



Coming **together** to fight hunger.

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HOUSTON FOOD BANK AND END HUNGER NETWORK TO UNITE TO EXPAND HUNGER RELIEF EFFORTS

HOUSTON, Oct. 10, 2008—After decades of partnering to relieve hunger, the Houston Food Bank and End Hunger Network are planning to come together by merging into one organization with a greater capacity to serve the hungry in greater Houston and southeast Texas. The boards of both nonprofits have signed a nonbinding letter of intent and expect the merger to be finalized later this fall.

The Houston Food Bank and End Hunger Network complement one another in mission and operations. The End Hunger Network is a food rescue organization in addition to operating the Red Barrel program, a food collection effort that places red barrels in area grocery stores to receive food donations from shoppers. The Houston Food Bank is the largest source of food for hunger relief charities in southeast Texas, distributing more than 36 million pounds of food annually.

“The missions of the Houston Food Bank and End Hunger Network are intertwined,” said Food Bank President and CEO Brian Greene. “Both work to combat hunger in the greater Houston area, and by merging, community resources will be maximized and used more efficiently. As a result, more people will be helped through distribution of nutritious food. The merger will allow us to expand job training opportunities and other key programs.”

The planned merger is not about cost savings, emphasized Greene, but rather growth. It will expand the Houston Food Bank’s capabilities and the reach of End Hunger Network’s programs. Operating as one organization also supports the Food Bank’s goal of distributing 120 million pounds annually in southeast Texas by the year 2018.

Both organizations are members of Feeding America (formerly America’s Second Harvest—The Nation’s Food Bank Network). Across the country, only a handful of food rescue organizations operate independently from food banks.

“When the organizations come together, End Hunger Network’s programs will continue as before, but as part of the Houston Food Bank,” said Amy Ragan, the executive director of End Hunger Network. “I am particularly excited about expanding production at our Mary Barden Keegan Hunger Relief Center, which will become the combined organization’s main meal processing facility.”

Food rescue organizations such as End Hunger Network collect perishable foods from within the community for distribution to the hungry through hunger relief agencies such as shelters, church pantries and Meals on Wheels. Food banks are charitable centers of food collection from which such partner agencies “withdraw” food items to fill their pantries for distribution within their individual communities.

End Hunger Network and Houston Food Bank Join Together/2

End Hunger Network was founded in 1985 by the late community advocate Mary Barden Keegan. Keegan established End Hunger Network to make it easier for the community to funnel existing resources to emergency food providers.

End Hunger Network's three core programs take different approaches to rescuing and preparing available food resources:

- Meal Prep uses short-dated meat donated by grocery distribution centers to prepare frozen meals that are distributed by agencies to hungry families.
- The iconic Red Barrels are available in 250 grocery stores for consumers to fill with purchased and donated nonperishable foods. They are assigned to food pantries that collect the food each week. As a result of the merger, Red Barrel will expand to more southeast Texas counties.
- Food Rescue recovers surplus perishable foods donated by food industry businesses and delivers it directly to emergency shelters, food pantries and other agencies that feed the hungry.

Houston Food Bank has 73,000 square-feet of warehouse and office space at its central location off US 59, and additional storage space off-site. In addition to distributing food, the Food Bank operates several nutrition education, outreach and job training programs, among them:

- Operation Frontline: Six-week courses in nutrition, food safety, meal preparation
- Culinary Academy: 12-week foodservice industry training for low-income underemployed adults
- Kids Cafe: Nutritious meals for up to 500 kids each month served at local Boys & Girls Clubs
- Backpack Buddy Club: Backpacks are filled with food for hungry kids to take home from school on Friday to ensure they have nutrition over the weekend
- Second Chance: On-the-job training and certification for inmates of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice
- Social Services Outreach: Assistance in application for food stamps and other state-funded social services

Staff members of End Hunger Network will be incorporated into the Houston Food Bank staff, and the combined organization's board will include members from the existing boards of both nonprofits. Merger plans are undergoing legal review and should be finalized soon.

For more information, contact Houston Food Bank at 713-223-3700.

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About the Houston Food Bank

The Houston Food Bank is filling pantries and filling lives. Each week, more than 80,000 people can eat thanks to the network of nearly 400 charities that receive fresh produce, meat and non-perishables from the Houston Food Bank. More than 36 million pounds of food travels from the Houston Food Bank to reach hungry people in 18 southeast Texas counties. In addition to food distribution, community services range from nutrition education to assistance with food stamp applications and hands-on job training. Founded in 1982, the Houston Food Bank is a certified member of Feeding America, the Nation's Food Bank Network.

About End Hunger Network

End Hunger Network, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, channels surplus food to people at risk for hunger in 18 southeast Texas counties. Through its three programs—Meal Prep, Red Barrel, and Food Rescue—End Hunger Network provides the transportation, processing, and logistical expertise to prevent nutritious foods from ending up in Houston-area landfills. Each day, this innovative network collects enough to feed 8,000 people and prepares about 5,000 meals in its one-of-a-kind Mary Barden Keegan Hunger Relief Center. To learn more about End Hunger Network and how to help Houston's hungry, please visit www.endhungernetwork.org.