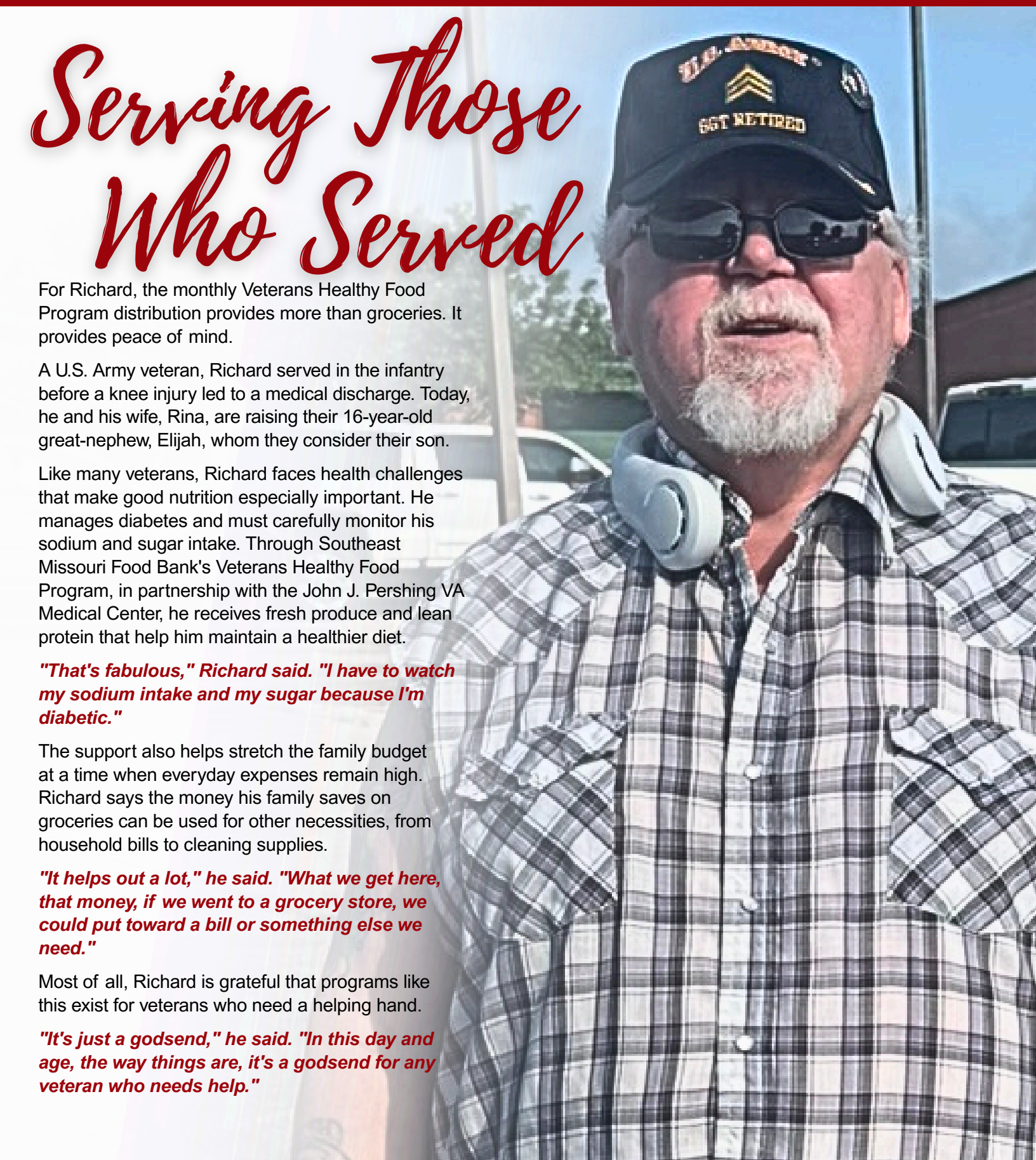
southeast missouri FOOD BANK

foodCONNECTION

FALL 2026

Serving Those Who Served



For Richard, the monthly Veterans Healthy Food Program distribution provides more than groceries. It provides peace of mind.

A U.S. Army veteran, Richard served in the infantry before a knee injury led to a medical discharge. Today, he and his wife, Rina, are raising their 16-year-old great-nephew, Elijah, whom they consider their son.

Like many veterans, Richard faces health challenges that make good nutrition especially important. He manages diabetes and must carefully monitor his sodium and sugar intake. Through Southeast Missouri Food Bank's Veterans Healthy Food Program, in partnership with the John J. Pershing VA Medical Center, he receives fresh produce and lean protein that help him maintain a healthier diet.

"That's fabulous," Richard said. "I have to watch my sodium intake and my sugar because I'm diabetic."

The support also helps stretch the family budget at a time when everyday expenses remain high. Richard says the money his family saves on groceries can be used for other necessities, from household bills to cleaning supplies.

"It helps out a lot," he said. "What we get here, that money, if we went to a grocery store, we could put toward a bill or something else we need."

Most of all, Richard is grateful that programs like this exist for veterans who need a helping hand.

"It's just a godsend," he said. "In this day and age, the way things are, it's a godsend for any veteran who needs help."

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help more. reach more. feed more.

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Our Mission

To end hunger and leverage the power of food to build healthy communities.

A Note from SEMO Food Bank:

Serving Neighbors in the Face of Food Sourcing Challenges

At Southeast Missouri Food Bank, our responsibility is simple: Make sure food reaches neighbors who need it. That commitment remains constant, even as challenges facing the charitable food system continue to evolve.



This year, one of the most significant changes we've faced is navigating a reduction in federal food support through USDA programs, like TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program). Food banks across the country are experiencing similar pressures, but the impact is especially significant in rural areas like Southeast Missouri, where federal commodities have long represented an important source of food.

Based on midyear projections, we anticipate a reduction of about 2 to 3 million pounds of food available for distribution in 2026 compared to previous years. While we continue to strengthen food donations from retailers, manufacturers, and partners, those sources alone will not fully replace the loss of federal inventory.

To help address this challenge, Southeast Missouri Food Bank's Board of Directors approved an additional $500,000 for food purchases this year. This represents one of the largest food purchasing investments in our organization's 40-year history and reflects our commitment to ensuring neighbors across Southeast Missouri continue to have access to the food they need and maintain support for partner pantries, children's programs, senior distributions, and mobile food distributions that thousands of neighbors rely on each month.

Even with this increased investment, food costs remain elevated, and competition for donated food continues to grow. In response, our team is actively seeking new food sources, strengthening partnerships, and carefully managing resources to minimize disruptions for the families, children, seniors, and veterans we serve.

The months ahead will require flexibility and determination, but our mission remains unchanged. Your continued support helps us respond to challenges like these while ensuring neighbors across Southeast Missouri have access to the food they need.

Camille Peters

Camille Peters
Chief Operating Officer, Southeast Missouri Food Bank

Save the Date

EMPTY BOWLS
Feeding Hope. One Bowl at a Time.

Mark your calendar for ***Friday, Nov. 6, for our second annual Empty Bowls lunch***! Join us for a meal of warm soup as we celebrate 40 years of fighting hunger.

Stretching Every Dollar, Every Meal

For Steffanie, visiting a food pantry helps make a tight budget stretch a little further for her family of four.

She and her partner are raising an 8-year-old daughter with significant dietary restrictions and a 3-year-old son. With one income for the household and medical needs that add to grocery costs, every dollar matters. Steffanie shared that their household income is just over the limit to qualify for SNAP assistance, leaving few safety net options to help bridge the gap.

"It really helps offset our grocery budget," Steffanie said of visiting pantries. "So we can stretch it to afford some of (my daughter's) pricier foods."



Her daughter has celiac disease, autism, and food allergies, making grocery shopping both careful and expensive. Steffanie spends time comparing labels, looking for deals, and using coupons and cashback apps to make ends meet. Eating out is rare, and most meals are planned around what they can afford and what her daughter can safely eat.

SEMO Food Bank's Mobile Food Pantry helps fill the gaps, providing staples like pasta, protein, and pantry items that allow the family to spend more of their limited budget on specialized foods their daughter needs.

Steffanie also values the balance she is able to provide her kids, ensuring they have both nutritious meals and occasional treats.

"I think it's super important," she said. "I want them to have a good relationship with food."



Sharing the Harvest, Fighting Hunger

Through the Missouri Department of Conservation's Share the Harvest program, hunters can donate harvested deer to help provide nutritious protein to neighbors facing hunger. Southeast Missouri Food Bank has distributed donated venison through its Produce Prescription Program and other distributions, where it has been a welcome surprise for recipients like Cynthia.

"Venison is a special treat for me," she said. "It's a luxury you can't find at the store. We are grateful for everything, but it's special to get something you are excited about."

This deer season, hunters can make a difference beyond the field by participating in Share the Harvest. A donated deer can help provide nutritious meals for neighbors across Southeast Missouri while supporting conservation efforts and reducing waste. ***Learn more about the program at mdc.mo.gov.***



Steady Support for Our Seniors

These days, Tommy is focused on getting by — and helping others do the same.

Born and raised in Charleston, he spent years working in Chicago before returning to Southeast Missouri to be closer to family. Today, much of that family is gone, but Tommy still looks for ways to care for himself and those around him.

Each month, he receives a senior food box through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), a USDA program distributed locally by Southeast Missouri Food Bank and its partner network. He also picks up boxes for two friends who don't have transportation.

"It's pretty important," he said. "I know I get my canned goods, my juice, things I need."

As food costs continue to rise and stretch already limited budgets, that consistency matters more than ever.

"You might get one bag of groceries, you know. And that's it," he added. "Prices going up everywhere."

For him, the monthly box is more than food: It's stability.

"Yeah, it helps a lot," he said.

Supporting Hunger Action Month ... Together

This September for Hunger Action Month, Southeast Missouri Food Bank invites you to take simple, meaningful steps to help neighbors facing hunger. ***Because ending hunger is possible ... together***.

5 WAYS TO TAKE ACTION

GO ORANGE

Wear orange Sept. 29 for Hunger Action Day and show support for neighbors facing hunger. You can purchase our Hunger Action Month T-shirt at **bonfire.com/semofb-go-orange**

MAKE A GIFT

Every $1 helps provide 4 meals for families, children, and seniors in Southeast Missouri. Make your gift today and make a diference for our neighbors facing hunger.

JOIN THE FULL PLATE CLUB

Want to make an even greater impact? Set up a monthly donation and join our SEMO Full Plate Club, a simple way to provide reliable, ongoing support all year long.

VOLUNTEER

Whether you're sorting food, packing boxes, or helping at a distribution, your time helps families receive the food they need. Opportunities for groups and individuals are available.

SPREAD THE WORD

Follow Southeast Missouri Food Bank on social media and like and share posts. Every share helps raise awareness and connects more people to ways they can make a difference.

semofoodbank.org