



## Media Release

**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Ozarks Food Harvest Ready for the School Year with Children's Programs**

SPRINGFIELD – As students begin heading back to school across the Ozarks, many will be happy to know they'll have plenty to eat when classes begin.

This is because, during the school year, many children receive their only meals when breakfast and lunch is served between classes.

And, the number of kids relying on the free and reduced lunch program continues to soar in southwest Missouri with more than 50,000 kids now living in poverty here in the Ozarks.

But, over the past few years, Ozarks Food Harvest has developed different programs to give children who are on the free and reduced lunch program a chance to eat more than what their school can offer.

During the coming school year, The Food Bank has partnered with three additional schools for its vastly popular *Food for Thought™* backpack program bringing the total number of schools on the program to 28. Through this program, The Food Bank was able to distribute more than 17,000 backpacks last year full of nutritious food to kids before they went home on Friday ensuring they had something to eat over the weekend.

Ozarks Food Harvest will also resume its *Kids Cafe®* after-school program this year, increasing the number of locations for it to 21 across the Ozarks. This program gives at-risk kids a place to go after school and provides them a chance to have a warm dinner, something many would go without if it wasn't for the program.

But, it's not just Ozarks Food Harvest that's responsible for the success of these programs; local groups like Female Leaders in Philanthropy (FLIP), the Foundation for Springfield Public Schools, The Community Development Block Grant Program, Care to Learn, the Community Foundation of the Ozarks and others play a large roll through annual grants and donations.

Ozarks Food Harvest works with more than 350 hunger relief organizations, reaching more than 41,000 people each month in 29 southwest Missouri counties. Ozarks Food Harvest distributes more than 5 million pounds of food annually to its network of agencies and offers direct relief through its *Kids Cafe®*, *Food for Thought™*, *Club F.U.N.™* and *Mobile Food Pantry™* programs.

For more information contact Matt Petcoff with Ozarks Food Harvest at 417-865-3411 or visit [ozarksfoodharvest.org](http://ozarksfoodharvest.org).

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Transform Hunger into Hope™ at [ozarksfoodharvest.org](http://ozarksfoodharvest.org)

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