



News Release

Contact: Lisa Church
573-471-1818
lchurch@semofoodbank.org

Food Bank Receives Grant To Hire Displaced Workers to Pack Food Boxes for Newly in Need

Sikeston, MO (April 2, 2020) — Missouri Foundation for Health has awarded a nearly \$200,000 grant to Southeast Missouri Food Bank to hire workers displaced by the coronavirus outbreak to help pack and distribute food to seniors and many families newly in need.

The \$198,720 grant will allow the food bank to hire 12 temporary employees to work full-time for the next 10 weeks to help sort, package and distribute food at the food bank's Sikeston distribution center and at mobile food distributions held throughout its 16-county area.

"We have seen a dramatic increase in the need for food assistance since the outbreak of COVID-19 began to affect our local economy in March," said food bank Chief Executive Officer Joey Keys. "We're distributing more food through our member agencies and holding more mobile food distributions where we take a truck of prepacked boxes of food and distribute them drive-through style to families who need the help."

The food bank relies heavily on volunteers who pack food boxes and help with food distributions.

"We have a dedicated group of volunteers, but many are seniors and are understandably concerned about getting out right now," Keys said. "This program will allow us more flexibility with the volunteers and hire people who are temporarily out of work so they can continue to earn a wage and support their families."

Cape Girardeau Area Chamber of Commerce and Sikeston Regional Chamber and Area Economic Development Corp. will promote the employment opportunity among its members who may have employees who are temporarily furloughed by COVID-19-related layoffs. The recruitment firm Manpower, which has offices in Sikeston and Cape, will screen qualified applicants and conduct the hiring.

"Supporting our members is a top priority for the Cape Chamber – especially in times of uncertainty," said Kim Voelker, chamber vice president. "Workforce needs are shifting

quickly, with many of our community members finding themselves without employment, and several businesses seeking additional help due to increased demand. The Missouri Foundation for Health grant program is an excellent solution that addresses the various changing needs with our local workforce, and we are proud to be a partner in this initiative.”

“The Sikeston Regional Chamber is excited to partner with this group to provide employment to those who have been laid off or furloughed recently,” said Executive Director Marcie Lawson. “SEMO Food Bank is a vital resource for this area, especially right now, and we’re glad this partnership will help them continue providing food to families who so desperately need it.”

A portion of the grant will be used to purchase additional food to meet the increased need for food assistance.

“Because our retail partners are seeing an increase in demand and empty shelves, our retail donations are down significantly,” Keys said. “And with social distancing efforts and infection concerns, food drives have been put on hold for now. We’re having to purchase most of our food, and we’re seeing fewer choices, higher prices and longer delivery times. Any extra dollars we can raise right now – whether through grants or donations – will be used to purchase and distribute food to meet this increased demand.”

Missouri Foundation for Health has been a longtime supporter of Southeast Missouri Food Bank and over the years has helped fund programs to provide more nutritious food to southeast Missouri families.

“They certainly understand our mission and the important role food plays as a foundation for better health,” Keys said. “We are incredibly grateful to have their support.”

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About Southeast Missouri Food Bank

Southeast Missouri Food Bank provides food to 140 charitable and disaster relief programs in Southeast Missouri. Member agencies include food pantries, soup kitchens, domestic violence and homeless shelters, senior citizen programs, children’s programs, and non-profit rehabilitation facilities. 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. The mission of Southeast Missouri Food Bank is to end hunger and leverage the power of food to build a healthy community. The Food Bank is affiliated with Feeding America, the nation’s largest food bank network, and has received the highest possible rating from Charity Navigator, attesting to its adherence to best practices. Those interested in helping can do so by making a tax-deductible contribution, donating food, or scheduling a time to volunteer. More information about SEMO Food Bank and its programs is available at semofoodbank.org.