



# HARVEST TIME

OZARKS FOOD HARVEST - THE FOOD BANK | NEWSLETTER FROM THE O'REILLY CENTER FOR HUNGER RELIEF



**"Now I am doing the work in service to others, and the payback is seeing people get the help they need."**

- Anita, manager of Ozark County Food Pantry

## FINDING PASSION THROUGH HARD TIMES

When she was at her lowest, Anita kept her head down and avoided eye contact. She felt ashamed for needing help. She wondered how things had gotten to this point.

Anita had never struggled to pay bills or put a meal on the table. With a job as an insurance agent, she had a steady paycheck. Everything started to change when she began to have back problems. After months of pain and a failed surgery, Anita had no choice but to quit her job and apply for disability. This change in her life was abrupt—and it scared her.

"I was an empty nester, I got divorced, and then I had the disability. It all hit within three months of each other," Anita shared.

Looking for a cheaper place to live, Anita found an apartment in Gainesville, Missouri. She did not plan to stay long, but then she found Ozark County Food Pantry, one of The Food Bank's 270 hunger-relief partners.

Anita's first trip to the pantry was a favor to a neighbor. She was only there to help him carry groceries to his car, but she found the support she didn't know she was looking for. The volunteers at the pantry helped her feel welcome and loved. That day, she brought home a bag of groceries for herself.

"I think he knew that I wouldn't go unless it was really to benefit him," Anita explained. "But it really helped me, too."

After she no longer had to worry about buying food, Anita was able to buy household items like laundry detergent and shampoo. She also found ways to give back to those who had helped her.

"Because of the pantry, I had a few extra dollars in my purse that I could give to my neighbor for taking me wherever I needed to go when my car wouldn't run," Anita said.

With each trip to the pantry, Anita started to come out of her shell. She formed friendships with the volunteers, and one day, Anita asked the manager if she could help out. She wanted to help others the way she had been helped.

Now, Anita is the manager of Ozark County Food Pantry, and she easily relates to the hundreds of families who walk through the doors.

One day, Anita helped a woman get food, who repeatedly asked, "And I get this too? And I can have this?"

"By the time she got to the end of the line, we were both crying," Anita said. "It's hard to ask for help when you've been self-sufficient."

Over the past few years, Anita's time at the food pantry has been relaxing and fulfilling.

"When I go and do that service for others, there's no longer that paycheck, trying to get ahead or trying to promote myself," Anita shared. "Now I am doing the work in service to others, and the payback is seeing people get the help they need."

Anita achieved food security and found her passion, thanks to the generosity of donors like you. When you support the work we do, you help people like Anita flourish because they no longer have to worry about putting food on their tables.

Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic is sending more and more first-time food recipients to pantries across the Ozarks. We hope they feel as welcome as Anita did. We are so thankful for your loyalty that continues to help neighbors through challenges of all kinds.



Dina receives food from a Mobile Food Pantry.

## FIGHTING HUNGER BRINGS US TOGETHER

2020 has been a year like no other, but that hasn't stopped us from fighting hunger. In fact, the pandemic and its effects on the community have pushed The Food Bank into high gear. Ozarks Food Harvest—and the 200 other Feeding America food banks across the country—were created for times like this. We're always prepared to respond when crises arise, whether they are economic, natural disasters or public health.

But we couldn't do it alone. With the help of generous donors like you, we've distributed 14 million meals since the pandemic began, and we plan to keep going until no one in the Ozarks has to worry about where their next meal will come from. With the new year right around the corner, thousands of families are still facing pandemic-related difficulties such as job loss and emergency expenses.

This holiday season, you can help them start 2021 off on a brighter note by making a gift to Ozarks Food Harvest. For every dollar donated, we can provide \$10 worth of groceries to our hunger-relief partners across southwest Missouri.

Your gifts will help people like Dina, who has continued to work hard to provide for her family throughout the duration of the pandemic. She received food for her family at a *Mobile Food Pantry*.

"We're just having a hard time. Thank you so much, not only for me, but for everyone. I never thought I would have to come to something like this to help out," she shared.

As the end of the year approaches, we would also like to remind you that it may be time to review your IRAs and other tax-deferred

accounts. If you plan to make a donation before the end of 2020, you may want to consider making a tax-free charitable gift from your IRA. We are more than happy to provide you with general guidance, but please seek specific advice from your financial, tax and/or legal advisors to determine if making a gift from your IRA is the right choice for you.

We can't thank you enough for joining us in the fight against hunger this holiday season and throughout the year. You are making a huge impact for families who need a little extra help this season. Together, we can *Transform Hunger into Hope*.

## INCREASING FOOD ACCESS IN RURAL AREAS

At Ozarks Food Harvest, we believe that everyone has the right to access nutritious food that helps them live full, productive lives. Unfortunately, many people in southwest Missouri live in rural areas, where they have limited access to wholesome and affordable food.

We characterize some of these places as food deserts, or areas with a low number of food retailers that provide fresh food at affordable prices. People living in these locations often have limited resources, low wages and inadequate access to transportation. Without access to healthful foods, people may experience health-related issues such as obesity, diabetes or heart disease. Although some convenience stores

or small, local grocers may stock nourishing options, they're often too expensive to purchase.

Residents of McDonald County and Vernon County often have challenges accessing food. Both counties are fairly large, and each of them have very few grocery stores and just one centrally-located food pantry. That's where Ozarks Food Harvest comes in.

"A lot of the families who live in counties like these don't have any transportation to get to the grocery store or food pantry," Terra Baum, agency compliance and capacity manager at The Food Bank, said. "We're working with churches and other organizations to improve access to food and ease the burden for the people who live there."

Through grant opportunities, Ozarks Food Harvest is also able to provide its partners with crucial infrastructure that allows them to transport and store food properly. The installation of walk-in freezers and coolers can make a world of difference for pantries in rural areas, giving them the ability to access more food from Ozarks Food Harvest to distribute in their communities.

When individuals have convenient access to healthful food, they can live healthier, more productive lives and help strengthen their communities. Ozarks Food Harvest is proud to help foster these changes and build stronger communities in southwest Missouri. Thank you for supporting this important work!

# Charlie's CORNER



Charlie O'Reilly



Make a difference in the lives of families during the holidays by donating to Ozarks Food Harvest.

## THE GIFT OF HOPE

The holiday season is a time to reflect and be thankful. I would like to extend my personal thanks and tell you how grateful I am for the support you show to Ozarks Food Harvest throughout the year. It's donors like you who make a difference and inspire hope for a better, brighter future for so many people in the Ozarks.

This year, in addition to providing food for 261,000 neighbors experiencing hunger, The Food Bank worked diligently to serve hundreds of families affected by COVID-19 hardships. Because of your support, Ozarks Food Harvest was able to purchase an additional \$2.2 million worth of food to ensure food pantries didn't struggle to keep their shelves stocked during this unprecedented time. The Food Bank has provided a record-breaking 14 million meals since April—that's \$23 million worth of food and funds for hunger-relief organizations. So many families visited food pantries in our network for the first time in their lives this year, and thanks to you, they received the food they needed.

We also hosted more than 75 *Mobile Food Pantries*, targeting displaced workers and low-income families who rely on their school's free and reduced meal program. To date, these distributions provided 720,000 meals to assist nearly 42,000 individuals. We will continue to host *Mobile Food Pantries* in communities across the Ozarks through the new year.

As much as we would all like to leave the pandemic behind in 2020, we will remain dedicated to providing the meals families depend on in 2021. That's why this holiday season, it's critical to make your donations to organizations such as Ozarks Food Harvest that can move the needle forward and adapt to the continued crisis we are facing.

Did you know that Ozarks Food Harvest is the largest COVID-19-related donor to charities in southwest Missouri? The Food Bank has tirelessly met the needs of our 270 hunger-relief partners this year, and we need your help so these organizations can continue providing uninterrupted service for families facing hunger in 2021.

I want you to know that you can trust The Food Bank with your gifts this holiday season and throughout the year. Every dollar donated helps provide \$10 worth of groceries to people experiencing hunger, and as you can read in the enclosed letter, Ozarks Food Harvest received its ninth consecutive four-star rating from Charity Navigator this year. I am proud to partner with an organization that puts the needs of the community above all else.

You have the power to give a gift of hope to families this holiday season. By choosing to donate to Ozarks Food Harvest, you will help provide food to the neighbors who need it most. Thank you for serving the community with us this year.



One in five children in the Ozarks is at risk for hunger. Your support can spread holiday cheer to kids in the Ozarks.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### CHECK OUT HUNGER

November 1-December 31

Make a difference while you grocery shop. Support Ozarks Food Harvest through Dec. 31 at local retail partners across the Ozarks by adding a \$1, \$3 or \$5 tax-free donation to your grocery bill. Participating retailers include Apple Market, Country Mart, Harter House, Hy-Vee, King Cash Saver, Price Cutter, Ramey, Rhodes Family Price Chopper, Town & Country Supermarket and Woods Supermarket. Last year, more than \$43,000 was donated to help provide nearly 173,000 meals to children, families and seniors in southwest Missouri. Since 1998, the holiday campaign has collected more than \$608,500—providing 2.68 million meals.



Thanks for supporting The Food Bank while you grocery shop this season.

### FOOD FIGHT

March

Want to raise funds for Ozarks Food Harvest with your business or organization this spring? Join us for our 10th annual Food Fight with Springfield Public Schools. We're making some changes due to the schools' challenges with COVID-19 this year, and partners are greatly needed to help bring hope to families facing hunger in the Ozarks. Reach out to Jennifer Sickinger at [jsickinger@ozarksfoodharvest.org](mailto:jsickinger@ozarksfoodharvest.org) or call 417-865-3411 to learn more.



You can bring hope to families at risk for hunger during this year's Food Fight Event.

# CHALLENGING MISCONCEPTIONS OF FOOD INSECURITY

A key aspect of being a Hunger Hero is understanding the issues that surround people living with food insecurity. Ozarks Food Harvest is not only dedicated to making sure families facing hunger get the food they need, but also to erasing the stigma and advancing the conversation around food insecurity.

Unfortunately, there are a number of misconceptions that exist for families working toward food security and a more stable lifestyle. Today, I want to take a moment to explain the reality and provide you with a little bit more information about what it means to be food insecure.

One of the most common misconceptions is that government programs provide plenty of food and people are just looking for a handout. In reality, government programs such as SNAP are designed as a supplement—they are not meant to provide an entire month's worth of food.



Angela is able to enjoy meals with her family because of the food she received at a Mobile Food Pantry.

Individuals must fulfill certain requirements to receive this assistance. If a parent suddenly loses their job or someone accumulates unexpected medical bills, government programs like SNAP can help them put food on the table, but again, are only meant to supplement their existing food budget.

Another misconception is that a person cannot be food insecure if they are overweight. This may surprise you, but hunger and obesity often co-exist. Limited access to nutritious food items and economic challenges may result in families turning to convenience stores or less healthy options to fill their stomachs.

Many people also believe that only unemployed individuals need food assistance. More often than not in southwest Missouri, at least one member of a food-insecure household works. However, even with a job, many people struggle to pay their bills because of stagnant wages and underemployment. COVID-19 has introduced new factors to this situation, as many people have experienced furloughs or reduced working hours. Our food pantry partners exist to help families make ends meet when the unexpected occurs.

These are just a few of the misconceptions associated with people receiving food assistance, and I hope they help you better understand what food insecurity looks like in southwest Missouri. People who receive food assistance are hardworking and hopeful about



Bart Brown,  
President/CEO

## BART'S *Hope Note*

their futures, and thanks to donors like you, they can get the help they need to live fuller lives.

Your support has helped provide food for people like Angela, who shared her story with us at a *Mobile Food Pantry*.

"I'm unemployed and still working on getting unemployment checks going. Every day, the food dwindles down but then we bring it back up. You guys help a lot. This helps us be able to sit down as a family and have dinner," she shared.

Thanks to generous donors like you, families like Angela's can sit down and enjoy a meal together this holiday season—and they have hope for a happier new year.



Denise Gibson,  
Development Director

## From DENISE'S DESK

# THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING THE FOOD BANK

I want to take a moment to personally thank you for your dedication to our hunger-relief efforts. Your support of our mission of *Transforming Hunger into Hope* means so much to everyone here at The Food Bank. Whether you have supported us for 15 years or a few weeks, we can't thank you enough. You help ensure that our neighbors have something to eat—during the holidays and throughout the year.

Many of you have stepped up to help us meet the increased need this year, and we could not be more grateful for your compassion. Your continued commitment to Ozarks Food Harvest allows us to provide meals and a great deal of hope to neighbors across 28 counties in southwest Missouri. We couldn't do this without you, and we thank you deeply for trusting us with your financial donations. With you on our

side, we will continue to work to meet the need in the Ozarks.

Through your support, we have provided millions of meals in 2020. Your monetary donations allow us to distribute nutritious food to 270 charitable partners across southwest Missouri. Our collective efforts make a huge impact on the lives of families experiencing hunger, and because of your kindness, someone will eat today.

As 2020 comes to a close, I want to thank you again for choosing Ozarks Food Harvest. We hope you continue to support The Food Bank as we work toward ending hunger in the Ozarks. Thank you for caring for the community, and thank you for being a Hunger Hero!

# SPECIAL THANKS TO THESE FRIENDS OF THE FOOD BANK

## BASS PRO HELPS PROVIDE NEARLY 300,000 MEALS

Big thanks to Bass Pro employees for donating during Hunger Action Month. Employees donated a total of \$19,640, which were matched by Johnny Morris and Bass Pro corporate, and NASCAR legend Richard Childress donated an additional \$25,000 toward the campaign. In total, this combined gift will help provide 278,560 meals in the Ozarks. We could not be more grateful for this gift, and we look forward to working with Bass Pro and its employees more in the future.



Bass Pro Shop employees raised money to help fight hunger in the Ozarks.

## KRAFT HEINZ COMPANY FOUNDATION SUPPORTS FAMILIES

Heartfelt thanks to the Kraft Heinz Company Foundation for its donation of \$26,500 to support ongoing COVID-19 response efforts. These funds will allow us to continue purchasing food items that are needed to supplement donations and enable us to host additional *Mobile Food Pantries*. Thank you to Kraft Heinz for showing compassion for neighbors in the Ozarks who need an extra hand!

## SLUSHER FOUNDATION BENEFITS LOCAL CHILDREN

Ozarks Food Harvest is grateful for the Slusher Foundation's recent gift of \$10,000 in support of the *Weekend Backpack Program*. This generous gift will help provide nearly 1,000 bags filled with 6,000 weekend meals. This program is even more important this year, as families and students experience pandemic-related disruptions. The Slusher Foundation has donated more than \$310,000 to support hunger-relief efforts since 2000.

## J.R. ALBERT FOUNDATION GIFT PROVIDES 100,000 MEALS

Thanks so much to the J.R. Albert Foundation for its \$25,000 gift that will help provide 100,000 meals! This is the first donation made on behalf of a three-year pledge from the Foundation, which was renewed this year. The J.R. Albert Foundation strives to promote food equity, fight poverty and foster sustainable agriculture in local food systems.

## BKD FOUNDATION HELPS SERVE COMMUNITY

Special thanks to the BKD Foundation for its \$33,200 gift that will help provide 132,800 meals for children, families and seniors in the Ozarks. The foundation aims to enrich the communities BKD serves through financial donations and volunteerism. Since 2009, BKD has donated more than \$46,000 to hunger-relief efforts in southwest Missouri. We're grateful that this partner continues to generously support Ozarks Food Harvest's mission of *Transforming Hunger into Hope*.

## MCDONALD'S AND TYSON PROVIDE NUTRITION FOR FAMILIES FACING HUNGER

Ozarks Food Harvest received a 67,000-pound donation of protein and vegetables from McDonald's and Tyson Foods, Inc. to help families facing hunger during the COVID-19 pandemic. McDonald's donated more than 21,000 pounds of chicken tenders and 6,000 pounds of its southwest vegetable blend, while Tyson Foods, Inc. donated 40,000 pounds of chicken breast filets. The donation will help provide more than 55,000 meals. We're so thankful for this gift and our continued partnership with these businesses.



McDonald's and Tyson donated food for the people of southwest Missouri.

## GENERAL MILLS SUPPORTS CHILDREN WITH WEEKEND MEALS

We're grateful for the General Mills Foundation and its \$20,000 gift to the *Weekend Backpack Program*. This will help provide thousands of weekend meals for kids who aren't sure where their next meal will come from. The General Mills Foundation has supported children in southwest Missouri since 2010. Ozarks Food Harvest is grateful for how General Mills deeply cares for the community, especially where its employees live and work!

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**Kevin Richardson**, Volunteer Coach  
**Marcus Seal**, Volunteer Supervisor  
**Emilia Stauffer**, Volunteer Coach  
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Due to growth and limited space in the newsletter, all warehouse and transportation associates on the Operations team are now listed online at [ozarksfoodharvest.org](http://ozarksfoodharvest.org).

# HUNGER HERO NEWS

FEEDING FAMILIES ACROSS THE OZARKS

“Our employees are humble, generous, enthusiastic volunteers who are more than willing to serve in any way they can.”

- Mary Ackland, Ozarks Food Harvest Volunteer



American National donates to Ozarks Food Harvest.

## AMERICAN NATIONAL OFFERS SUPPORT THROUGH VOLUNTEERING AND FUNDRAISING

The employees of American National are passionate about serving the community. Since 2016, the group has donated nearly 300 hours of time to The Food Bank.

Before the pandemic began, American National offered its employees at least two half-day opportunities to volunteer each month, and several of the business' teams turned to Ozarks Food Harvest to enjoy a few hours of community outside of the office as well.

Although most American National employees are still working from home at this time, the organization encourages them to volunteer on their own. Mary Ackland, employee experience specialist at American National, hopes that the company can begin offering regular volunteer experiences again in the near future.

Mary personally enjoys volunteering because she knows she is doing something that makes a positive impact while getting to know her coworkers better.

“I've been blessed to get to know many other American National employees through our volunteer program who I would not have been able to spend time with otherwise,” she

shared. “Our employees are humble, generous, enthusiastic volunteers who are more than willing to serve in any way they can.”

Since volunteer opportunities have been limited, American National made a gift of \$15,000 to The Food Bank in November. This generous donation will help provide 60,000 meals.

“As a community, we must maintain supporting the efforts of our partner agencies, whether that be via donations or volunteering. I also believe that, as individuals, we should talk about the need with family and friends. We can raise awareness and get others involved,” Mary said.

We're thankful for the caring, compassionate employees at American National. If you are interested in bringing your employees to Ozarks Food Harvest for a volunteer session, we would love to have you! Please reach out to Jolene at [volunteer@ozarksfoodharvest.org](mailto:volunteer@ozarksfoodharvest.org) to get on the schedule.

## FOOD & FUND DRIVES

Below is a list of food and fund drives that have provided meals from Sept. 10 – Nov. 16, 2020.

- Bass Pro Shops - Drive to End Hunger — 178,560 Meals
- White River Electric — 100,676 Meals
- Stamp Out Hunger — 20,000 Meals
- Central Bank of the Ozarks — 15,337 Meals
- Abacus CPAs, LLC — 6,000 Meals
- Stomp the Blues Out of Homelessness — 6,000 Meals
- Smithfield Foods — 4,476 Meals
- Thomas Wham & Tracy McCreery — 4,000 Meals
- CNH Industrial Reman — 3,322 Meals
- MSU Homecoming - Can We Build It — 2,877 Meals
- Oasis Convention Center — 2,652 Meals
- Tau Kappa Epsilon — 1,865 Meals
- Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc. — 1,780 Meals
- Cheers for Children — 1,480 Meals
- Dickerson Park Zoo - Hunger Action Month Drive — 1,456 Meals
- Winton Policy Group, LLC — 1,000 Meals
- William White — 800 Meals
- Mister Car Wash — 751 Meals
- Springfield-Greene Co. Park Board - Splash and Sizzle — 607 Meals

Thank you so much to our ongoing food and fund drive hosts.



A volunteer works in the high tunnel at Full Circle Gardens.

## Full Circle Gardens program logs record harvest

Ozarks Food Harvest's Full Circle Gardens program has experienced tremendous growth this year! Since the beginning of 2020, Glean Team volunteers have harvested a record-breaking 54,000 pounds of fresh produce for families in southwest Missouri. This is a 20 percent increase over the past three years.

We continue to see this exponential growth thanks to our supportive partners and donors. We are so grateful for the renewed commitment of farms we've worked with in the past and for the new farms that have joined us in the fight against hunger.

Even in the midst of a pandemic, our Glean Team volunteers have continued to show up

## Volunteers needed

Volunteers are absolutely critical to Ozarks Food Harvest, and we ask you to sign up for a session today! Groups are welcome and needed. We have an especially urgent need to fill in our weekday afternoon sessions at the warehouse.

If you have volunteered with us before, we thank you for choosing Ozarks Food Harvest. If you have yet to sign up for a session, now is the time.

Whether you sign up for a weekly session or donate time once a month, we need your help to continue providing meals across the Ozarks. The need is greater than ever, and your gift of time will make a difference. You'll help provide more than 300 meals in a three-hour session!

and make a difference. We thank them for their wonderful gifts of time used to pull weeds, plant seeds and harvest veggies.

"I'm so grateful for and astonished by this continued growth! We couldn't do any of this without the help from our partners and volunteers," Alexa Poindexter, Full Circle Gardens manager, said. "They continue to amaze us with their generosity and commitment to fighting hunger."

The weather might be chilly, but our volunteers are still working hard in the high tunnels at our garden in Rogersville this winter! If you are interested in volunteering, please visit [ozarksfoodharvest.org/volunteer](http://ozarksfoodharvest.org/volunteer) to sign up and get on the schedule. We can't wait to see you!

2021 will bring a new set of challenges, and we need your help to meet them. We're grateful for the work the National Guard has accomplished with us over the past eight months, but our need for volunteers will be even greater without their assistance.

If you would like to sign up with your business, class or organization, please contact Jolene Thompson, volunteer engagement coordinator, at 417-865-3411.

Your health and safety are priorities to us, and rest assured we are following strict safety protocol, wearing masks, social distancing and increasing sanitation procedures. Please free to reach out to Jolene with any questions you have about our sessions. We'll see you soon!

# VOLUNTEERS

Below is a list of individuals and groups who have donated 12+ hours of time from July 6 – Aug. 31, 2020.

## INDIVIDUALS

Andrew Bailey	Wil Hardiman
Janet Bay	Samuel Hendricks
Shance Beckwith	Ann Hilmo
Charles Bowen	James Hubbell
Trudy Bowen	Marty Johnson
Debra Brady	Mary Keidle
Kaleb Brooks	Kathy Kraus
Caleb Bryant	Donald Landon
Kim Burton	Dave Lappin
Kenneth Carnahan	Justin Larese
Karla Carroll	Paige Latta
Tom Carson	Alec Layton
Kalim Choudhury	Colton Maggard
Gale Clithero	Dillon McConnell
Raif Cook	Cindy McDonough
Marilyn Corson	Monta Montgomery
Kacey Davis	Timothy Moore
Eileen Deal	Peter Nester
Gary DeHaven	Sarah O'Toole
Desiree Dixon	Steve Petr
Kris Dreesen	Austin Pfister
Hannah Duff	Melody Pierson
Danny Edwards	Derek Ruda
Arlene Eichler	Alisa Severn
Jeff Foster	Beth Sherbo
Whitney Franklin	Margene Terrill
Linda Gillick	Mary Thomas
Haley Gumm	Margaret Thomure
Sydney Gutierrez	Lona Wait
Alexander Hamm	Stella Wilber

## GROUPS

Antioch UMC	MSU Care
Central Bank of the Ozarks	MSU Cell and Molecular Biology Society
Expedia	MSU Marketing Association
Faith for Life - Campbell UMC	On The Lam Sams
Hendrickson Family	OTC Health Sciences
John Deere	Seasons Hospice
Remanufacturing Leadership	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
King's Way UMC	Wesley UMC
Kraft Heinz	
MSU ASCE - Student Chapter	

We appreciate all of the time and effort our volunteers give on a regular basis.



Volunteers sort produce in the warehouse.



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