



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Nicole Williams, Communications & Public Relations Manager, Community FoodBank of New Jersey  
[nwilliams@cfbnj.org](mailto:nwilliams@cfbnj.org) / 732-798-5213

COMMUNITY FOODBANK OF NEW JERSEY, MERCER STREET FRIENDS, AND NORWESCAP ANNOUNCE \$2 MILLION  
INVESTMENT IN NETWORK CAPACITY

*Grants will enable food pantries and soup kitchens to serve more people in need during a COVID-19 winter and beyond*

HILLSIDE, NJ—February 10, 2021

The Community FoodBank of New Jersey (CFBNJ), Mercer Street Friends, and Norwescap today announced a \$2 million commitment to fund food pantries and soup kitchens within their collective 15-county service area. Grants will be awarded to help community organizations sustain their operations through a difficult winter and expand their capabilities to respond to the dramatic surge in need due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Round One of this Network Investment Initiative has been launched in collaboration with the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund's Endurance Grants program. The remaining funds will be given out via the food banks' own request for proposals process. Distribution of grant funds to selected organizations will be facilitated by the Community Foundation of New Jersey.

"Our partner organizations are absolutely vital to CFBNJ's mission delivery. Without their tireless efforts as the boots on the ground in the fight against hunger, we could not operate efficiently or effectively," said Carlos Rodriguez, President & CEO of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey. "This financial commitment to network capacity is just the beginning of our multi-year plan to meet their most urgent needs of the moment and to ensure our shared future."

For Atlantic, Bergen, Cape May, Cumberland, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, and Union counties, funds will be awarded by CFBNJ. For Mercer County, grants will be administered by Mercer Street Friends, and in Hunterdon, Sussex, and Warren Counties, grants will be administered by Norwescap.

"As the Food Bank for Mercer County, Mercer Street Friends is proud of our many partner organizations that have stepped up their efforts to battle food insecurity during this pandemic," said Mercer Street Friends CEO Bernie Flynn. "We are pleased to participate in this program to help small and medium sized pantries continue their critically important work."

"Norwescap is excited for this opportunity to help build the capacity of our nonprofit partners to reach more people and provide much needed support at this critical time," said Mark Valli, CEO of NORWESCAP.

The initiative begins as New Jersey has seen an estimated 56% increase in food insecurity due to the pandemic, a spike larger than the increases nationally and in neighboring states. At the same time, food banks' partner organizations are struggling to serve their communities at a time when they are most needed, whether they need equipment to make outdoor food distribution possible in winter, additional refrigeration to store perishable food, or an infusion of funds to address rising demand. The current food insecurity crisis is expected to outlast the pandemic, and about 82% of New Jersey food pantries surveyed by the David Tepper Charitable Foundation anticipate a rise in demand for emergency food over the next three months.

CFBNJ, Mercer Street Friends, and Norwescap invite proposals from their existing network partners for grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000. While the initiative will prioritize small-to-medium-sized food pantries and soup kitchens (operating budget less than \$500,000), applications are welcome from any network partner in need of support. Eligible expenses include household and hygiene items for clients, winterization expenses, capacity expenses, and emergency operating needs.

CFBNJ, Mercer Street Friends, and Norwescap partner organizations interested in applying for one of these grants should visit [cfbnj.org/networkinvestment](https://cfbnj.org/networkinvestment) for more information.

Proposals are due by February 19, and organizations will be notified of their awards by March 5. Virtual technical support webinars will be offered on February 12 and 16 for organizations requiring assistance with their applications. A recording of these webinars will be posted on [cfbnj.org/networkinvestment](https://cfbnj.org/networkinvestment).

##

#### **ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FOODBANK OF NEW JERSEY**

*[The Community FoodBank of New Jersey \(CFBNJ\)](https://cfbnj.org), a member of Feeding America®, has been delivering food, help and hope across the state for 45 years. Last year, CFBNJ provided nutritious food for over 66 million meals through its network of more than 1,000 community partners including pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, mobile pantries, and child and senior feeding programs throughout the 15 New Jersey counties it serves. For our hungry neighbors, the Community FoodBank of New Jersey is the powerful agent of change that fills the emptiness caused by hunger and provides resources that are essential to earning a sustainable living.*

#### **ABOUT MERCER STREET FRIENDS**

*As a Quaker-affiliated, nonsectarian 501(c)(3) organization, Mercer Street Friends is dedicated to nourishing minds and bodies, empowering families and communities by providing comprehensive programs to address poverty and the physical and emotional trauma it creates for children, families and the community. Our programs focus on: food, families and education.*

*As the primary source of government and privately donated food, Mercer Street Friends Food Bank leads the community response to hunger in Mercer County. In 2020, the Food Bank channeled more than 5.5 million pounds of food to a network of more than 100 food pantries, shelters, school districts, soup kitchens, meal sites, senior centers, programs for the disabled and low-income housing sites. Throughout the year, Mercer Street Friends served over 100,000 individuals, providing 50,000 weekend Community Food Bags, totaling 800,000 weekend meals to families throughout the County.*

#### **ABOUT NORWESCAP**

*Norwescap provides vital and life-sustaining services to over 30,000 individuals and families in need in Northwest New Jersey. Our programs include strategies that address the critical areas of education, health and wellness, employment, housing, volunteerism and financial empowerment. Since our inception, we have been dedicated to achieving the mission of creating opportunities to transform lives through innovative programs and partnerships. For more information, please visit [www.norwescap.org](https://www.norwescap.org).*