



IMPORTANT: All information pertaining to this report is EMBARGOED UNTIL MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2009

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Data Show Startling Mental Health Picture and Brings Into View the Pain of the Economic Crisis

WHAT: (EMBARGOED UNTIL MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2009) To many, Long Island seems a picture of suburban perfection, but deeper examination reveals some troubling facts and social health disparities exist. Disparities existed three years ago in Vital Signs' first report, but they have worsened. In the past three years, suicide rates have increased 36% in Nassau and 37% in Suffolk. Suffolk's suicide rate is higher than the state's rate. Suffolk's drug-related discharge rate is rising, up almost 20% in three years. The total number of child abuse reports rose in Nassau and Suffolk in 2008, 3.2% and 8.6% respectively. A growing percentage of homeowners are paying 30% or more of their gross income on housing costs. In some cases, households have turned to the government for assistance through programs such as Food Stamps, with household enrollment increasing 43.5% in Nassau and 54% in Suffolk from May 2006 to May 2009. Initial foreclosure filings (lis pendens) rose in the 2nd quarter of 2009, and reached 4,804, the highest number ever recorded. Personal bankruptcy filings are increasing on Long Island, from March 31, 2008 to March 31, 2009, filings rose 42.6% in Nassau and 32.3% in Suffolk. Unemployment, falling wages, and the housing market collapse have drained individual and family resources and forced a growing number of low and middle income households to make difficult choices each month between basic expenses like rent, food, and medical care. Within this environment, social health concerns have increased, particularly for the region's more vulnerable residents.

These issues and more are brought to light in Adelphi University's release of Vital Signs 2009, which tracks the performance on 28 social health indicators, updating previous data, noting trends and patterns, and adding five new indicators (mortgage foreclosure and delinquency, personal bankruptcy, voter turnout, youth arrests, and senior unintentional falls) to more broadly capture quality of life on Long Island. By providing centralized, comprehensive, and current data, the project seeks to inform community-based initiatives, policy action, and strategic planning in the region. Unprecedented in its depth, the 120-page report breaks out county social health data by zip code, income, gender, and race/ethnicity.

WHEN: Monday, December 14, 2009

A telephone press conference will be held at 12:00 PM EDT. The press conference can be accessed by calling (866) 657-5823. Participant passcode is 9226276.

To see an advanced copy of the full report, visit <http://www.adelphi.edu/vitalsigns/>, Password 2009vsmedia. (EMBARGOED UNTIL MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2009)

WHO: Adelphi University's Director of Community Research, Dr. Sarah Eichberg and Vital Signs Project Associate, Deborah Petry, L.M.S.W., C.A.S.A.C. will present key findings from the 2009 Vital Signs report to update data from the project's 2006 inaugural report to track trends and patterns and to provide a current snapshot of Long Island's quality of life.

Vital Signs is a multi-phase project that systematically identifies, tracks, and analyzes the social health of populations and communities in Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island. Initiated by Adelphi University President Robert A. Scott in 2004, its primary objective is to develop a centralized resource to help inform policy and service provision and reduce social health disparities. As a campus-community partnership, Vital Signs reflects Adelphi's ongoing commitment as an "engaged university," and is affiliated with the Center for Social Innovation.

The program received generous support from the Bank of America Foundation, New York State Department of Education, and New York State Senator Kemp Hannon. An array of community leaders on the advisory board also provided valuable guidance and input.

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