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While many Marylanders are facing new and greater challenges due to the economic factors impacting our state and the nation, there is a population—more than 456,000—within our state whose circumstances are dire. And though it may be difficult to imagine that anyone could ask families and individuals to help others when many are squeezing their belts tight to meet the responsibilities and needs of their own families, Girl Scouts throughout central Maryland will soon be asking you to help the more than 456,000 Marylanders who are living in poverty and in need of food.

The sad truth is that of the 456,000 Marylanders in need of help, more than 200,000 are children and 73,000 are senior citizens—people who have spent their lives working and raising their families only to find themselves in a situation where they can barely take care of their basic need—food. The face of hunger may actually surprise you: it could be one of your children’s classmates, the elderly neighbor up the street, your co-worker or one of the families you see at church/synagogue services. In Baltimore County, it is estimated that more than 60,000 people live in poverty; 16,500 under the age of 18 and 10,450 are between the ages of 5 and 17.

On February 27 Girl Scouts throughout central Maryland will participate in the Council’s annual Harvest for the Hungry food campaign by distributing food collection bags in their neighborhoods and communities asking everyone to participate in this “community helping community” effort. This food drive benefits the efforts of the Maryland Food Bank, an organization with whom Girl Scouts of Central Maryland has partnered with for the past ## years to help eradicate hunger in central Maryland. Everyone can help—even if you can’t fill the bag, we ask that you donate one, two or three non-perishable food items to help feed those that are hungry. Once you have your food items in the bag you can simply put the bag out on your doorstep on March 6 and a Girl Scout or Mail Carrier will pick the bags up. You can also donate food at your local post office, Coldwell Banker or Safeway store.

Last year 1,942 girls in 229 Girl Scout Troops participated in the campaign and collected 59,078 lbs of food to help more than 50,000 individuals and families in need of food assistance. This year we will be working to double our collection to help feed even more families. With it taking only 1.24 pounds of food to feed one individual, imagine how many people could benefit from a collection of 20,000 lbs of food.

The economy has hit many Marylanders hard and the Maryland Food Bank has seen a 50% increase in the number of families and individuals in need of food over the last year. Many people who are in need work full-time jobs or have only recently been laid off. As a result they are forced to choose between buying the food they need or paying bills. By donating food to the Harvest for the Hungry food drive, you can help people in your community by giving them what they need most—food.

Together we can all make a difference by helping those in need. I encourage families, individuals, businesses and organizations to work with Girl Scouts of Central Maryland and the Maryland Food Bank and support the 2010 Harvest for the Hungry campaign. Girl Scouts all across central Maryland will appreciate your support of their efforts and 60,000 families and individuals in Baltimore's counties will be grateful for your donations.

Sincerely,

Traci A. Barnett, M.B.A.
Chief Executive Officer
Girl Scouts of Central Maryland