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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Addressing food insecurity through Food Assistance Outreach

Des Moines, Iowa – While many of Iowa’s citizens struggle to put nutritious food on the table, more than 12.7% of families who are eligible for Food Assistance haven’t even signed up for help.

The Iowa Food Bank Association, a collaboration of the eight Feeding America Food Banks serving Iowa, is conducting Food Assistance outreach across the state. Funded in part by USDA, an equal opportunity provider and employer, and the Walmart Foundation, the Iowa Food Bank Association assisted with 1,535 applications for potentially eligible Iowans during the last reporting year. This has led to an estimated local economic impact of \$2,880,896 across the state.

“We have two outreach workers and numerous volunteers traveling the state providing the outreach,” said Cory Berkenes, Executive Director for Iowa Food Bank Association. “Our goal is to reach those families that may be eligible but, for whatever reason, have not applied for the assistance.”

One of the most common reasons people give is that they don’t believe they are eligible because they make too much money. But a single-person household with a gross monthly income of up to \$1,557 may qualify; for a family of four, the gross monthly income is \$3,181. Almost 51% of all SNAP participants are in working families.

The Food Assistance Program, referred to as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at the federal level, is a central component of federal policy to alleviate hunger and poverty. The program’s main purpose is “to permit low-income households to obtain a more nutritious diet...by increasing their purchasing power”, according to the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008. The Iowa Food Bank Association is working in cooperation with the Iowa Department of Human Services on the outreach effort.

“No one should have to choose between medicine and food or between dinner on the table or heat in the house,” said Berkenes, noting that “over 137,000 Iowans often have to make those choices.”

The Iowa Food Bank Association (IFBA) is a collaboration of the eight Feeding America food banks that serve all of Iowa’s 99 counties. Together, the food banks serve over 1,000 non-profit organizations serving individuals in need. These organizations include food pantries, emergency meal sites, congregate meal sites, emergency shelters, and other sites that provide food to clients. The mission of IFBA is to coordinate efforts to alleviate hunger by supporting the Feeding America food banks that serve the state. Collaborative efforts will allow the food banks to become more efficient and effective in serving hungry Iowans.