

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
November 8, 2010



## **Local leaders volunteer to live exclusively off of a food bank hamper to raise awareness about poverty**

The “Do the Math-Eat the Math Campaign” highlights how some residents cannot afford nutritious food in our community. This campaign is a joint project between the Food Matters Coalition and the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit. **Seventeen local leaders will attempt to live exclusively off the contents of a food bank hamper from Nov 18-24.**

“Most people do not know that most food banks only give out 3-4 days worth of food and this can only be accessed once a month”, said Carole Chang, a Registered Dietitian with the Health Unit. **“Food banks are meant to provide emergency support when people are in dire need of food;** however, many people living with low income or receiving social assistance are forced to access the food bank regularly because they simply do not have enough money for food.”

Findings released by the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit’s 2010 Nutritious Food Basket Report indicated that the cost of feeding a family of four (two parents with two children) in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark is \$163 per week or \$706 per month. Many families are forced to choose between paying bills and buying healthy food. **Poor nutrition can lead to increased risk for chronic and infectious diseases, poor pregnancy outcomes with greater risk for low birth weight and negative impact on the growth and development in children.** These conditions cost more to treat and manage than they would cost to prevent by ensuring people are financially able to purchase an adequate and nourishing diet.

**“So many of us take for granted that we will have enough food to eat and to feed our families,”** says Dr. Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health for the Health Unit. “During this week we will have to live like too many individuals and families who must rely on the food bank to make it to the end of the month. It won't be easy.”

Dr. Stewart and other participants will pick up a food hamper from their local food banks in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Counties on November 17, 2010. **Like many food bank users, the participants will try to stretch their 3 day food hamper to a week or for as long as they can.** The participants will keep a daily journal on the campaign website. Community members are encouraged to follow their journey. A meeting will be held on November 26, 2010 for participants to share their experiences and discuss possible actions to advocate for change. An executive summary will be available December 6<sup>th</sup>.

For more information, visit <http://www.healthunit.org/nutrition/dothemath/dothemath.html>. If you don't have access to the internet, call the Health ACTION Line at 1-800-660-5853.

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For more information about the campaign, to get in touch with participants or to arrange for photos of participants receiving their hamper, contact Susan Healey, Communications Co-ordinator at 613-345-5685 or 613-802-0550.