



2831 N. 31st Avenue • Phoenix, AZ 85009 • (602) 352-3640 • Fax (602) 352-3659

www.FirstFoodBank.org

MEDIA ALERT

Contact: Melody Hanna (602) 343-3160

Cell: (602) 621-0526

mlhanna@FirstFoodBank.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 8, 2008

ST. MARY'S FOOD BANK ALLIANCE AIMS TO SEND HUNGER PACKING

Many in Arizona are Learning that Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation

Phoenix, AZ - For the neediest in Arizona, summer is a difficult time. This summer, as all too many are learning, it's not just those below the federal poverty level who are feeling the daily pressure of balancing a budget. Increased gas, food prices, and high electric bills, combined with a difficult and falling economy, are creating a challenging situation for low- and middle-income individuals and families as well.

St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance and Gila River Casinos are aiming to mobilize the community with its *Send Hunger Packing* summer campaign. "Contrary to popular belief, hunger doesn't take a vacation during the summer," commented Terry Shannon, St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance's President and CEO.

To send hunger packing, the Food Bank and its community supporters, Gila River Casinos, along with SRP and US Airways, will promote a number of summer activities to make easy for the public to help. The community is encouraged to visit the Food Bank's Web site at www.FirstFoodBank.org for updates on what's happening during the summer in the community, including food drives and promotions with the Arizona Diamondbacks, the Arizona Cardinals and Fry's and Bashas' grocery stores.

The support raised during the summer will help those depending on the Food bank. According to a recent Energy Department report, by June gas prices are projected to average \$3.71 per gallon. Currently, Arizona's gas price at \$3.45 a gallon is among the highest in the nation. Food prices have increased at the fastest rate in more than 20 years, and shoppers are finding their grocery dollar is not spreading as far.

Conditions for food banks are equally as challenging. “The Food Bank’s monthly fuel bill to operate a fleet of trucks to pick up and distribute donated food has increased 20 percent over last year,” continued Shannon. “The food we purchase in truckloads to supplement donation shortages is costing us more than last year.”

###

PHOTO OP: THE MEDIA CAN ATTEND THE *SEND HUNGER PACKING* KICK-OFF EVENT ON MAY 15, 11:30 - 1 OR 3 - 5 P.M., TO GET MORE DETAILS, AS WELL AS INTERVIEWS WITH THE FOOD BANK’S CEO AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM GILA RIVER CASINOS.

For statistics on poverty and hunger, media inquiries, photos or interview requests, please contact Melody Hanna at (602) 343-3160, (602) 621-0526 or mlhanna@firstfoodbank.org.

ABOUT ST. MARY’S FOOD BANK ALLIANCE: 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 675 sites that serve the hungry. Serving 13 of Arizona’s 15 counties, the organization is committed to volunteerism, building community relationships, and improving the quality of life for Arizonans in need. During Fiscal Year 2006-2007, the Food Bank distributed 51.5 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: 602-352-3640.