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## **LIFE GETS HARDER FOR TEXAS PANHANDLE'S HUNGRY**

*According to Study, 14.6% of Residents of Texas Panhandle Struggle with Hunger*

**Amarillo, Texas – May 8, 2017** – High Plains Food Bank (HPFB) announced the release of *Map the Meal Gap 2017*, the latest report by Feeding America® on food insecurity and the cost of food at both the county and congressional district level. *Map the Meal Gap 2017* reveals that food insecurity exists in every county in the top 29 counties of the Texas Panhandle. Overall food insecurity ranges from a low of 7.8 percent of the population in Deaf Smith County up to 19.3 percent in Cottle County. The national average food insecurity rate across all counties is 14%.

The study also finds that people currently facing hunger are likely falling further behind as they continue to struggle to buy enough food to meet their needs. Food-insecure individuals now face, on average, a food budget shortfall of \$16.89 per person each week, up from \$16.41 last year.

HPFB Executive Director Zack Wilson shared, "Food insecurity remains an issue for one in seven of our neighbors -- especially in the southeast section of the Panhandle. More than ever before, it's important Texas Panhandle communities come together to support a growing number of seniors in our rural areas, to fight the effects of hunger."

High Plains Food Bank is one of 200 food banks in the Feeding America network that collectively provides food assistance to 46 million Americans struggling with hunger. HPFB distributed around 7.6 million pounds of food (over 6 million meals) to Texas Panhandle residents struggling with food insecurity in 2016. Feeding food-insecure residents healthy food is a priority for High Plains Food Bank, and approximately one-third of the total annual distribution in 2016 was made up of fresh produce. The food bank experienced a rise in the number of families being served monthly through feeding partner agencies, from between 8,000 to 9,000 families monthly to upwards of 9,500 families monthly toward the end of the year. In addition, HPFB offers a Direct Mobile Distribution (DMD) program to 9 of the 29 counties served, in order to meet the need for many families. In 2015, HPFB served an average of 1,466 clients monthly through a DMD where they receive 35-40 pound family food boxes. In 2016, that service number climbed to 1,731 monthly clients.



“It is disheartening to realize that millions of hardworking, low-income Americans are finding it increasingly difficult to feed themselves and their families at the same time that our economy is showing many signs of improvement, including a substantial decline in the number of people who are unemployed,” said Diana Aviv, CEO of Feeding America. “This study underscores the need for strong federal nutrition programs as well of the importance of charitable food assistance programs, especially the food pantries and meal programs served by the Feeding America network of food banks.”

*Map the Meal Gap 2017* uses data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and food price data and analysis provided by Nielsen (NYSE: [NLSN](#)), a global provider of information and insights. The study is supported by founding sponsor [The Howard G. Buffett Foundation](#), [Conagra Brands Foundation](#) and [Nielsen](#).

#### Key Local Findings:

- Food insecurity among children in the Texas Panhandle is 23.5% or 30,160 children under the age of 18.
- Food insecurity remains higher (17% and above), in the South East quadrant of Texas Panhandle.
- Cost of an average meal in our service area is \$2.96. The annual meal gap for our service area is 12,509,200. \*The annual meal gap represents the following formula:  
***Annual dollars food insecure persons report needing to meet their food needs in this area / Average cost of a meal for food secure individuals in the U.S.***

Dr. Craig Gundersen, Professor of Agricultural and Consumer Economics at the University of Illinois, Executive Director of the National Soybean Research Laboratory and a member of Feeding America's Technical Advisory Group is the lead researcher of *Map the Meal Gap 2017*.

A summary of the findings, an interactive map of the United States, and the full report are available at [map.feedingamerica.org](http://map.feedingamerica.org).

Join the conversation about *Map the Meal Gap 2017* on Twitter using [#MealGap](#).

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#### **About High Plains Food Bank**

*The High Plains Food Bank is a charitable food and nutritional education/promotion organization that distributes food to over 179 non-profit agencies throughout 29 counties of the Texas Panhandle. In 2016, the food bank distributed over 7.6 million pounds of food (of which over 2 million pounds was fresh produce).*

#### **About Feeding America**

Feeding America is a nationwide network of 200 food banks that leads the fight against hunger in the United States. Together, we provide food to more than 46 million people through food pantries and meal programs in communities throughout America. Feeding America also supports programs that improve food security among the people we serve; educates the public about the problem of hunger; and advocates for legislation that protects people from going hungry. Individuals, charities, businesses and government all have a role in ending hunger. Donate. Volunteer. Advocate. Educate. Together we can solve hunger. Visit <http://www.feedingamerica.org/>. Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/FeedingAmerica](http://www.facebook.com/FeedingAmerica) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/FeedingAmerica](http://www.twitter.com/FeedingAmerica).