

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LOAVES & FISHES SET TO ELEVATE CHILDHOOD HUNGER TO A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS **Renowned Panel of Experts to Address Growing Public Issue during Community Symposium**

NAPERVILLE, Ill., March 23, 2015 – Child hunger and food insecurity are growing concerns nationwide, especially in suburban areas where many low-income families have relocated in search of employment, affordable housing and better schools. Last year alone, [Loaves & Fishes Community Services](#) provided nutrition to nearly 10,000 children in DuPage County, which represents 25 percent of food insecure children in the area, according to [Feeding America](#). To increase awareness of the detrimental and long-term impacts of hunger on children, their families, and the overall community, Loaves & Fishes will host “**Spotlight on Child Hunger**” on Friday, April 17, 2015 at Central DuPage Hospital in Winfield, IL.

“Our goal with this community symposium is to elevate food insecurity as a public health crisis and to build a greater understanding of how fundamental proper nutrition is to early childhood development and education,” explained Megan Selck, interim president and CEO of Loaves & Fishes Community Services, a nationally recognized anti-poverty and food assistance organization based in Naperville, IL. “We have partnered with some of the country’s foremost experts on this subject and are pleased to be able to bring their voices and insights together at such a critical time.”

In a study of children’s health and development, Dr. John Cook and Dr. Deborah Frank, professors in the Department of Pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine, linked several adverse impacts to food insecurity in children, such as harmful growth problems (stunting, wasting, structural and system anomalies), compromised immune systems, and energy deficits. These effects of malnutrition then follow children into adulthood, thus creating expensive health and productivity challenges affecting the entire community.

“Creating the right conditions for early childhood development is far more effective, and cost efficient, than addressing problems at a later age,” noted Dr. Cook. “These initial impacts can become long-term complications as the child enters adulthood, which can result in higher costs for remedial education, clinical treatment, crime, lost productivity, and ineffective workforce development. If we want to be prosperous, and I think everyone does, we need to make sure our children have enough of the right kinds of food to eat.”

In response, Loaves & Fishes seeks to elevate child hunger to a public health crisis and invites the community to a vital and enlightening symposium, made possible through the generous support of the Gustafson Family Foundation, the DuPage Community Foundation and Northwestern Medicine. This free symposium will be held from 7:30-11 a.m. at Central DuPage Hospital (25 N. Winfield Rd. in Winfield) and will include a keynote address by Dr. Cook, who will discuss his research findings to increase awareness of this pressing issue. In addition to his work at Boston University, Dr. Cook is a principal investigator at Children’s HealthWatch, a network of pediatricians, public health researchers, and children’s health and policy experts committed to improving children’s health in America. Prior to joining Children’s HealthWatch, Dr. Cook was the Research Director at the Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy at Tufts University of Nutrition Science and Policy.

His presentation will be followed by an interactive discussion featuring a panel of renowned regional and local experts, including: **Dr. Theresa Hawley**, Illinois Governor's Office on Early Childhood Development; **Dr. Jennifer McNulty**, Medical Director of Pediatric Emergency Medicine and Pediatrics at Edward Hospital; and **Dr. Linda Van Horn**, Northwestern Comprehensive Center on Obesity at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. The panel discussion will be moderated by **Dr. Sandy Goldberg**, clinical nutritionist and Emmy Award-winning on-air Health and Nutrition Contributor for NBC5 Chicago.

A continental breakfast will be provided before the symposium, and Central DuPage Hospital will provide complimentary valet parking for all guests. Continuing Education Unit credits are available to attendees. Registration is required and can be completed at www.loaves-fishes.org. Space is limited.

Loaves & Fishes is located at 1871 High Grove Lane, Naperville and provides multi-faceted programs, such as job search support, food assistance, skill-based classes and public benefit assistance, to low-income, west suburban residents. Learn more about getting help, making a donation, or volunteering at <http://www.loaves-fishes.org>.

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