



DREXEL UNIVERSITY

Center for

# Hunger-Free Communities

The Center for **Hunger-Free Communities**, founded in 2004, is a research, advocacy and policy center of Drexel University School of Public Health that engages in multi-faceted research and action with the goal of developing innovative, empirically-tested solutions to the challenges of hunger and economic insecurity. Hunger is a product of low wages, joblessness, poor housing, violence and lack of educational opportunities. We work across the nation and in Philadelphia's communities to ensure policies and programs help treat and prevent hunger.

## Our Mission and Vision

The Center works with partners from public and private organizations, universities and the community to:

- Find science-based solutions to hunger and economic insecurity;
- Report on and monitor the health consequences of poverty and hunger;
- Engage those who have experienced poverty as full partners in developing research, programs and policies that work;
- Establish and support opportunities for an on-going national dialogue on poverty.

We envision a world where children born today will inherit a nation free from hunger; a nation where all members of the community partner to keep families economically secure; and a nation where all people have an equal voice in policies that affect their lives.

## Our Core Activities

In affiliation with the Drexel University School of Public Health, the Center for Hunger-Free Communities brings together the work of the following programs:

- **Witnesses to Hunger**, a groundbreaking research and advocacy project featuring the voices and photography of parents and caregivers of young children who have experienced hunger and poverty firsthand. The photographs, along with the parent's life stories, have been exhibited throughout the country, offering living testimony to the need for legislation that eliminates poverty and hunger in the United States. The parents also work to encourage more civic engagement in their own communities and in neighborhoods across the country. Project sites include: Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore and Camden.
- **Children's HealthWatch**, a multi-site research effort that is assessing how public policy affects the food security, development and health of very young children. The Center for Hunger-Free Communities coordinates the Philadelphia site of Children's HealthWatch, which includes pediatricians and public health researchers who monitor child health from the front lines of pediatric care and use their research to inform policy.
- **Microfinance/TANF Demonstration Project** is an emerging research study that develops a new model of public benefits and microfinance that will leverage participants' own strengths to become financially self-sufficient. The project aims to build financial, social and human capital through three program components: 1) asset-building through matched savings, 2) financial literacy education and 3) trauma-informed peer support groups. In partnership with the PA's Department of Public Welfare, the project will run for five years starting January 2014.

# Witnesses to Hunger

**Witnesses to Hunger** is a participatory advocacy project of the Center for Hunger-Free Communities, which partners with the real experts on hunger – the parents and caregivers of young children who have first-hand experience with hunger and poverty. The people of Witnesses to Hunger share their expertise and create change through their roles as **photographers, educators and advocates, and advisors.**

All too often, policies and programs to address hunger and poverty are created without the participation of the people who are most affected. Witnesses to Hunger seeks to increase the participation and inclusion of low-income community members in the development of programs and policies to address hunger and poverty in the United States.

Witnesses to Hunger incorporates three key activities:

## **Photography:**

Participants in Witnesses to Hunger take photographs to show the human experience of hunger and poverty and their ideas for change.



## **Education and Advocacy:**

They speak out about their own experiences with hunger and poverty to educate the public, the media, and policymakers, and to improve policies and programs on a local, state, and national level.



## **Advisory:**

They advise organizations by sharing their personal experiences, connections, and stories in order to improve programs and advocacy for those who experience hunger and poverty.



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### For More Information:

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