**The Faces of Food Insecurity & Hunger**

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC) created the National Day of Service (NDS) as a national public awareness day about an important domestic issue that impacts communities nationwide. The inaugural NDS on September 30, 2023, turned out more than 700 GFWC clubs are performing a Community Service Project (CSP) to help those in their communities suffering from food insecurity and hunger.  
  
According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

• 34 million people in the U.S. are food insecure,

• 9 million children are hungry,

• 53 million people turned to food banks following COVID-19 due to unemployment, and

• 100 percent of U.S. counties have families suffering from food insecurity.

Food insecurity and hunger are terms used interchangeably, but it is important to understand the difference between the two. When someone suffers from **food insecurity**, it is an economic condition. Meaning the person/family is having to choose between paying a bill or buying food. A person that suffers from **hunger** is physically feeling hungry and does not have access to food.   
  
It is a common misconception by many in the United States to think those that are hungry and food insecure are homeless. The reality is that people that utilize food banks and charitable food sources are working. They make too much to qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which helps low-income families afford nutritious food options.   
  
The largest U.S. constituency effected by food insecurity and hunger are our working poor. Feeding America reports that the average annual income for those that suffer from hunger is $10,030. To qualify for SNAP benefits, a family of four can net no more than $2,313 a month or $27,766 annually based on national guidelines.   
  
Food insecurity and hunger adversely impacts the health care system, as many who do not have access to healthy and nutritious food are obese, suffer from chronic health conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes, along with other diseases caused by malnutrition.

Now more than ever with the cost of living increasing, while wages remain stagnant, it is incumbent on those that can to reach out to our elected officials to educate them about the effects of food insecurity and hunger on the economy, the health care system, and the well being of the families and children affected.   
  
It is not enough to gather nonperishable food items to distribute to those in need. Funding for food programs and nutrition education need to be advocated for at every level of government to ensure a brighter future for all.