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**Weekend Meals for Food Insecure Students in Trenton Packed by
Superintendent James Earle and Mayor Reed Gusciora**

Starbucks Provides \$100,000 Grant to Mercer Street Friends and Community FoodBank of New Jersey To Support Send
Hunger Packing Program

*Equitable food access grant will help ensure BIPOC students will have nutritious weekend meals, helping to remove
hunger as a learning barrier*

HILLSIDE, NJ—January 27, 2021

Earlier today, Trenton Superintendent James Earle and Mayor Reed Gusciora along with Mercer Street Friends and the Community FoodBank of New Jersey (CFBNJ) teamed up to pack hundreds of meals for students in need at the Starbucks Trenton Community store. The food will be distributed through Mercer Street Friends' Send Hunger Packing program, which helps feed food insecure students over the weekend, when they lack access to school meals.

The service event was held to celebrate a \$100,000 grant provided by Starbucks as part of their \$1.7 million commitment to Feeding America food banks, in support of efforts to increase access to nutritious food among households with individuals who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in communities experiencing high food insecurity rates. The support will be used to fund Send Hunger Packing in Trenton, where bags provided through the program contain healthy, kid-friendly foods, such as cereal, oatmeal, peanut butter, jelly, juice boxes, and more.

"I learned the value of the Send Hunger Packing program during my time in the West Windsor Plainsboro School District and am so pleased with the comprehensive provision of weekend meals provided by Mercer Street Friends to our students in Trenton," said Trenton Superintendent James Earle, "the wonderful support of Starbucks, Feeding America and the Community Food Bank of New Jersey to help ensure that our students have access to nutritious meals each and every day is critical to their health and well-being." Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora added, "We are thrilled to have Starbucks so engaged in the Trenton Community and this generous grant dedicated to the Send Hunger Packing Program is another example of their commitment to our children and their families."

"The Send Hunger Packing Program is a labor of love for Mercer Street Friends and has expanded significantly through the leadership of Food Bank Director James "Butter" Allen. That expansion would not have been possible without partners like Starbucks," said Bernie Flynn, CEO of Mercer Street Friends.

"Send Hunger Packing is a signature Mercer Street Friends program," said Butter Allen. "When the pandemic hit in March 2020 and schools went virtual, we converted individual student Send Hunger Packing bags containing four weekend meals, to Community Food Bags designed to provide 16 meals for the entire family. Now that schools are back in person, Send Hunger Packing meals bags are back. Service has expanded in Trenton from 5 schools pre-pandemic providing 450 meal bags to students, to 11 schools with more than 1,200 Trenton students receiving Send Hunger Packing meal bags each Friday. Plus Community Food Bags continue to be available to families in need as well."

Nationwide, people of color are more likely to live in food insecure households, Native Americans by 2.9 times, Black people by 2.4 times, and Latinos by two times, according to Feeding America. The pandemic and its economic effects have only widened this gap. With this in mind, food banks that received equitable food access grants from Starbucks were identified based on the locations of Starbucks Community Stores, which are committed to economic development and opportunity in historically under-resourced communities.

“For the last 50 years and still today, Starbucks believes it is our role and responsibility to help strengthen the communities we serve, and in partnership with Feeding America and its member food banks, we are tackling hunger with a focus on equity,” said Camille Hymes, vice president of community impact at Starbucks. “The equitable food access grants are a unique opportunity to combine efforts with our Community Stores across the country, which are specifically designed to support historically under-resourced communities through local partnerships and economic opportunity, to increase access to nutritious food for people that need it most.”

“We at CFBNJ and Mercer Street Friends are working every day to address the disparities that people of color face in our communities,” said Carlos Rodriguez, President & CEO of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey. “Support from partners like Starbucks is meaningful as we tackle hunger together with a focus on equity, helping our BIPOC neighbors to lead healthy and active lives.”

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ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FOODBANK OF NEW JERSEY

[The Community FoodBank of New Jersey \(CFBNJ\)](#), a member of Feeding America®, has been delivering food, help and hope across the state for more than 45 years. Last year, CFBNJ provided nutritious food for over 85 million meals through its network of more than 800 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. The Food Bank works with 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. Mercer Street Friends serves over 100,000 individuals, and has provided nearly 2 million meals since March 2020 through the Community Food Bag and Send Hunger Packing initiatives.