



Illinois 4-H Press Release

Date: July 17, 2007

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4-H Continues to Make a Difference

Springfield, IL - The 4-H CAN Make A Difference Food Drive is back in action for its eleventh year at the Illinois State Fair held in Springfield on August 10–19.

Citizens are encouraged to join forces with 4-H youth to help eliminate hunger by getting involved in this campaign. All donors will receive a discount coupon for some of their favorite fair foods when they bring a bag, box, or can of non-perishable food to the State Fair. Fairgoers can also contribute by buying raffle tickets at the House of Food display or at numerous other locations throughout the fairgrounds. There are several exciting prizes again this year including a John Deere riding lawn mower. All proceeds help purchase food supplies that are critically needed at food pantries across the state.

Citizens are also encouraged to donate at local businesses in Springfield. Schnucks, Shop-N-Save, and Cub Foods in the Springfield area are offering pre-bagged bundles of non-perishable food items that shoppers can purchase at their stores from August 5–19. During this time, Bergner's, located at the White Oaks Mall in Springfield, will also have collection bins for citizens to drop off donations.

All donated food items will be taken to the Central Illinois Food Bank where they will be distributed throughout the state according to the greatest need.

The 4-H CAN Make A Difference Food Drive is partnering with the Illinois Department of Agriculture, as well as other state agencies and businesses. The Illinois Farm Bureau, Illinois Beef Association, Illinois Pork Producers Association, US Bank, and WFMB Radio are just a few of the proud sponsors of this year's effort to help fight hunger.

Since the program began, 4-H members have collected more than 2.3 million pounds of food. In addition, they have contributed over 2 million hours of volunteer service at local food banks, pantries, shelters, and meal programs throughout the state. For the past ten consecutive years, the program has received the Statewide Food Drive of the Year Award from the Central Illinois Food Bank and America's Second Harvest for outstanding leadership and service to citizens in need.

According to Sharon Petefish, University of Illinois Extension Specialist, 4-H Youth Development, the program began when 4-H youth became aware of the hunger problems facing Illinois families.

"The Illinois Hunger Coalition reports that 1.5 million of the state's citizens deal with hunger every day and almost half of this number is children." Petefish recently stated. "This is especially disturbing to 4-H youth since Illinois is one of the world's largest food producers," Petefish added.

Therefore, 4-H members across Illinois collect food items to restock their local food pantries in the summer and fall months when supplies run low. Illinois Food Bank officials report supplies accumulated during the winter holiday season are typically depleted by mid-May. This leaves little supply at food pantries across the state during critical summer and fall months. The demand is also heightened during this time because children who receive government-subsidized meals during the school year are at home for the summer. Thus, many families experience an exceptional strain on their food budgets.

For more information concerning the food drive, please contact the University of Illinois Extension, State 4-H Office at 217-244-9671.

4-H is the largest out-of-school educational program for youth in the United States. 4-H seeks to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, forming attitudes, and developing life skills that will enable them to become caring, competent, and contributing members of society. In Illinois, 281,462 youth participate in 4-H youth development programs through U of I Extension. More than 25,300 adult volunteers assist in the programming. For more information about 4-H in Illinois, visit: <http://www.4-h.uiuc.edu>.

