

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE: June 10, 1999

GOVERNOR, VOLUNTEERS GLEAN FOR THE HUNGRY AT BURLINGTON COUNTY FARM

Governor Christie Whitman and New Jersey Agriculture Secretary Art Brown, Jr., welcomed volunteer gleaners from Fleet Banks' "Team Fleet" and Notre Dame High School in Lawrenceville today to Specca's Garden State Greenhouse where Farmers Against Hunger (FAH) were gleaning strawberries. The berries will be distributed to 12 religious and community service organizations in Burlington County for use in their hunger relief programs.

"Most of us are so busy with our daily lives that we forget that many people in this country suffer from hunger every day," the Governor said. "The Farmers Against Hunger program is a common sense way of bringing food to the tables of needy families. We're ensuring that surplus produce is put to the best use possible - feeding New Jersey's hungry."

"The Farmers Against Hunger Program is helping thousands of families and individuals improve their diets with donated fresh fruits and vegetables that they would not otherwise have been able to enjoy," Secretary Brown said.

FAH is a hunger relief program of the New Jersey Agricultural Society in cooperation with the NJDA, Farm Bureau, and Rutgers Cooperative Extension. In its first three years of operation, FAH distributed more than 2 million pounds of food donated by farmers and commercial produce suppliers. The organization expects to distribute another million pounds of produce by the end of this year.

According FAH director Robin McGovern, "The fresh fruits and vegetables provide essential vitamins and nutrients that are often lacking in the daily diet of our low income recipients. Many of our recipients are the working poor who do not meet the criteria for state aid yet have difficulty paying the rent and buying groceries."

FAH organizes gleanings similar to this one or collects produce several times a week at farms throughout central and southern New Jersey so that fresh, nutritious but cosmetically flawed, fruits and vegetables can be distributed to community and religious organizations serving New Jersey's hungry.

FAH is funded by a grant from the Community Food and Nutrition Block Grant program of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, a Jersey Fresh matching grant from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, and grants from USDA's Fund for Rural America, Kraft Fresh Produce Initiative, FOOD FOR ALL and the Bertram and Corella Bonner Foundation.

In addition to fresh produce from farm fields, FAH collects and distributes surplus fresh fruits and vegetables from farm markets, wholesalers and food distributors

and delivers the produce to central distribution sites in Mt. Holly, Camden, Moorestown, Hammonton and Trenton. Volunteers quickly allocate the produce to local churches, shelters, day care and senior citizen centers to use in their meal and pantry programs. FAH is expanding food recovery and gleaning throughout the state by creating a cooperative gleaning network with food banks and pantries, and showcasing gleaning as an excellent community service project, particularly for youth organizations.

A challenge grant of \$30,000 from Corella Bonner enabled FAH to purchase the larger, refrigerated truck they needed to expand the collection routes and serve more agencies. Among the many others who contributed to the purchase of the truck were the Kraft Fresh Produce Initiative, Frank Donio, Inc., Pennington United Methodist Church, and the Gloucester County Board of Agriculture.

So far this year, FAH has rescued over 320,000 pounds of surplus produce with 65,000 pounds collected directly from farms and 255,000 pounds donated by Wakefern Food Corporation, Frank Donio, Inc. and Raio Produce.

For additional information about FAH, call McGovern at 609-777-0553.