

For Immediate Release

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Hunger-Free Minnesota Launches Program for Gardeners to Donate Extra Produce

MINNEAPOLIS (July 26, 2012) Hunger-Free Minnesota today launched "Good to Grow", a program to increase fresh produce donations by individual and community gardeners. The program is part of the organization's goals to help close the missing meal gap in Minnesota. The program also aims to support good nutrition by expanding the supply of fresh fruits and vegetables available to those who are on limited incomes.

While Hunger-Free Minnesota is also working on programs to encourage farm surplus donations, "Good to Grow" brings this initiative to the individual. "We want to make it easy for individuals and community gardeners to participate in fighting hunger in our neighborhoods," said Ellie Lucas, chief campaign officer for Hunger-Free Minnesota. "We want to make sure those extra tomatoes, squash and carrots never go to waste. No donation is too large or too small."

The program, supported by partner Minnesota Public Radio, includes the following elements:

1. Commit to Share

Gardeners are encouraged to visit the Hunger-Free Minnesota website and commit to donate at least five pounds of produce this year to an area food shelf or food sharing site. Five pounds of produce is the equivalent of 4.1 meals.

2. Matching Garden Bounty with Need

The Hunger-Free Minnesota website will offer a matching service by zip code for gardeners to find a food shelf, meal program or food bank where they can donate their extra produce (whether it's close to home or cabin).

3. Free Garden Produce Bag

The first 200 who pledge to donate garden excess will get a cotton recyclable "Good to Grow" garden bag.

4. Harvest Tips

Hunger-Free Minnesota will provide garden harvest/donation tips throughout the balance of the summer/fall harvest season.

5. Spread the Word

Gardeners are asked to share their photos of donations and produce through social media channels, such as Facebook and Twitter for Hunger-Free Minnesota and to consider growing for those in need next year.

Matching in advance is important because of the limited shelf life of fresh fruits and vegetables. "You need to know where to go when your bean crop is ripe and you are heading out of town on vacation," explained Lucas. "Our goal is to make sure there's a plan to donate that's practical."

Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) is supporting the program with its employees and through public service announcements and programming. "Our ability to reach a statewide audience easily helps the 'Good to Grow' campaign engage gardeners across the state with this simple and powerful message," added Ali Lozoff, Group Marketing Manager, Minnesota Public Radio – American Public Media. At the food shelf/meal program level, Hunger-Free Minnesota will support the program by providing marketing materials and also offering additional information on how to use produce such as kale, rhubarb, etc.

At The Minnesota State Fair

"Good to Grow" will also be featured at the Minnesota State Fair under MPR's tent by the Grandstand on Aug. 31. The State Fair is the perfect setting for talking about the upcoming fall harvest as gardeners from across the state gather to show off their produce and see the fruits of others' labors.

"We'll be matching gardeners with their neighbors in need. It's hard to think about hunger when you're at the fair, but there are people who are food insecure in every single county of our state," said Lucas. "Even if you only grow a few plants in your backyard, you can make a difference. We want your extras."

About Hunger-Free Minnesota

Hunger-Free Minnesota is a coalition of community leaders and citizens, nonprofit agencies and organizations including the Greater Twin Cities United Way, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, food banks, food shelves and corporate partners including General Mills, Cargill, Hormel Foods, Land O'Lakes, UnitedHealth Group and others. The primary goal of Hunger-Free Minnesota's three-year campaign is to close the 100 million missing meal gap in Minnesota. Initiatives in the campaign's strategic, data-driven action plan include system-wide changes, new partnerships, education, policy changes, direct grants and other support for local participating organizations. The coalition encourages individuals and organizations to "Fight Hunger Where You Live." More information is available at www.hungerfreemn.org.

About Minnesota Public Radio

Minnesota Public Radio® (MPR) operates a 43-station radio network serving virtually all of Minnesota and parts of surrounding states. Reaching one million listeners each week, Minnesota Public Radio produces programming for radio, Internet and face-to-face audiences, and is home to the largest and most experienced radio newsroom in the Upper Midwest. Programs produced by Minnesota Public Radio's parent company, American Public Media™, reach over 17 million listeners on more than 800 radio stations nationwide each week. A complete list of stations, programs and additional services can be found at www.mpr.org. Source: Data are copyright Arbitron, Inc. Arbitron data are estimates only. Spring 2011/Fall 2011 average.

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