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SUMMER SWEET CORN HARVEST TO BENEFIT HUNGRY IOWANS

(May 26, 2015) Des Moines, Iowa – For most Iowans, the arrival of summer coincides with the availability of abundant and delicious farm fresh foods, including sweet corn.

But many people do not have the opportunity to partake in the summertime staple, particularly those who are food insecure.

A unique partnership involving the Iowa Food Bank Association, Food Bank of Iowa, J & E's Delicious Sweet Corn of Kellogg and the Iowa Food & Family Project will provide a taste of summer to those most in need. By pooling time, talents and resources, nearly 500 dozen ears of sweet corn will be grown, harvested and donated to the Food Bank of Iowa for distribution throughout central Iowa.

The sweet corn seed, donated by Monsanto, was recently planted by Jacob and Emily Van Manen, owners of J & E's Delicious Sweet Corn. Under their supervision and with a little cooperation from Mother Nature, the one acre of GMO sweet corn will be ready for harvest by mid-July.

"Something as seemingly simple as purchasing sweet corn at a roadside stand, farmers' market or grocery store isn't an option for nearly 400,000 hungry people throughout the state," says Cory Berkenes, executive director of Iowa Food Bank Association. "We thank the many partners who, by working together, have made this unique project happen. It will bring a summertime favorite direct from the farm to those who rarely have the opportunity to enjoy it."

Jacob and Emily Van Manen are well known for growing and selling great-tasting sweet corn and welcome the opportunity to help those in need.

"I'm grateful to be a farmer in the heart of the nation's bread basket. But like many Iowans, I often take for granted the plentiful food we have," Jacob said. "Not all families have that same assurance of knowing where their next meal will come from, which is why we're proud to take part in this project."

Once harvested, the sweet corn will travel from the farm to the table in less than one week. It will be distributed by Food Bank of Iowa and its partner agencies at various locations throughout central Iowa, including the downtown produce stand on Euclid that serves 200 families each Wednesday throughout summer.

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.

The Iowa Food & Family Project showcases the continuous improvement of Iowa's farm families and their dedication to providing wholesome food for everyone through innovative partnerships, fun activities and personal engagement. It involves nearly 40 dedicated partners and proudly serves as presenting sponsor of the Iowa Games and supporter of Live Healthy Iowa. Feed your curiosity at www.iowafoodandfamily.com, Twitter (@foodnfamilies) and Facebook (Facebook.com/foodnfamilies).