



News Release
For Immediate Release
Contact: Heather Collier
573-475-7573
hcollier@semofoodbank.org

SEMO FOOD BANK KICKS OFF HUNGER ACTION MONTH WITH 12,300 POUND DONATION OF MISSOURI RICE

Sikeston, MO (Sept. 1, 2026) – September is Hunger Action Month, a time to raise awareness about hunger and encourage communities to take action to help ensure their neighbors have access to the food they need.

“Hunger Action Month gives us an opportunity to put a little extra focus on hunger, but we know hunger doesn’t take a month off,” said Joey Keys, President and CEO of Southeast Missouri Food Bank. “September is a chance for all of us to think about what we can do to help our neighbors and to recognize that every action, big or small, can be part of the solution.”

Hunger continues to be a pressing issue across Southeast Missouri. More than 69,000 individuals, or 1 in 5 people, experienced food insecurity in 2024, according to Feeding America’s most recent Map the Meal Gap report. That includes more than 20,000 children, or 1 in 4.

Southeast Missouri Food Bank kicked off Hunger Action Month on Tuesday with Harvesting Hope, a celebration of its partnership with Missouri Rice Council and the generosity of Missouri rice producers.

Heritage Farms, Inland Rice, Martin Farms and Riceland donated a combined 12,300 pounds of rice to Southeast Missouri Food Bank. The donation will provide more than 10,000 meals for families across Southeast Missouri.

The donation was celebrated at Southeast Missouri Food Bank with remarks from Missouri Gov. Mike Kehoe and Missouri Director of Agriculture Chris Chinn. Representatives from Missouri agriculture, hunger-relief organizations, local communities and Southeast Missouri Food Bank also attended the event.

“This donation is a great example of what Hunger Action Month is all about,” Keys said. “Our rice farmers are growing food that feeds people, and through their generosity, that food is now going to help families right here in Southeast Missouri. We’re incredibly grateful to Heritage Farms, Inland Rice, Martin Farms and Riceland for helping make that possible.”

Hunger Action Month continues throughout September, and there are many ways individuals, businesses, civic groups and organizations can get involved:

- **Donate:** Financial gifts help Southeast Missouri Food Bank purchase nutritious food and support programs serving neighbors across Southeast Missouri. Every \$1 donated helps provide food for four meals.
- **Volunteer:** Give your time at Southeast Missouri Food Bank to help sort, pack and prepare food for distribution.

- **Advocate:** Share information about hunger and ways to help with friends, family, coworkers and community members.
- **Support local food drives and events:** Participate in a food drive, fundraiser or other Hunger Action Month activity in your community.
- **Go orange:** Wear orange Sept. 29, Hunger Action Day, to show your support for hunger awareness and help start conversations about food insecurity in Southeast Missouri.

“Hunger Action Month isn’t about one organization or one way of helping,” Keys said. “It’s about all of us finding a way to be part of the work. Whether you give, volunteer, participate in a food drive or help spread the word, every action helps.”

SEMO Food Bank serves families, children, veterans and seniors through a network of 140 partner agencies and direct-service programs across a 16-county service area. Southeast Missouri has some of the highest rates of hunger in Missouri, with 1 in 5 individuals, 1 in 4 children and 1 in 8 seniors living in homes that are food insecure. The six most food-insecure counties in the state are in Southeast Missouri.

To learn more about Hunger Action Month and ways to get involved with Southeast Missouri Food Bank, visit semofoodbank.org.

###

About Southeast Missouri Food Bank

The mission of Southeast Missouri Food Bank is to end hunger and leverage the power of food to build healthy communities. The food bank provides food to 140 charitable and disaster relief programs in Southeast Missouri. These member agencies include food pantries, soup kitchens, domestic violence and homeless shelters. Southeast Missouri Food Bank also holds regular mobile food distributions and provides monthly boxes of food to 5,600 senior citizens and weekend backpacks of food during the school year to 1,100 students in area school districts. The food bank’s 16-county coverage area includes Bollinger, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Dunklin, Madison, Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Perry, Reynolds, Ripley, Scott, Ste. Genevieve, Stoddard and Wayne counties. Those interested in helping can do so by making a tax-deductible contribution, donating food, or scheduling a time to volunteer. Visit semofoodbank.org for more information.