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Helping Residents to Locate Food Resources, the Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition Launches an Interactive Food Map

Columbia, MD – The Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition (LHIC) has developed an interactive Food Connection Map to assist residents in locating food resources available throughout the County. The map can be found on the LHIC website here: <https://www.hclhic.org/foodmap>.

Nearly one in four county residents reported some concern about having enough money to pay vital expenses like rent, mortgage or for food, according to the [2021 Howard County Health Assessment Survey](#). Additionally, the survey found that 32% of residents reported eating vegetables less than once per day in the past week, highlighting the need for expanded awareness and education surrounding nutritious food access.

“This convenient and easy to use tool helps residents find healthy and low-cost food resources in their communities,” said Howard County Health Officer Dr. Maura Rossman. “In speaking with community members, we frequently hear that people don’t know about the local food assistance programs available to them. This map, and an online resource guide, puts all of this information in one place so people can find the programs and services they need to help feed their families.”

“Every resident in Howard County should have the means to locate healthy and low-cost food resources no matter their socioeconomic status. We know that with inflation driving up food prices, more of our neighbors are struggling with food insecurity,” said Howard County Executive Calvin Ball. “Through the development of our innovative interactive Food Connection Map, we’re ensuring that our residents have the means of finding healthy and low-cost, accessible food and nutrition resources in the County. Together, we will continue to provide our residents with easy access to a variety of resources and the Food Connection Map is one innovative way to make that vision a reality.”

This map was created by the Howard County Health Department as part of the LHIC Food Security Committee's goal to increase access to and awareness of culturally appropriate, accessible, affordable, and nutritious food to decrease food and nutrition insecurity among Howard County residents.

Additional food security efforts underway in the County include:

- Analysis of a recently-completed food and nutrition survey with key partners to discuss the data and plan for addressing identified gaps.
- Implementation of a container garden pilot project in the Owen Brown Place community, with assistance from the University of Maryland Extension, to serve as a model for other communities.
- Design, translation, and distribution of an accessible brochure to supplement the online map and increase awareness of existing food resources in the County.

In addition to mapping food assistance programs identified by LHIC program staff, the map provides County bus routes, restaurant locations, nutrition education programs, and food retailers located through the County. The webpage also provides opportunities for residents to provide feedback to help LHIC improve the user experience and a form for additional community organizations to complete if they wish to be included on the food resource map.

For more about the Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition and information about how members of the public can get involved, visit www.hchlhic.org.