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For Immediate Release

New Mexico Task Force to End Hunger Holds World Food Day Conference

October 16 Proclaimed World Food Day in New Mexico

Santa Fe, October 12, 2007 – To bring awareness to both worldwide hunger and the specific challenges faced in New Mexico, the NM Task Force to End Hunger and other public and private agencies are sponsoring a World Food Day Conference on Tuesday, Oct. 16. This year's conference, "Climate: Changes, Challenges and Consequences" will be in Albuquerque at the University of New Mexico's Student Union Building, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

This year's conference focuses on the links between climate change and world hunger and poverty, and new strategies to end world hunger. The most recent (November 2006) Household and Food Security released by the Economic Research Service of the USDA found that in 2005, 11 percent of U.S. households were "food insecure," a slight improvement from 2004. Food insecurity means a family has no idea where their next meal is coming from. Although this is good news for the U.S., worldwide hunger remains a huge problem with over 800 million people suffering from hunger and malnutrition – among these are 200 million children.

Governor Bill Richardson, again this year, has shown his support for World Food Day by signing a proclamation thanking farmers and local communities for their local efforts to end hunger at home and abroad. The Governor's 2007 World Food Day Proclamation will be read at the conference by Marisol Atkins, Deputy Secretary of the state's Children, Youth and Families Department.

"New to the 2007 New Mexico World Food Day conference is the participation of several UNM student groups who are interested in learning more about current and potential hunger problems here and abroad," said Mary Oleske, who represents the Human Services Department (HSD) on the New Mexico Task Force to End Hunger. "We remain committed to ending hunger and food insecurity in this state, as well as providing more nutritious food to the low-income families we serve day-in and day-out."

The HSD continues to support the state's Emergency Food Assistance and School Lunch programs by providing 1.5 million and 5 million pounds of surplus USDA food to the Association of Food Banks and to Public Schools, respectively. Other HSD hunger-fighting and nutrition-related initiatives begun this year include doubling the minimum Food Stamp payment to most senior citizens and the disabled, from \$10 to \$20 each month and by working with farmers' markets to allow food stamp participants to directly purchase locally-grown fruits and vegetables from them using their Electronic Benefits Transfer card.

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