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PRESS RELEASE

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ST. MARY'S FOOD BANK ALLIANCE ANNOUNCES \$10 MILLION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO DRAMATICALLY EXPAND SERVICES

Funding will support increased food distribution to community; expansion of after-school feeding programs and Community Kitchen training facility

Phoenix, Ariz. – St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance, the world's first food bank, is announcing today a campaign to raise \$10 million for capital improvements that will allow the distribution of more food into the community, including dramatic expansion of an after-school feeding program and a culinary training course focused on life skills.

Food Bank President and CEO Terry Shannon said the capital campaign, titled *Ending Hunger, Changing Lives*, was first envisioned two years ago by the organization's Board of Directors in order to take a proactive stance against growing hunger in Arizona. Today, Shannon said, more than \$7 million has been pledged by community leaders toward the goal.

“The response from community leaders has been immediate and very, very supportive, but we have more to do,” Shannon said. “With today’s economic challenges, some may question the decision to move forward with such an endeavor. But if you think about it, there is no better time for us than right now to raise our voices and gain the community’s support for those who can’t do it for themselves.”

The St. Mary’s Food Bank capital campaign effort is being led by co-chairs Kevin and Sydney Knight of Knight Transportation; David Rousseau of Salt River Project; Alicia Harrison of Wells Fargo; Dale Rich of Albertson’s; Randi Freeman; Nancy Stone of ILX Resorts; Barry McBride of Sun Cornerstone Group and chairman of the Food Bank board; and Ayla Dickey of the University of Phoenix.

Funds raised from the capital campaign will focus equally on three main areas: expanding the production capacity of the organization’s Kids Cafe® program to allow more children to be fed after school; streamlining the way Food Bank partner agencies select and pick up food at St. Mary’s warehouses to accommodate more agencies; and relocating the kitchen and classroom space to increase student capacity of its Community Kitchen program.

Kids Cafe

Nearly one in every five Arizona kids lives in poverty – and 40 percent are children under the age of five. In 1998, the Food Bank launched its first Kids Cafe. Sites for this program currently include schools, community centers, and houses of worship and on average, the Food Bank provides up to 2,100 meals daily to children at 30 Kids Cafe sites.

Through the Capital Campaign, St. Mary’s hopes to increase the number of Kids Cafe cold meals that are prepared daily to more than 12,000 and to also begin a hot meal service. Existing production facilities at its Surprise location will be increased by 1,500 square feet and an additional 2,000 square feet of production space will be added in a renovated building adjacent to the 31st Avenue and Thomas Road warehouse.

Agency Food Selection and Distribution

In recent months, demand for food from the Food Bank has increased by 80%, and St. Mary's is distributing more than seven million pounds of food into the community each month. Community centers, domestic violence shelters, transitional homes, and agency representatives are able to select, free of charge, the food that best meets the needs of their clients.

By 2016, it is projected that 1.15 million people in Arizona will live in poverty and will need help. In order to provide nutritious food to the agencies that serve them, St. Mary's Food Bank will renovate its 31st Avenue and Thomas Road location to become the food box production center for all locations; add 6,000 square feet to its Surprise location and relocate all food sorting activities to that facility; as well as move agency food selection and distribution to its new Thomas Road building.

Community Kitchen

The first program of St. Mary's Food Bank to directly address the roots of poverty, the Community Kitchen is a life-changing 15-week training program that transitions low-income adults into a career in foodservice. It teaches students not only culinary skills, but also critical life skills while they prepare nutritious meals for the hungry in the community. Program staff help students find permanent jobs following graduation.

A priority for this program is to increase the number of students each semester and have 1,500 graduates in the workplace by 2016. The Food Bank plan for the Community Kitchen, currently housed in temporary quarters that can only accommodate 10 students, is to build a 3,000 square foot foodservice training facility in the new Thomas Road facility that will accommodate 50 students at one time.

"Now more than ever our neighbors - the working poor, seniors on fixed incomes, the children living in poverty, the family experiencing job losses due to layoffs or reduction in hours due to furloughs - all of them need our help," Shannon said. "With one in seven

Arizonans already living in a family environment below the federal poverty level and one in five children in Arizona at risk of going to bed hungry at night, we knew we had to take some dramatic steps to make sure we were prepared to serve the growing need.”

More information about the *Ending Hunger, Changing Lives Capital Campaign* is available at www.firstfoodbank.org.

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ABOUT THE FOOD BANK: St. Mary’s Food Bank Alliance, the world’s first food bank, is a non-sectarian, nonprofit organization that alleviates hunger by efficiently gathering and distributing food to 534 sites that serve the hungry. Serving 13 of Arizona’s 15 counties, the organization is a member of Feeding America, the national network of food banks, and is committed to volunteerism, building community relationships, and improving the quality of life for Arizonans in need. During Fiscal Year 2007-2008, the Food Bank distributed 43.4 million pounds of food to families and individuals, provided enough food for 200,000 meals every day, and garnered more than 230,000 volunteer service hours. Web site: www.FirstFoodBank.org Phone: 602-242-FOOD.