

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Contact Olivia Greenich Stern
Food For The Hungry Digital Content & Marketing Director
(330) 260-4059
oligreenich@gmail.com**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**HEADLINE: 2023 Food For The Hungry LIVE was a success as the goal of raising $260,000 was achieved.**

MOUNT VERNON, Ohio — The 42nd anniversary of the Food For The Hungry Drive brought Knox County residents, businesses, schools, and organizations together to help fight food insecurity. These collective efforts resulted in donations totaling $296,009.36 and 12 truckloads of food, and the total is still climbing!

Community members came together again this year to support food assistance projects and provide emergency client services through Interchurch Social Services, The Salvation Army, and other food assistance organizations of Knox County.

Volunteers staffed 12 different collection points around the county on Friday, Dec. 8, to collect food and money, while local media combined to produce Food For The Hungry LIVE, a seven-hour broadcast on radio and the internet. Thanks to KAT (Knox Area Transit), Bethany Celmar, Joe Porter and their team from KAT and Mobility Management for helping at the county-wide collection points.

 Food For The Hungry LIVE featured 21 different food assistance organizations and awarded each a Winter Grant. The grants totaled **$39,500**. The organizations and their awarded grants are as follows:

* ***Central Christian Church Food Pantry - $2,000***
* ***CHOMP Free Produce Market at Mount Vernon Mulberry Church - $2,000***
* ***Church on the Rise Food Pantry - $2,000***
* ***Cornerstone Community Church Hot Meals Program - $2,000***
* ***Covenant Church Food Pantry - $2,000***
* ***The Escape Zone - $2,000***
* ***First Congregational United Church of Christ Hot Meals Program - $1,500***
* ***First Presbyterian Church Hot Meals Program - $2,000***
* ***Freedom Center: A Drug & Alcohol Rehab Center - $1,000***
* ***Gay Street United Methodist Church Hot Meals Program - $2,000***
* ***Jacqueline McCalla-Cordle Children’s Fund - $3,000***
* ***Knox County Career Center Food Pantry - $2,000***
* ***Knox Learning Center - food for students - $2,500***
* ***Lazarus Life Ministries - a recovery for men coming out of addiction - $1,500***
* ***LifePoint Church Backpacks of Hope - $2,500***
* ***New Directions Domestic Violence Support Center - $1,000***
* ***Say a Prayer Ministries/In Joy Food Pantry - $1,500***
* ***Sharing Shed of Millwood Church of Christ - $1,000***
* ***First Naz of Mount Vernon Father’s Table Food Pantry and Hot Meals - $3,000***
* ***TouchPointe Marriage and Family Resources - Knox Works Program - $1,500***
* ***Winter Sanctuary Emergency Homeless Shelter - $1,500***

**The distribution of grants is made possible by the various collections within Knox County. Keep reading for exciting information on the collections!**

***The Knox County Elementary school collection*** was hosted by ***Psi Iota Xi Sorority***. The students collected $12,446.29 and 6,316 food items! That is 5.06 truckloads of food!

School Totals:

* Centerburg: 566 food items and $1,046.25
* Danville: 349 food items and $793.50
* East Knox: 556 food items and $1,286.31
* Fredericktown: 905 food items and $2,398.59
* Columbia: 773 food items and $660.58
* Dan Emmett: 283 food items and $428.25
* East: 482 food items and $696.00
* Pleasant Street: 537 food items and $613.00
* Mount Vernon Middle School: 359 food items and $1,064.75
* St. Vincent de Paul: 229 food items and $462.00
* Twin Oak: 598 food items and $1,717.00
* Wiggin Street: 552 food items and $1,174.06
* The Learning Center: 127 food items and $106.00

***The Knox County High Schools collection was a huge success.*** Local High Schools collected a total of $6,742.79 and 1,600 food items! That is 1.28 trucks!
Volunteer Shawn Dugan served as our High School Collection and Competition Coordinator.

School Totals:

* Centerburg High School: $509.00 and 389 food items.
* Danville High School: $1,090.00 and 262 food items.
* Fredericktown High School: $1,038.93
* The Knox County Career Center: $3,489.86 and 503 food items
	+ The lab that brought in the most items overall—Collision Repair
	+ The lab that brought in the most food items (no cash)—Pre-Professional Mentorship and Individualized Career Exploration
	+ Coin Wars Winner—HVAC
* Mount Vernon High School: $615.00 and 446 food items

The top three collecting schools in Knox County were recognized. The top two schools are receiving a plaque to acknowledge their achievement and contribution to Food For The Hungry.

The top class in each school receives a pizza party from Plaza Pizza in Heath and a cookie party from Sharon Valley Sweets.

The 2023 Awards are as follows:
Gold - Knox County Career Center
Silver - Danville
Bronze - Fredericktown

The Rotary Club of Mount Vernon joined as a sponsor of this year's high school collection.

***The Knox County Career Center*** ***Online Silent Auction of themed gift baskets*** brought in a total of $4,911.00

***The themed basket totals for 2023:***A Little Outdoorsy Basket -$180.00Car Care Basket #1 - $225.00
Car Care Basket #2 - $200.00
Downtown Date Night Basket #1 - $270.00
Downtown Date Night Basket #2 - $211.00
Family Fun Basket - $285.00
Foodies Basket - $420.00
Gambier Getaway Basket - $300.00
Gathering Together Basket - $250.00
Homebody Basket - $100.00
Hometown Date Night Basket - $250.00
Longaberger Basket Collection - $65.00
Mohican Getaway Basket - $300.00
Northern Getaway Basket - $240.00
OSU Basket - $100.00
Pork BBQ Basket #1 - $150.00
Pork BBQ Basket #2 - $150.00
Motorcycle - $750.00
Pretty Pampered Basket - $255.00
Wood Pellets - $210.00

***The Kenyon Snowflake Gala continues to be a significant contributor to FFTH.*** The Snowflake Gala took place on Friday evening, Dec. 8. The gala fundraising totaled $ $82,494 Kenyon presented this year's ***William A. Stroud Jr. Award for community service*** to Joe and Krys Mortellaro, Knox County philanthropists and volunteers. A new award, the Founders Award, was presented to Jerry Scott at the Gala for his dedicated years of service to the Snowflake Gala and Food For The Hungry. The award was created to recognize the outstanding efforts of the original founders of the Kenyon Snowflake Gala.

The President’s annual holiday reception collected $1,210.00 and 9 boxes of food.

Kenyon College’s overall total: $83,704.00 and 9 boxes of food.

***Mount Vernon Nazarene University*** held a campus-wide collection for FFTH with multiple events throughout the semester.

* Bring a Buck to Chapel - $177.10
* Faculty & Staff Collection - $1,480.00
* Esther Jetter Preschool Collection - $535.00 and 267 food items
* Student Christmas Party Collection - $243.18
* Happy Bean Coffee Shop - $307.33
* MVNU Athletics Basketball Game - $857.00 and 122 food items
* Euchre Tournament - $88.50
* Snowflake Gala Table Sponsorship and Fund-A-Cause Auction: $1,350.00
* Presidential Match - $1,000.00

MVNU’s Total: $6,038.11 and 389 food items.

MVNU presented the ***Stephen W. Zelkowitz Memorial Award*** to JR Bonham on FFTH LIVE. JR has volunteered with FFTH since he was a Junior in High School. FFTH is just one of the many things he volunteers to help with, but it holds a special place in his heart because he understands the importance of helping those in need in his community. We honor his incredible commitment and passion for the annual Food For The Hungry Drive and the years of service he has put in to make this annual drive possible.

The Fourth Annual Food For The Hungry ***Service Club Competition*** was a huge success with a total of $10,289.00 raised! Carol Grubaugh, Executive Director of the Knox County Chamber of Commerce organized this collection. Thanks to these Service Clubs for helping FFTH: the Rotary Club of Mount Vernon, the Kiwanis Club of Mount Vernon, the Soroptimist Club of Mount Vernon, and the VFW Post 4027 in Mount Vernon. The Soroptimist Club donated $3,550 and the VFW Post 4027 was honored on FFTH LIVE as the winner of the competition for giving $5,000.00 to the FFTH Drive.

***Other notable donations:***

* AMVETS Post 95 and Ladies Auxiliary Post #95 - $1,500.00
* Apple Valley Festival of Trees is continuing its collection until December 31
* Ariel Corporation - $10,000.00
* Centerburg Wreath Auction—$440.00
* Danville Wreath Auction—$297.00
* Elvis’ Lost Brother (Eric Bressi) collection at Rural King—$306.00
* Fredericktown Christmas Walk and Auction—$8,000.00 (preliminary total)
* Knox Community Hospital—$6,025.00
* Knox County Foundation - $5,000.00
* Knox County Jazz Orchestra Concert - $778.00 and 108 food items
* Knox Foodies Collection at Road Hog Willie’s Real Pit Bar-B-Q and Primary Vision Care - $810.00 and 1 truckload of food
* Mortellaro McDonalds—$3,000.00
* Mount Vernon Dental (along with SuperQ 93.7 WQIO)—$4,658.00
	+ They hosted a Veteran's Day Concert and collected donations at their office with FFTH Awareness Remote Broadcasts.
* Park National Bank - $2,000.00 and the use of their billboard to promote the drive.
* Praisestock - $1,200
* Public Library of Mount Vernon and Knox County – 30 grocery bags full of food
* Turkey Trot with 255+ runners/walkers—$2,242 and 675 food items

***The collection points*** played a pivotal role in the collection on Drive Day. Thank you to those who volunteered at the collection points and those who donated at these locations: the Red Rover Marathon in Apple Valley/Howard, the Interchurch Branch and Hometown Market in Centerburg, the Interchurch Branch and Hometown Market in Danville, the Interchurch Branch and Bellstores in Fredericktown, The Village Market in Gambier, and Aldi, Lanning’s Foods, Baker’s IGA, Lowe’s, Wal-Mart Supercenter, Glenn A Gallagher Centre at Ohio Eastern Star, and the Knox Memorial in Mount Vernon.

Thanks to Megan Evans, Martin Booker, and their team with the Mount Vernon Arts Consortium for their use of the Knox Memorial and their amazing support!

You can stay updated on photos, radio interviews, videos, and more at FoodForTheHungryCares.org. The video archive of Saturday’s broadcast is also available at MVNU.tv in the on-demand tab and will be available for a full year.

Thank you for doing your part to fight hunger in our community!

Food For The Hungry, celebrating 42 Years of ***working together to care for our neighbors.***

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