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Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation Announces \$2 Million in Foodbank Grants \$250,000 Grants to Address Hunger Statewide

(Oak Brook, IL) – September 22, 2021 – As the COVID-19 pandemic surges in communities throughout the state, the Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation (ILCHF) recently approved \$2 million in funding to eight food banks serving Illinois. The new funding initiative will provide \$250,000 in grant funding over two years to each of eight Illinois-serving foodbanks for total a funding allocation of \$2,000,000. The eight grants are part of the \$15 million that ILCHF allocated to Covid-19 relief funding for distribution in 2021 and 2022.

"We are incredibly excited about this new initiative. Conversations with stakeholders, leaders of the foodbanks and Feeding Illinois helped our team gain a deeper understanding of the challenges facing the foodbanks across the state in providing nutritious food to children and families in Illinois, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic," adds Bob Egan, ILCHF's Senior Program Officer. "This funding opportunity allowed for additional eligible costs in addition to the purchase of food. A critical component to ensuring that more needs could be met," Egan continued.

In 2020, with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and emergent needs that followed, ILCHF provided two emergency rounds of funding to eight regional foodbanks totaling \$1.5 million. These funds were used to provide meals to children and families impacted by school and after school program closings and record levels of unemployment.

"This initiative differs from past ILCHF foodbank funding opportunities in critical ways, adds Matt Thullen, ILCHF's Program Officer for Evaluation. "First, this initiative is a two-year commitment on the part of the Foundation, which will provide the foodbanks with a stable source of funding through a challenging period as they attempt to respond to immediate pandemic-related needs and build capacity in order to face on-going and/or future challenges," Thullen continued.

"In addition, this initiative broadened the use of ILCHF funding to help the foodbanks improve their capacity and infrastructure to deliver healthy food to children across their distribution regions including strengthening their partnerships with local distribution sites," Thullen continues. "In general, this opportunity allows for funds to be requested for activities related to the provision of healthy food for children and families in Illinois, and within this guideline, funds may be used for costs associated with supply chain issues such as food acquisition, food distribution and other related costs, including outreach and site expansion," Thullen concluded.

"Through our historical work with Illinois-serving foodbanks, ILCHF understands the important connection between access to healthy foods and children's health," adds Egan. "While we are keenly aware of the challenges to ensuring access to healthy foods for all children that existed before the pandemic, the stark inequities highlighted by the pandemic have become more evident in recent months. We are grateful to again partner with the eight foodbanks and hope this new initiative helps mitigate some of the issues they have been seeing," Egan concluded.

The following organizations are each receiving a \$250,000 grant to support their work for Illinois residents:

Central Illinois Foodbank, Inc. - Children's Emergency Food Distribution Program

Central Illinois Foodbank will use this grant to purchase Foods to Encourage (protein, fresh produce and/or dairy), shelf-stable food and/or prepared meals to be distributed to children and their families at-risk of food insecurity. Areas served:

Adams, Bond, Brown, Cass, Christian, Effingham, Fayette, Greene, Jefferson, Logan, Macon, Macoupin, Marion, Menard, Montgomery, Morgan, Pike, Sangamon, Schuyler, Scott and Shelby counties.

Eastern Illinois Foodbank - Expanded Access to Healthy Food

The goals of this project are to identify gaps in their service to families with children and to strengthen and expand their School Pantry network to fill those gaps. Areas served: The 11 counties targeted through this project include 8 counties currently served by their School Pantry and Backpack Programs: Champaign, Clay, Coles, Cumberland, Douglas, Livingston, McLean, and Woodford. They will also target 3 counties with high child food insecurity rates currently not being served by their School Pantry and Backpack programs: Clark, Ford and Vermilion.

Greater Chicago Food Depository - Hunger Relief Initiatives for Children in Cook County, Illinois

The Food Depository will direct hunger relief efforts for children through three programs: 1) Healthy Student Market school-based pantries through which students and their families can obtain fresh produce and shelf-stable food; 2) Kids Cafes, a partner network of after-school programs that provide nourishing meals to students; 3) the Summer Meals Program, a combination of meal sites and mobile meal distributions that bridge the food gap for children when school is not in session. Areas served: All of Cook County including the City of Chicago and the surrounding suburbs.

Northern Illinois Food Bank - Providing Nutritious Food for Children

Northern Illinois Food Bank will provide distribution of nutritious food for children through their network of food pantries (school and non-school-based) and direct distribution programs. In addition to food pantries, the Food Bank provides prepared meals to children in collaboration with schools and after school and summer activity sites and provides weekend backpacks of food for children identified by school staff. Areas served: Boone, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, Ogle, Stephenson, Will and Winnebago counties.

Peoria Area Food Bank - The Peoria Area Food Bank (PAFB) & Illinois Children's Health Foundation Youth and Families with Children Mobile Pantry

The PAFB will distribute fresh produce, nutritious healthy food and backpack products to youth programs, schools, and health clinics. The PAFB will purchase a van and equip it with a refrigeration unit, enabling the Food Bank to pick-up and distribute food that requires a certain temperature to keep it fresh. It will provide the Food Bank a cost-effective mode of transporting food. Areas served: Peoria, Tazewell and Mason counties.

River Bend Food Bank - Hunger Relief for Illinois Children and Families

River Bend Food Bank will provide immediate hunger relief to Illinois children and families through two of their most effective programs: the Backpack Program and our Food Pantry at SouthPark Mall. Areas served: Hancock, Henry, Fulton, Jo Davies, Warren and Whiteside.

St. Louis Area Foodbank, Inc. - Food for Better Childhoods

This project will support the St. Louis Area Foodbank's Illinois child hunger programming. Funding will provide healthy food to children and their families through School Markets, mobile markets, and agency support. Areas served: Calhoun, Clinton, Franklin, Jackson, Jersey, Madison, Monroe, Perry, Randolph, St. Clair, Washington and Williamson counties.

Tri State Food Bank Inc. - Backpacks and Mobile Food Distributions

Tri-State Food Bank will provide nutritious food to children and families in two ways: They will expand their Weekend Backpack Program in southern Illinois by adding new sites in Hamilton and Johnson counties, as well as continue to support the existing Backpack program in Saline County. They will also host approximately 37 mobile food distributions in areas of highest need giving families boxes of non-perishable staples and supplementing with available fresh produce and other items such as milk and eggs. Areas served: Alexander, Edwards, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Johnson, Lawrence, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, Richland, Saline, Union, Wabash, Wayne and White counties.

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About Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation

The Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation (ILCHF) has a single vision: Every child in Illinois grows up healthy. Working through grantee partners across the state, the Foundation focuses its grant making on identifying and funding solutions to the barriers that prevent children from accessing the ongoing health care they need. For more information, go to www.ilchf.org.