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For Immediate Release

Food Stamp Outreach Comes to Las Vegas

(Project focuses on increased food stamp participation and healthier meals for kids)

Santa Fe, New Mexico July 15, 2005 – The New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) are teaming up to help people in the Las Vegas area who are eligible for food stamps to enroll in the program.

Last year, New Mexico moved from first in the nation for food insecurity to fifth, and from third for hunger to thirteenth. “The Food Stamp Program is the number one defense in fighting hunger and food insecurity in New Mexico,” said Katie Falls, Director of the HSD Income Support Division. Over the past 12 months, the number of New Mexicans participating in the program has increased by nearly 10,000 to 93,000.

Representatives from the Las Vegas Income Support Division (ISD) office and the USDA will be at Lowe’s Super Save (2400 7th Street) on Monday, July 18, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, July 19, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and on Wednesday, July 20th, from 8:00 a.m. until noon. Food stamp applications will be available and staff will help potential food stamp participants, complete applications and answer questions about the Food Stamp Program.

In San Miguel County, 2,624 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 \$1,698 per month can qualify for food stamps. The maximum amount of food stamp benefits a family this size could receive is \$393 per month.

This food stamp outreach effort in Las Vegas is just one of many initiatives undertaken by the department to get more New Mexico families eligible for the program on the program. “We know there are thousands of New Mexico families that are eligible for food stamps but not participating,” said Falls. “We hope this outreach effort, at a local grocery store, will help more eligible families get the benefits they deserve and put food on their tables”

Other benefits of food stamps are they can provide more nutritious meals for children, helping to reduce obesity and they help the overall economy in small communities like Las Vegas. One estimate shows that every food stamp dollar spent locally helps generate another dollar for the economy. In New Mexico, \$250 million dollars in the 100 percent federally-funded program helped some 93,000 families put food on their tables each month, while also helping to support the state’s agricultural and retail food industry. In San Miguel County, food stamps bring about \$7 million to the local economy each year.

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