Fudge and other members of Congress last week undertook the Food Stamp Challenge , from Oct. 31 to Nov. 4, to find out firsthand what life is like for recipients, who actually no longer get food stamps, but a debit card. The program is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

Congresswoman Marcia Fudge (D-OH) went shopping at a Daves Supermarket located at 3300 Payne and spent $22.65 Monday. Fudge took the role of a food stamp recipient and wanted to spend no more than $31.30, the average weekly allotment for a food stamp recipient.

The amount works out to $4.50 a day per person, or $1.50 for each meal. Fudge was taking part in a national food stamp challenge, a part of the "Fighting Poverty Through Faith, Working Together to End Hunger" mobilization campaign.

The effort seeks to raise awareness about hunger and poverty and defend the food stamp program. "In June, a staggering 45.2 million Americans filed for food stamps because they are living in poverty – that's one in seven Americans," said Fudge. "The need is certainly great in our community, with 20 percent of the residents of my district receiving food stamps."

Congresswoman Fudge is one of 12 legislators taking the food stamp challenge. Fudge shared that some Washington lawmakers want to make cuts to the food stamp program as part of the federal deficit reduction effort. "This is not the time to cut food stamps," said Fudge.

In Fudge's District 76,274 women (26 percent) live in poverty, 99,955 African-Americans (31 percent) in the district live in poverty, 7,906 Latinos (48 percent) in the district live in poverty, and 2,041 Asian-Americans (17 percent) in the district live in poverty. These numbers were provided by the Congresswoman's office.

As Congresswoman Fudge started to shop, Lena Boswell, a Clevelander who shops for a family of 3 on the food stamp income, wanted to help. Fudge purchased such items as bananas, cabbage, yams, pinto beans, carrots and Rotisserie Chicken.

"When you are shopping on that budget, there is no room for waste, and one bad choice is all it takes to go hungry. If a jar of pasta sauce breaks, an entire meal could be lost," said Cynthia Smith an onlooker in the store.

It took Fudge significantly longer to shop. With each purchase Fudge added up the cost as she went. She weighed the produce before putting it in the cart and refused high price items.

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Fudge believes strongly that we cannot afford to cut SNAP and feeding programs right now. She hopes this effort raises awareness about the reality for many low-income Americans.

One-in-four families, according to the Food Research and Action Center, worry about having enough money to feed themselves and their families. And for those who may get the help from SNAP, it still may not be enough to buy the minimum amount of food the United States Department of Agriculture says people need to survive.

Here are some of the names of the Congress members who are participating in the Food Stamp Challenge;

Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.)

Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.)
Rep. Marcia L. Fudge (D-OH)

Reps. Joe Courtney (Conn.),
Rep. Keith Ellison (Minn.)
Rep. Alcee Hastings (Fla.),
Rep.Jim Moran (Va.)

Rep.Tim Ryan (Ohio)
Rep.Jackie Speier (Calif.).