

For Immediate Release

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Grant to Aid Local Hunger-Relief Efforts

(February 21, 2007)--The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance recently received \$20,000 to provide training to hundreds of hunger-relief agencies across the state. Funded by Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. and America's Second Harvest - The Nation's Food Bank Network, training will help agencies launch new standards that enhance food safety and improve operations.

More than 900 agencies, serving all 75 Arkansas counties, are part of the Alliance network of front-line hunger-relief efforts. They include soup kitchens, emergency food pantries, and shelters for domestic abuse victims and the homeless. Most of them are operated primarily, if not solely, by volunteers. Many operate in rural or isolated areas of the state and in areas of extreme poverty. Almost two-thirds of agencies surveyed by the Alliance requested training to help them improve their long-term stability.

"This wonderful new grant allows us to reach out with information designed to help agencies operate more efficiently and effectively. These hard-working staffs and volunteers continually face shortages of funds, adequate equipment, facilities and transportation. Training will help them build capacity to keep up with the growing numbers of hungry people in our state," said Debra Alich, executive director of the Alliance.

During 2006, more than 20 million pounds of food and grocery products were distributed by the Hunger Relief Alliance network. A recent report by the US Department of Agriculture confirms that the number of hungry people in Arkansas is growing. The Department ranks Arkansas as having the third highest incidence of hunger in the nation.

The Foodbank of North Central Arkansas, located in Norfork, Baxter County, is one of the participating members of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. The Foodbank

of North Central Arkansas serves over 40 agencies throughout Baxter, Boone, Marion, Newton, Searcy, Stone, Izard, Fulton, and Sharp Counties.

According to Linda Finley, the Foodbank's executive director, "We have seen a definite increase in the number of people with food insecurities coming to our community agencies. We appreciate this agency training opportunity funded by Wal-Mart, Inc. and America's Second Harvest. This training will help us to better meet the needs of people in our communities who are hungry."

In addition to food safety and reporting guidelines, training topics will also include grant writing, volunteer recruitment and training, and marketing.

Other members of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance include the Arkansas Foodbank Network, Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas, Harvest Texarkana, Ozark Food Bank, Potluck – Food Rescue, and River Valley Regional Food Bank.