

News Release  
WSEM  
5209 Detroit Avenue  
Cleveland, Ohio 44102  
[www.wsem.org](http://www.wsem.org)



*For more information, contact:*

Ilia Estremera  
West Side Ecumenical Ministry  
216/651-2037, ext. 309  
[iestremera@wsem.org](mailto:iestremera@wsem.org)

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

**WSEM AND CLEVELAND FOODBANK CHALLENGE NORTHEAST OHIOANS TO  
RAISE HUNGER AWARENESS THIS THANKSGIVING**

**CLEVELAND (November 8, 2010)** — West Side Ecumenical Ministry (WSEM) is partnering with the Cleveland Foodbank once again to challenge Northeast Ohio companies to make a difference in the lives of Clevelanders in need through the third annual *WSEM Food Stamp Challenge*, November 12-18.

The *WSEM Food Stamp Challenge* is a 7-day commitment, in which participants agree to live on the average food stamp allocation in 2010 - \$31.04/week or \$4.43/day - to raise awareness about hunger and generate critically needed funds to help feed hungry children and adults in the community. The Challenge is the creation of the WSEM volunteer Junior Advisory Board, a group of young professionals who will take the Challenge themselves.

“It’s sobering to think that many people have to choose between buying food, paying their rent or paying the gas bill,” said Ann Weinzimmer, chair of WSEM’s Junior Advisory Board and an associate with Jones Day’s Cleveland office. “Participants taking the Food Stamp Challenge better appreciate the choices that individuals living on food stamps face, in which \$31 a week doesn’t go very far. Luckily for the participants, they still have the comfort in knowing that at the end of the day, they will be able to buy food and pay rent. Those living on Food Stamps don’t have that security.”

The weekly food stamp allocation of \$31.04 is a \$4.29 increase from last year’s allocation of \$26.75.

- more -

“Unfortunately, the increase was due to federal stimulus funds, which will likely be taken away in next year’s budget,” added Weinzimmer. “That’s why spreading the word about hunger in our community is so important.”

To participate in the Challenge, participants pledge to spend no more than the average weekly food stamp allotment of \$31.04 for the duration of the Challenge for all of their food and drink. Each of the Challengers are then asked to recruit 20 Sponsors that are each asked to commit \$30, thus raising \$600 each.

Every dollar raised through the Challenge will be used by the three WSEM Food Centers (Brookside, Community Corner and Near West) to supplement the food pantry with nutritious fresh food items and link WSEM’s clients to critical outreach services to help lead them down the path to self-sufficiency.

WSEM encourages those participating in the Challenge to spread the word about their experiences via their Facebook or Twitter accounts or follow the posts of the WSEM Junior Advisory Board on their Twitter account/wsemchallenge. And they will have plenty to “tweet” about considering the high cost of food, and that participants are not allowed to accept free food from family, friends or co-workers.

For more information on how to participate, call WSEM at 216.651.2037 or click on the link on WSEM’s homepage at [www.wsem.org](http://www.wsem.org).

### **About WSEM**

Founded in 1966, West Side Ecumenical Ministry (WSEM) is a nonprofit, social service organization working to assist families and individuals meet their needs through programs of service. WSEM administers programs through its three Centers of Excellence and Counseling Solutions Program that provide food and outreach services, employment training, early childhood education and counseling solutions. For more information, visit [www.wsem.org](http://www.wsem.org).

###