



Media Release

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Ozarks Million Dollar Hunger Challenge ends next month

Ozarks pantries struggle to meet fundraising goals

New child food insecurity data shows more families relying on feeding programs

SPRINGFIELD, Mo.—Ozarks Food Harvest and the Community Foundation of the Ozarks' second *Million Dollar Hunger Challenge* for OFH member pantries and CFO affiliate foundations ends next month, and more than half of the participating nonprofits have yet to meet the challenge in order to receive matching funds.

The *Hunger Challenge* utilizes a \$125,000 gift from the Walmart Foundation State Giving Program to Ozarks Food Harvest, which can be leveraged to more than \$1 million worth of food, because for every dollar donated to OFH \$10 worth of food distribution is provided.

Nearly 30 Ozarks Food Harvest hunger relief member organizations participated in this year's challenge by partnering with 24 CFO affiliate community foundations—April 1 through Sept. 30—but more than a dozen of these partnerships have not met their goal of \$3,050 and only one month remains.

Several agencies attributed difficulty in reaching fundraising goals to supporters' existing efforts in Joplin. The Lamar Good Samaritan, Crosslines of Joplin, Oregon County Food Pantry in Alton and Thayer and King's Pantry (Southern Webster County Pantry) in Seymour have expressed a sincere need for help.

"While donations have dropped dramatically since the Joplin disaster, our food pantries and feeding sites' efforts have increased significantly across southwest Missouri," said Bart Brown, president/CEO at Ozarks Food Harvest.

Ozarks Food Harvest unveiled local results of the national Map the Meal Gap study last March, and last week an addendum to the study focusing on *child* food insecurity was announced, revealing 28.2 percent (71,780) of southwest Missouri children—5 percent higher than the national rate—face food insecurity. Of the food insecure children in OFH's 28-county service area, 30 percent (21,534) do not qualify for the free and reduced school meal programs or WIC and rely on charitable programs for assistance.

The original 2011 Map the Meal Gap study found that the food insecurity rate within Ozarks Food Harvest's 28-county service area is 16.9 percent. While half of the 177,870 food insecure individuals are eligible for SNAP, WIC and other assistance and 26 percent are eligible for WIC and other assistance, 24 percent are not eligible for any government assistance, and must rely on Ozarks Food Harvest's network of more than 300 member food pantries and feeding sites.

—More—

The last month of the challenge, September, is Hunger Action Month, when community members are asked to take action to fight hunger all month long.

“Whether it’s by advocating and raising awareness, making donations or volunteering, everyone can find a way that’s right for them to make a difference and help our food pantries double their efforts during Hunger Action Month,” Brown said.

About Ozarks Food Harvest–The Food Bank

Ozarks Food Harvest is the Feeding America® food bank for southwest Missouri, serving more than 300 hunger relief organizations across 28 Ozarks counties in addition to the long-term relief sites in Joplin. The Food Bank reaches 20,000 individuals weekly and distributes one million pounds of food monthly. OFH was named the 2011 Small Business of the Year by the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce. Learn more at ozarksfoodharvest.org and at facebook.com/ozarksfoodharvest.

About Community Foundation of the Ozarks

The Community Foundation of the Ozarks is a public foundation serving the Missouri Ozarks. CFO is dedicated to working with its donors, nonprofit partners and affiliated community foundations in meaningful and purposeful ways. The Foundation’s mission is to enhance the quality of life in our region through resource development, community grantmaking, collaboration and public leadership. Founded in 1973, CFO has since grown to include 43 affiliate community foundations and nearly 2,000 charitable funds, with assets of \$172 million as of Dec. 31, 2010. For the first six months of the 2011 fiscal year, the Foundation gave back \$11.6 million in charitable grants and distributions and received more than \$28.7 million in charitable contributions. Since its inception, CFO has made more than \$100 million in grants and distributions. Go to www.cfozarks.org for more information.

About Philanthropy at Walmart

Walmart and the Walmart Foundation are proud to support the charitable causes that are important to customers and associates in their own neighborhoods. The Walmart Foundation funds initiatives focused on education, workforce development, economic opportunity, environmental sustainability and health and wellness. From Feb. 1, 2009 through Jan. 31, 2010, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation gave more than \$512 million in cash and in-kind gifts globally, \$467 million of which was donated in the U.S. To learn more, visit www.walmartfoundation.org.

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Transform Hunger into Hope™ at ozarksfoodharvest.org

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