



National Center for Public Research

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## NATIONAL CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS FOOD ACCESS AND INSECURITY ISSUES IN CHICAGO

### National Center for Public Research Names September Food Desert Awareness Month

CHICAGO, IL, 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 Chicago, 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](http://www.fooddesertmonth.org).

All types of communities are impacted by food access issues. Areas as diverse as Chicago, Louisville, Detroit, and New York City, all have research documenting food imbalance areas, and the corresponding negative health outcomes. In June of 2009, the United States 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 Chicago, it is estimated that 609,034 people, or 21.5% percent of the population, live in food deserts or food imbalance areas. The majority of these individuals are African Americans, with as many as 200,000 children and 100,000 single mothers.

***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](http://www.fooddesertmonth.org) and [www.twitter.com/FoodDesert](http://www.twitter.com/FoodDesert).

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