



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## UNITED WAY, FOOD BANK TAKE STEPS TO EASE FOOD SHORTAGE

United Way of Monroe County and the Hoosier Hills Food Bank announced a special initiative to increase the amount of food available in Monroe County.

Despite having distributed over 1 million pounds of food so far in 2006, the Hoosier Hills Food Bank is struggling to keep pace with the needs of its member agencies. "Our agencies are serving more and more people but so far this year we've only been able to provide 1% more food than in 2005. There is not a single can of fruit or vegetables in our entire warehouse. We're flush with snacks, juice and milk, but we desperately need the items our pantries and kitchens use most – canned meat and canned fruit and vegetables," said food bank director Julio Alonso.

In response to the growing demand and with the help of its community partners, Hoosier Hills Food Bank (HHFB) will join the more than 80% of food banks nationwide that operate food purchase programs in addition to accepting donated food. As part of the America's Second Harvest network of food banks, HHFB has access to discounted and donated food offered by national vendors.

"We simply can't keep food coming in at the same rate it's going out so we've placed an order for 27,288 pounds of food including canned fruit, vegetables and beef stew. The total cost of 50 cents per pound is significantly lower than the \$1.50 per pound average value of donated food," said Alonso. "This is not something we've ever done before and we can probably only do it periodically, but our community partners have stepped up to make it possible. **United Way of Monroe County** is providing \$5,000 in additional funding to which we will add \$6,800 from our budget, in part because of an increase in our social services grant from the Monroe County Commissioners. A grant from Perry Township will cover transportation costs of about \$2,000."

United Way Executive Director Barry Lessow said, "One of United Way's community goals is that everyone has access to sufficient food. We are proud to partner with the Hoosier Hills Food Bank, and help the local agencies in its network meet the needs of their clients with quality, nutritious food. The Food Bank deserves our thanks for the many ways it helps address hunger in our community."

The food bank is also asking the community to help restock its shelves. Alonso cautioned that while the occasional purchase of food will help the agency weather shortages, Hoosier Hills will continue to rely most heavily on community food drives and donations. “This purchase order will bring us some great food, but it won’t last long and then only if we limit the weekly amounts the agencies can take. This is a generous community that’s already given more food than last year and we usually see a jump in food donations around the holidays, but unfortunately, we have to ask for help before that.”

Community residents may use the food bank’s regular food donation box at the YMCA to donate food and from October 2-6 there will be food collection bins at the Monroe County Courthouse, Bloomington City Hall and Ellettsville Town Hall. Ellettsville Town Council President Patrick Stoffers encouraged town residents to drop off a donation. “If we all just pick up an extra can or two when shopping it can make a big difference,” said Stoffers. Donations are also accepted at 615 North Fairview Street each weekday from 9am to 5pm. While any non-perishable food items are accepted, canned meat, fruit and vegetables are the greatest need. Businesses or groups interested in sponsoring a food drive may call 334-8374.

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**Hoosier Hills Food Bank** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that collects, stores and distributes food to non-profit agencies that feed the hungry. HHFB serves more than 80 member agencies that reach over 6,400 clients each week in six counties. In 2005, the agency distributed 1,679,915 pounds of food. HHFB is a United Way member agency and an affiliate of America’s Second Harvest-The Nation’s Food Bank Network. For more information, call 334-8374 or visit [www.hhfoodbank.org](http://www.hhfoodbank.org) .

**United Way of Monroe County** is a nonprofit organization that improves people's lives by engaging the caring power of our community. Through community partnerships, United Way works to ensure that Monroe County residents have access to sufficient food, housing, health care and emergency services. United Way also invests in programs that strengthen children and youth, support efforts for seniors to remain independent, and promote workforce preparation. United Way can be reached at 812-334-8370 or [www.monroeunitedway.org](http://www.monroeunitedway.org).