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Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank Reaches Multiple Milestones *40 Years of Neighbors Helping Neighbors*

PITTSBURGH, PA (Monday, December 14, 2020) – In June 1980, Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank opened its doors in Pittsburgh’s Hill District. The once-thriving steel industry, which had been in a slow, steady decline for nearly 30 years, began to rapidly deteriorate during the early 1980s. In January 1983, the region’s unemployment rate hit 18.2 percent leaving 212,000 people unemployed, many hungry and in need of emergency food assistance.

40 years later, hunger is at an all-time high due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, due to unemployment and poverty caused by the pandemic, there is currently a 42 percent increase in food insecurity in Southwestern Pennsylvania, including a 57 percent increase in childhood hunger.

December marks the 40th year of operation for the Food Bank, now headquartered in Duquesne. Since its inception, the food bank has evolved from providing shelf-stable, nonperishable food items, to distributing more than 12 million pounds of fresh, nutritious produce in 2020. The organization’s “bold goal” is for produce to account for half of all food distributed by 2025.

Over the past 40 years, as the world of food banking has evolved, the Food Bank has moved beyond emergency food assistance. Today, the Food Bank has a network of more than 500 partner agencies (including smaller regional and rural food banks, food pantries, homeless shelters and senior centers) and seven Partner Distribution Organizations (PDOs) that support additional agencies throughout an 11-county service area. In fiscal year 2020, the Food Bank network distributed enough food for nearly 40 million meals.

Lisa Scales, President and CEO of the Food Bank has been with the organization for more than half of its existence.

“What we’ve been able to accomplish over the past eight months, let alone the past 40 years, is a true reflection of our community as a whole,” said Scales. “Without the support of our donors and volunteers we wouldn’t be able to fulfil our mission for as long as we have.”

Just this week, **the Food Bank surpassed the 250-million pound milestone of food distributed since Scales began her current role of CEO in 2012.**

Since March, **the Food Bank has distributed more than 30 million pounds of food in response to the COVID-19 pandemic** through drive-up distributions, home delivery and its pantry network.

The Food Bank also kicked off the Grow Share Thrive campaign in September.

As part of the overall comprehensive campaign, in addition to a building expansion project, Grow Share Thrive will extend the Food Bank's network of partners to include organizations that can reach individuals who do not go to a traditional food pantry. The Food Bank will also open a Community Pantry at its headquarters in Duquesne to test new ideas, provide training for partners and connect those who need food to expanded resources to help stabilize lives.

"Grow Share Thrive is our vision and commitment to ending hunger and its root causes across our region," said Scales. "By expanding our infrastructure and programming, all our neighbors will have food today, tomorrow and for a lifetime. We are building the Food Bank for the Future."

"We are committed to doing more and it starts with us transforming the current food bank system to better meet the immediate needs of our neighbors, while addressing the root causes of hunger and inequality," said Scales.

In addition to sourcing, warehousing and distributing food, the Food Bank is actively engaged in confronting issues of chronic hunger, poor nutrition and health. Work includes childhood anti-hunger initiatives, special distributions to seniors and other vulnerable populations, nutrition education, anti-hunger advocacy and capacity-building efforts throughout our agency network. Through advocacy efforts, the Food Bank has become a primary driver in comprehensive anti-hunger endeavors regionally, statewide and at the national level. The Food Bank launched a new Food Justice is Social Justice campaign in August. The goal of the Food Justice is Social Justice is to create awareness about social inequality, while educating the Food Bank's service area of numerous organizations in the region that are focused on ending racism and creating equality for all.

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About Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank is a nonprofit organization that distributes nearly 40 million meals annually across 11 counties in southwestern Pennsylvania through a network of 500 agencies, partners and programs. The Food Bank was founded in 1980 and is a member of Feeding America, the leading domestic hunger-relief charity in the U.S. For more information on hunger in our region or how to get involved, visit pittsburghfoodbank.org.