org](http://map.feedingamerica.org).

“*Map the Meal Gap 2015* provides unique insight into the prevalence of food insecurity in each county and congressional district in our nation,” said Bob Aiken, CEO of Feeding America. “It will help policy makers and our elected officials understand the challenges they face in addressing hunger in the communities they serve.”

The study is supported by the Founding Sponsor Howard G. Buffett Foundation [as well as the](#) ConAgra Foods Foundation and Nielsen. The food price data and analysis was provided by Nielsen (NYSE: NLSN), a global provider of information and insights. The lead researcher is Dr. Craig Gundersen, professor of

Agricultural and Consumer Economics at the University of Illinois, executive director of the National Soybean Research Laboratory and member of Feeding America's Technical Advisory Group.

Keep up with all of Foodshare's latest news and updates by becoming a follower at [www.twitter.com/Foodshare](http://www.twitter.com/Foodshare).

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## About Foodshare

Foodshare is the food bank for Hartford and Tolland counties, and since 1982, we have sought to end hunger in our region. Last year, Foodshare distributed 12 million meals worth of food to some 300 food pantries, community kitchens, homeless shelters, and other partner programs. But even that huge amount of food only met one-third of the need. To bridge the gap between what is needed and what Foodshare can provide, the organization is involving the entire community in order to increase the amount of food available from all sources and to help people get back on their feet so fewer people need food.

In this way, we address the chronic underlying reasons why people are hungry, stemming from poverty, not just the immediate lack of food.

Working in partnership with other community leaders such as the United Way, End Hunger Connecticut! and 211 Infoline, Foodshare has the experience and is building the networks necessary to help make this vision a reality.

**Join the movement!** Our goal is to inspire community members, like you, to become personally involved in effective hunger solutions. Your gifts of time, talent, and financial support are vital to solving hunger—not just by feeding a hungry person today but by creating a future where hunger will not be tolerated.