



## News Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Heather Collier  
573-471-1818, hcollier@semofoodbank.org

### **NEW FEEDING AMERICA REPORT SHARES INSIGHTS FROM NEARLY 36,000 PEOPLE TO HELP INFORM UPCOMING WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON HUNGER**

*Southeast Missouri Food Bank Participated in an Effort to Gather Insights from People in Southeast Missouri to Help Inform Policy Priorities to End Hunger*

Sikeston, MO – September 27, 2022 – Last week, Feeding America, the nation’s largest hunger-relief network published the [Elevating Voices to End Hunger Together: Community-Driven Solutions to Address America’s Hunger Crisis report](#), which includes insights and anti-hunger policy recommendations from nearly 36,000 people from across all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, including individuals in southeast Missouri. The report is a culmination of a three-month listening initiative launched earlier this summer with the goal to help ensure the Sept. 28 [White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#) and the subsequent policy conversations are informed by people facing hunger. The initiative included listening sessions, a survey, questionnaires and text message conversations.

Southeast Missouri Food Bank, a member of the Feeding America nationwide network of 200 food banks, 21 statewide associations and 60,000 faith-based and charitable partner food pantries and meal programs, supported this initiative by holding listening sessions at several of its partner pantries.

“At our local listening sessions, many people shared stories of having to choose between paying for medicine or food, or deciding whether to pay a bill or have food for the week,” said Joey Keys, chief executive officer of SEMO Food Bank. “Inflation has only made those choices even more difficult. This year, the food bank has paid three times more food and is also serving more people than we were a year ago. We know our neighbors facing hunger need help, and we are committed to making sure everyone in southeast Missouri has enough to eat.”

An overwhelming majority of respondents to Feeding America’s survey (92%) agreed that to actually reduce hunger, the government, the private sector, nonprofits, local institutions and communities must come together to create solutions.

The report's recommendations for federal policymakers — informed by people facing hunger — focus on four key areas: prioritizing dignity, increasing access, expanding opportunity and improving health. They include ways to strengthen federal nutrition programs as well as solutions for addressing the root causes of food insecurity to eradicate hunger across the nation. For example, the report recommends that Congress increase benefit levels and expand eligibility criteria for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to help more people afford sufficient amounts of nutritious food. Eighty-eight percent of survey respondents said it was important to support people's dignity and choices in what they feed their families and 78% want SNAP to make it easier to access healthy foods, not restrict food choices.

To learn more about the *Elevating Voices to End Hunger Together* initiative, visit [FeedingAmerica.org/ElevatingVoices](http://FeedingAmerica.org/ElevatingVoices). For more information about Southeast Missouri Food Bank, visit [semofoodbank.org](http://semofoodbank.org).

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### **About Feeding America**

Feeding America® is the largest hunger-relief organization in the United States. Through a network of more than 200 food banks, 21 statewide food bank associations, and over 60,000 partner agencies, food pantries and meal programs, we helped provide 6.6 billion meals to tens of millions of people in need last year. Feeding America also supports programs that prevent food waste and improve food security among the people we serve; brings attention to the social and systemic barriers that contribute to food insecurity in our nation; and advocates for legislation that protects people from going hungry. Visit [www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org), find us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter.

### **About Southeast Missouri Food Bank**

Southeast Missouri Food Bank provides food to 140 food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters in 16 southeast Missouri counties. They include Bollinger, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Dunklin, Madison, Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Perry, Reynolds, Ripley, Scott, Ste. Genevieve, Stoddard, and Wayne counties. The food bank also provides mobile food distributions, monthly boxes of food to eligible seniors and weekend backpacks of food to 1,200 in 31 school districts. 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 volunteering. Visit [semofoodbank.org](http://semofoodbank.org) for more information.