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FALL 2020

Celebrating 25 Years of Score Against Hunger

JOIN THE FOOD BANK AND THE MIZZOU FOOTBALL TEAM THIS SEASON

In 1995, The Food Bank and Mizzou Football conceived a new, bold idea: joining forces to help end food insecurity. This season, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Score Against Hunger campaign, marking a milestone in the effort to tackle hunger.

The anniversary comes during the COVID-19 crisis, one of the most significant challenges The Food Bank has faced since its founding. Many people need help with food for the first time, making this year's campaign more critical than ever. **Feeding America estimates more than 54 million Americans may experience food insecurity because of the pandemic.** Led by Mizzou Head Coach Eliah Drinkwitz and sponsored by Mpix, Score Against Hunger is key to ensuring The Food Bank can continue providing food to 100,000 Missourians per month across 32 counties.

"Thousands of Missourians are struggling with food insecurity for the first time. Now more than ever, Mizzou Football's partnership with The Food Bank is important to help people in need. Join us for the 25th anniversary of Score Against Hunger." said Mizzou Football Head Coach Eliah Drinkwitz

Since its inception by then-Head Coach Larry Smith and his wife, Cheryl, Score Against Hunger

has become The Food Bank's largest annual fundraising effort. Powered by the community and led by Mizzou coaches and athletes, it has grown to include other sports and different events. This year, COVID-19 has affected the campaign, causing cancellations, delays and challenges in sharing our message of tackling hunger. Your support is critical in helping The Food Bank overcome these unexpected hurdles so we can share food and bring hope as the pandemic continues.

Visit scoreagainsthunger.org to learn more or donate to The Food Bank, the official charitable partner of Mizzou Athletics.

Photo taken in 2018 during Taste of the Tigers



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The stories for this newsletter were prepared in October. For the latest information on how The Food Bank for Central & Northeast Missouri is responding to the effects of COVID-19, please visit ShareFoodBringHope.org.



Letter from Lindsay

THANKS TO ALL WHO HAVE HELPED THROUGH THE COVID-19 CRISIS

No prediction has survived the challenges of 2020. Food insecurity has reached levels not seen since the Great Recession. A sudden spike in demand led to a strain in national food supply lines, increasing costs and delays. Even our distribution methods have gone through radical changes to maintain the safety of those we serve. The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically raised the challenges put on The Food Bank. **This Thanksgiving, I am thankful for all of the people, businesses and organizations who have supported us through the crisis, allowing us to rise to the occasion and expand our services to help as many people as possible.**

From the beginning of the pandemic, our communities have rallied to support The Food Bank. **Thank you to all who provided donations and grants at unprecedented levels. These gifts allow us to purchase food even when it is more difficult to obtain and to continue working even when the fundamentals of our operation change.**

Thank you to the Missouri National Guard for dedicating so many hours of work, replacing our suspended volunteer program. Thank you to the Missouri Foundation for Health for providing a grant to hire additional temporary employees. Without both of these organizations, we would not have had the workforce we needed to sustain our mission. Finally, thank you to The Food Bank staff, whose commitment as essential workers is unparalleled and for whom I have profound respect.

This support for The Food Bank is symbolic of the strength of our communities. The dedication to helping people facing food insecurity inspires our staff every day. We will never be able to thank you, our donors and friends, enough for what you do. But, as the pandemic continues in its ninth month and the holidays draw near, we promise to continue our work through the uncertain future. The Food Bank must purchase more food, encourage more people to seek help and find more ways to bring hope across 32 counties. To succeed, we will need even more help from you, our donors, volunteers and communities. I know we will rise to the challenge together.

Gratefully,

Lindsay Young Lopez
President and CEO





Buddy Pack Program Changes To Better Help Kids

NEW PACKS PROVIDE MORE DIVERSE, NUTRITIOUS OPTIONS

In 2019, 1-in-6 children were food insecure in the United States. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, that number is now 1-in-4 children according to a Feeding America study. To meet this need and overcome logistical concerns, we needed a better strategy. In August, The Food Bank launched a new version of Buddy Packs to solve the problem.

This new Buddy Pack comes pre-packaged from a third party, with The Food Bank regularly selecting items from a menu of nutritious, diverse options for each order. Previously, The Food Bank purchased the items for Buddy Packs individually and in bulk, assembling the packs at our main facility and Buddy Banks. This method led to a lack of variety of the food, made it difficult to consistently access the healthiest items and required thousands of volunteer hours. With The Food Bank's efforts to maintain the safety of our volunteers, reducing the labor needs of the Buddy Pack Program is invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The new Buddy Packs are healthier and easier for us to distribute, but the most visible change is the new variety of food and how much happier that makes the kids who receive these packs on a weekly basis," said Shannon Stokes, The Food Bank's Chief Programs Officer.

The food in the new Buddy Pack provides a consistent increase in nutritional value. Items like veggie cups will appear more frequently, and staples like cereal, ready-to-eat meals and peanut butter will continue to be included regularly. The Food Bank is also making a conscious effort to try to include items that are low in sodium, which is better for heart health.

Even as classrooms went virtual, The Food Bank spent the fall semester providing our new Buddy Packs wherever possible. Many schools provided packs with school meals on bus routes, grab and go distributions and even home deliveries. While the new packs have reduced volunteer needs for Buddy Packs, we still need people to help us transport packs from delivery locations to schools.



Serving Pettis County Through Open Door

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing more Missourians to ask for help who never thought they would need it before. Thanks to The Food Bank's 140 partner agencies, we are making sure food is one less problem for people who have lost jobs, family members or stability. One partner agency, Open Door Service Center, has been helping the people of Pettis County through their soup kitchen, food pantry and thrift store.

Amanda Davis, the Executive Director of Open Door, has been serving the community since April of 2018. "We are much bigger than a food pantry," Davis said. "We have a thrift store, a food pantry but we also have a service center piece of it. And being able to know that I can make those decisions to put somebody in a hotel or to give them a little bit more money at the thrift store if they are having a hard time, I love that."

The pandemic has changed the number of people the service center serves on average. Last year, they were serving 1,800 people through the soup kitchen. Now, it serves 2,000 people. Open Door's food pantry

served 1,500 people last year and is now serving more than 1,700.

To serve the community more efficiently, Open Door recently expanded their freezer by using a Capacity Building Grant awarded by The Food Bank through Feeding America. Originally, Open Door's freezer was only able to hold four pallets of produce. Now, it can hold ten, allowing them to receive more produce from The Food Bank to distribute to Missourians.

Open Door is run by staff and volunteers. Usually, they have eight to 10 volunteers a day to help. But, due to the pandemic, they are working on a skeleton crew of four to six volunteers a day. The team has adjusted quickly to the new way of serving food in a drive-thru method.

"I think my team just knows that we have to do it," Davis said. "I mean there is really nothing different that we are doing physically or mentally-wise, we just know that we have to serve these people. We have to serve the numbers that come through our door."