

Help a Hungry Senior Connect to SNAP during Hunger Action Month

Good nutrition can lead to a better quality of life for older adults

RALEIGH, NC (September 18, 2015) - Kathy is a 76-year-old independent woman. She owns her home and car, but she struggles to pay the bills and afford nutritious food each week. As a result, she lost 25 pounds in the last year. Luckily, she found help before her health suffered. A community organization helped Kathy apply for and receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Kathy quickly regained 10 pounds and feels better than she has in years.

There are many reasons older adults apply for SNAP: eating better, health, family, and financial security. Using SNAP to pay for nutritious food can make a huge impact on an older adult's ability to manage a chronic condition and stay independent. During Hunger Action Month in September, the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina and the National Council on Aging (NCOA) encourage older adults and their caregivers to see if SNAP could help them.

Three in five eligible seniors do not participate in SNAP. While several factors contribute to the low participation rate, lack of understanding about the program is a significant barrier.

"For many older adults, mobility, technology, and the stigma attached to applying for SNAP create obstacles," said Lura Barber, Director of NCOA Hunger Initiatives. "Talking to your loved ones and the older adults in your community about SNAP could inspire them and put us well on our way to eradicating senior hunger."

The Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina is part of NCOA's national Senior SNAP Enrollment Initiative, which is working to find and enroll more eligible seniors into SNAP. Based on this work, NCOA has developed a *Seniors & SNAP Best Practices Handbook* that outlines effective enrollment strategies. The handbook is available to download at ncoa.org/SNAPHandbook.

"Working together, we can help the older adults we care about find if they are eligible for benefits to afford nutritious food," said Brad Blackwell, Food & Nutrition Services Program Supervisor for the Food Bank. "Encourage them to do it, not just for their health, but for all of the ways better nutrition will enrich their lives."

To find North Carolina's SNAP application, please visit BenefitsCheckUp.org/getSNAP. Or to get personal, one-on-one help applying for SNAP, please contact the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina at 1-800-358-8189 or visit threesquaresforcenc.org

To help spread the word about seniors and SNAP during Hunger Action Month in September, please use the hashtag #getSNAP on social media.

About NCOA

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) is a respected national leader and trusted partner to help people aged 60+ meet the challenges of aging. Our mission is to improve the lives of millions of older adults, especially those who are struggling. Through innovative community programs and services, online help, and advocacy, NCOA is partnering with nonprofit organizations, government, and business to improve the health and economic security of 10 million older adults by 2020. Learn more at ncoa.org and @NCOAging.

About the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina

The Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina is a nonprofit organization that has provided food for people at risk of hunger in 34 counties in central and eastern North Carolina for more than 30 years. The Food Bank serves a network of more than 800 partner agencies such as soup kitchens, food pantries, shelters, and programs for children and adults through warehouses in Durham, Greenville, New Bern, Raleigh, the Sandhills (Southern Pines), and Wilmington. In fiscal year 2014-2015, the Food Bank distributed more than 57 million pounds of food and non-food essentials through these agencies. Sadly, hunger remains a serious problem in central and eastern North Carolina. In these counties, nearly 650,000 people struggle to access nutritious and adequate amounts of food necessary for an active and healthy life. www.foodbankcenc.org.

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