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For Immediate Release

Governor's Hunger Summit Seeks Solutions to End Hunger and Food Insecurity in New Mexico

Santa Fe, Oct. 15, 2003 - The first-ever governor's "Hunger Summit" begins tomorrow with the goal of finding ways to reduce hunger and food insecurity for vulnerable families in New Mexico. Headed by the Human Services Department (HSD) and the New Mexico Department of Agriculture the day-and-a-half summit will take place at the Albuquerque Marriot Pyramid North Hotel (I-25 and Paseo Del Norte) beginning at 11:30 a.m. It will be held in conjunction with World Food Day, also tomorrow.

"We welcome this opportunity and challenge, and look forward to hearing from agencies that run food programs so that collectively we can find better ways to decrease hunger and improve food nutrition," said Pamela Hyde, HSD secretary. The HSD administers the Food Stamp Program that provides food assistance to over 200,000 people each month in New Mexico. However, that is only 66 percent of those eligible. HSD has begun outreach efforts to see that figure increase to 80 percent. HSD also supports the School Lunch Program by providing millions of pounds of USDA food to schools each year.

Over 300 people from agencies including the Department of Health, Children Youth and Families, State Agency on Aging and the Department of Education, and non-profit organizations that administer food aid programs throughout the state are expected to attend the conference. Following introductions, Lieut. Gov. Diane Denish will speak on hunger in New Mexico, then a ten-minute video presentation "The Faces of Hunger in New Mexico", narrated and hosted by actor Wes Studi will be shown and followed by keynote speaker Loretta Schwartz-Nobel, author of "Starving in the Shadows of Plenty."

The Hunger Summit's focus will be on creating a plan of action for reducing hunger in New Mexico, improving health and nutrition awareness and on finding ways to better coordinate access to food assistance programs in the largely rural state.

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