



Media Release

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Missouri's children among the hungriest in the nation

SPRINGFIELD – Recent statistics show that one in five children in Missouri are on the brink of hunger and are among the neediest and hungriest in the United States.

Feeding America, the nation's largest hunger relief organization, released statistics showing that Missouri children suffer from the fifth highest rate of food insecurity among all 50 states. This means 279,687 children under the age of 18 are at risk of going hungry each day in Missouri.

Many of these children can be found in the Ozarks. Counties such as Shannon (second), Oregon (fifth), Ozark (sixth) and Hickory (ninth), have some of the highest childhood food insecurity rates in the state.

To combat this problem, Ozarks Food Harvest has increased efforts with its children's feeding programs, like the Weekend Backpack Program™ and Kids Cafe® after-school feeding program.

During the 2009-2010 school year, The Food Bank will bring the Weekend Backpack Program™ to 28 schools in the Ozarks. Plus, 24 schools will feature the after-school, Kids Cafe® program with 10 of those hosting the Summer Food program. The Kids Cafe® program has grown by 77 percent since 2007.

Child Food Insecurity in the United States: 2005 – 2007, states that 3.5 million American children, ages five and under, are food insecure. The analysis includes the first ever state-by-state analysis of early childhood hunger, using data collected by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The report, funded with a grant from the ConAgra Foods Foundation, also found that food insecurity among all children increased in Missouri, when compared to USDA data collected from 2003-2005.

Ozarks Food Harvest works with more than 350 hunger relief organizations, reaching more than 53,000 people each month in 29 southwest Missouri counties. Recently, Ozarks Food Harvest has doubled its distribution to upwards of seven million pounds of food annually, the highest distribution in The Food Bank's 25 year history. This is possible because of its network of charities and direct relief programs such as Kids Cafe®, the Weekend Backpack Program™, Club F.U.N.™ and the Mobile Food Pantry™.

For more contact Matt Petcoff with Ozarks Food Harvest at (417) 865-3411.

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Transform Hunger into Hope™ at ozarksfoodharvest.org

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