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

SHARE THE HARVEST HELPS BRING NUTRITIOUS PROTEIN TO NEIGHBORS FACING HUNGER

SIKESTON, MO (Nov. 10, 2026) – As Missouri deer season gets underway, Southeast Missouri Food Bank is encouraging hunters to participate in Share the Harvest, a statewide program that turns donated deer into nutritious meals for families and individuals facing hunger.

For Southeast Missouri Food Bank, donated venison is an especially valuable source of protein. Protein is consistently one of the most requested food items, but it is also among the most expensive and challenging foods for food banks to source. Venison helps fill that need while providing families, children and seniors with a nutritious source of lean protein.

“Healthy protein is one of the hardest things for us to source consistently. The venison donated through Share the Harvest helps fill an important need. It's nutritious, it's a great source of protein, and it allows us to provide food to families who might not otherwise have access to it. We're grateful to the hunters who choose to share their harvest and help feed their neighbors,” said Joey Keys, president and CEO of Southeast Missouri Food Bank.

For more than 30 years, Share the Harvest has connected Missouri's hunting tradition with the spirit of neighbors helping neighbors. The program is administered by the Missouri Department of Conservation and Conservation Federation of Missouri in partnership with the Missouri Association of Meat Processors and Feeding Missouri. Donated deer are processed by participating meat processors, with the venison distributed through food banks and food pantries.

This season, the program has set a goal of collecting 6,500 donated deer statewide. Donations are free for hunters, with processing costs covered through program funding and sponsors.

In response to hunter feedback, Share the Harvest is also piloting new options to make donating more convenient. In Cape Girardeau County, Biester's Meats in Jackson now offers an after-hours cooler for Share the Harvest donations. Hunters can Telecheck and field dress their deer, complete the donation tag and follow the posted instructions to drop it off anytime during the season. All venison donated through this location will remain in the community to help feed neighbors facing hunger.

Hunters can also donate a whole field-dressed deer at any approved Share the Harvest meat processor. Participating processors prepare the donated venison for distribution through food banks and food pantries. Donations are free for hunters.

To find a participating processor, visit the Missouri Department of Conservation's Share the Harvest Meat Processor Lookup at: https://mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/deer/share-harvest/share-harvest-meat-processor-lookup

“We’re grateful to the hunters, meat processors and program partners who make Share the Harvest possible,” Keys said. “Every donated deer helps provide a valuable source of nutritious protein to neighbors across our region.”

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 Southeast Missouri Food Bank, visit semofoodbank.org.

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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 time to volunteer. Visit semofoodbank.org for more information.