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For Immediate Release

Human Services Department Outreach to Fight Hunger and Food Insecurity in Rio Arriba County

Staff to enroll eligible families for Food Stamp Program tomorrow in Española

Santa Fe, October 7, 2005 – The Human Services Department (HSD) is kicking off its Food Stamp Outreach efforts for Rio Arriba County tomorrow in Española during the *Hands Across Culture Youth Conference*.

Last year, New Mexico moved from first to fifth in the nation for food insecurity, and from third to thirteenth for hunger (in both cases, a higher ranking is better). “The Food Stamp Program is the number one defense in fighting hunger and food insecurity in New Mexico,” said Katie Falls, HSD Income Support Division (ISD) Director.

Over the past 12 months, the number of New Mexicans participating in the program has increased by nearly 10,000 to 93,000. “However, we recognize there are still hundreds of families in the state that are qualified for the program, just not enrolled,” said Falls.

In Rio Arriba County, 2,776 families are participating in the Food Stamp Program, which can help families make ends meet by supplementing their grocery expenses each month. For example, a family of three earning \$1,744 per month can qualify for food stamps. The maximum amount of food stamp benefits a family this size could receive is \$399 per month.

Staff of the Española ISD office will be on hand at Saturday’s conference from 12 noon to 6 p.m. to enroll eligible families in the program. Families can also sign up to win a bag of groceries and other prizes.

The *Hands across Culture Youth Conference* is being held at Valdez Park in Española.

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