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Foodbank Fighting Hunger in Rural Ohio

The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank is actively bringing the fight against hunger to rural Ohio and working to equip local charities with all the tools required to meet food needs in local communities. As part of its agency capacity building program, the Foodbank has partnered with two charities in Tuscarawas County, Journey's End Ministries in Newcomerstown and the Greater Dover New Philadelphia Food Pantry, and together in this county hit hard by unemployment and rising need for emergency food have provided the equivalent of 700,000 more meals this year than last year.

The Foodbank has increased food distribution to the Greater Dover New Philadelphia Food Pantry by over 1000% this year. Journey's End Ministries has received 167% more food than last year. Journey's End Ministries now ranks number one and the Greater Dover New Philadelphia Food Pantry number two in food received from the Foodbank in 2009, each ordering over a half million pounds through September.

The Foodbank is experiencing significant increases in demand for emergency food in 2009. While overall distribution has increased 18%, food distributed in the six rural counties served by the Foodbank has increased 67% this year. "The logistics of feeding those in need can be difficult in rural areas," said Dan Flowers, president and CEO of the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank. "These two agencies demonstrate how collaboration and strategic deployment of resources can make a huge difference in the fight against hunger."

According to Feeding America, nearly 43 percent of all client households served by food banks in the U.S. reside in suburban and rural areas. Rural communities face many challenges in getting food to people in need. Rural communities generally experience higher poverty and unemployment and have less access to public transportation, therefore lacking access to government services that could be available to them.

The Foodbank also works with the Ohio Benefit Bank program to make sure that those in need are made aware of the help available to them, through such government programs as food stamps, now known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the WIC program and other avenues of support.

Information about supporting hunger relief efforts through the Foodbank can be received by visiting their website at www.akroncantonfoodbank.org or by calling 330-535-6900.

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The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank is a non-profit organization committed to feeding people and fighting hunger by providing food and other essential products to more than 400 community organizations that operate food pantries, hot meal sites and other hunger relief programs in Carroll, Holmes, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit, Tuscarawas and Wayne counties. In 2008, the Foodbank distributed over 16 million pounds of food, providing 11.5 million meals locally for people in need.