



National Center for Public Research

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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NATIONAL CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS FOOD ACCESS AND INSECURITY ISSUES IN BOSTON

National Center for Public Research Names September Food Desert Awareness Month

BOSTON, MA, September 17, 2009 – The National Center for Public Research (NCforPR) has declared September National Food Desert Awareness Month in response to the urgent issue of food imbalance and its impact on health outcomes in communities across the United States. A food desert is a large geographic area with no or distant grocery stores. Often, food deserts have an imbalance of food choice, meaning an abundance of nearby fringe food such as fast food, convenience stores, and liquor stores rather than healthy and nutritious fresh fruit and vegetables.

Working with partners in three cities, Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles, the NCforPR is raising awareness about food access, insecurity and the impact on health outcomes. Research shows that residents living in food deserts suffer worse diet-related health outcomes, including diabetes, cancer, obesity, heart disease, and premature death. In June of 2009, the United States Department of Agriculture conducted the first national study of the prevalence of food deserts nationally, finding that 23.5 million people live in food desert areas.

In Boston, the NCforPR is hosting a poster contest for young people to represent healthy foods and healthy neighborhoods. Various prizes donated by Walgreens will be awarded in three separate age categories. Winners will also be profiled at www.fooddesertmonth.org. NCforPR partners include: MIT, Department of Urban Studies and Planning; Harvard School of Public Health, Department of Society, Human Development, and Health; Northeastern University, Institute on Urban Health Research, and the Interdisciplinary Consortium on Urban Planning and Public Health.

Also in honor of National Food Desert Awareness Month, the Boston Food Desert Forum survey report was released. The survey was conducted in advance of a May 2009 community forum entitled: *From Food Desert to Food Oasis: Identifying Challenges and Solutions*. The forum acknowledged that many talented and energized individuals and organizations are already making great strides at the community level, championing many local solutions that take many distinct forms.

Mari Gallagher, President of the National Center for Public Research and the researcher responsible for the first measure for food imbalance, said, “Communities cannot make some of the most basic choices – such as a nutritious apple instead of French fries – if they simply do not exist. National Food Desert Awareness Month is about highlighting access issues and the steps communities around the country are taking to restore food balance in their neighborhoods.”

To learn more about National Food Desert Awareness Month, events, and partners visit www.fooddesertmonth.org and www.twitter.com/FoodDesert.

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