



Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County, Inc.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CEDA RECOGNIZES ‘HUNGER ACTION MONTH’
AS DEMAND FOR BASIC FOOD SUPPLIES INCREASE**

Local food pantries see increase among middle-class residents in need of assistance

CHICAGO—(Sept. 4, 2008) - People from as far as Florida were in Chicago last Thursday to attend the Community Action Partnership (CAP) conference and join the Community Economic Development Association of Cook County’s (CEDA) “Will Run for Food” 3k Walk/Run event in recognition of “Hunger Action Month.” The event was CEDA’s effort to help raise awareness about the dire need to donate money and perishable food products to local food banks. More than 140 people ran, walked and jogged along Lake Shore Drive to show support for organizations like CEDA that provide free basic foods to people in need.

CEDA is among thousands of community-focused organizations across the country that are experiencing an increase in demand at food banks, while suffering from a steady decline in donations that are needed to sustain food drive programs. According to Feeding America (Formerly America’s Second Harvest), a national charitable hunger-relief organization based in Chicago, responsible for creating the Hunger Action Month initiative, the demand at food banks nationally is up nearly 20 percent compared to the same time last year. Rising prices in gas, groceries and energy have been attributed to the increase in demand.

“The economic hardships are no longer limited to low-income families and the working-poor. As a result, middle-class families are now turning to services that were not originally intended to address their needs,” said Robert L. Wharton, president and CEO of CEDA. “Everyone is seeking some form of relief and as a community-focused organization we must be prepared to meet the ever changing needs of our communities.

James Shatkus, food connection coordinator at CEDA’s Northwest Self-Help Center, in Mt. Prospect, said the center, which serves 2500 individuals annually, has experienced an increase in both the demand and number of middle-class families seeking help.

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“There’s definitely been a rise in middle-income families that’s come to the center,” said Shatkus. “From people in real estate who have suffered from the bad economy to people who have their own businesses and had to downsize, everybody is affected.”

CEDA is a member of CAP, the national membership organization of 1,100 local and state Community Action Agencies, which held their annual convention in Chicago from August 26-29. CAP President Don Mathis said the 3k event helped to raise awareness of issues that community agencies advocate.

“The event in Chicago was a tremendous addition to our convention,” said Mathis. “It gave attendees from out of town a greater appreciation of Chicago and it was consistent with our values of promoting healthier living and working to serve those who are less fortunate.”

CEDA operates two food pantries in suburban Cook County and will use donations from the event to supply five food banks throughout Chicago including the Greater Chicago Food Depository, North Side Anti-Hunger Network and the Oak Park/River Forest Food Pantry.

CEDA is a nonprofit community action agency serving more than 375,000 individuals annually. A nationally acclaimed leader in the quest to eliminate poverty, CEDA operates many innovative, highly effective family and community-based programs throughout Cook County.

Donations can be made by contacting the following:

CEDA Food Pantry

12549 S. Ashland Ave.
Calumet Park, IL
708-371-0308

CEDA Northwest Self-help Center

1300 Northwest Highway
Mount Prospect, IL
847-392-2332

Greater Chicago Depository

Call 773-843-2657

Oak Park/Forest Park Food Pantry (Located in the basement)

First United Church of Oak Park
848 Lake Street
Oak Park, IL

North Side Anti-Hunger Network

773-427-1083

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