



Contacts:

Eddie Oliver
Executive Director, Federation of VA Food Banks
804.549.5675
eoliver@vafoodbanks.org

Amanda Allen
Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Feeding America SWVA
(540) 444-2942 (direct)
(540) 537-8984 (cell)
aallen@faswva.org

December 5, 2018

Federation of Virginia Food Banks to Launch *Milk for Good* campaign

Pilot program will be first statewide initiative to purchase milk for food insecure families

Verona— Dec. 5, 2018 — Today at the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring and Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) Dr. Jewel Bronaugh announced the launch of the *Milk for Good* campaign, the first statewide milk purchase program to benefit food insecure families. *Milk for Good* is an initiative of the Federation of Virginia Food Banks (of which Feeding America Southwest Virginia is a part) in partnership with The Dairy Alliance, the American Dairy Association North East, and the Virginia Dairymen's Association.

Beginning in January 2019, each of the seven food banks which comprise the Federation will receive 200 half-gallons per week over a 24 week period. The pilot phase is generously supported by a \$50,000 grant from Colonial Farm Credit, Farm Credit of the Virginias, and MidAtlantic Farm Credit.

"Food banks are on the front lines of the battle against hunger in Virginia," said Secretary Ring. "Their efforts to secure more locally processed milk will not only strengthen access to quality nutrition for food insecure families, but our agriculture economy will benefit as well. It's a win-win."

According to Feeding America's 'Map the Meal Gap' report, nearly 894,000 Virginians (including 249,000 children) experience food insecurity, which means they struggle to afford enough food at any point throughout the year. Food banks, and the pantries with which they partner, are vital resources for these families.

The 2014 Hunger Study, the most comprehensive survey of food pantry clients conducted in Virginia, found that 43% of respondents (more than 57,000 people) said they would like access to more dairy products in their local pantries.

"Dairy products, and fluid milk in particular, are among the most in-demand items at our 2,000 partner agencies," said Federation Executive Director, Eddie Oliver. "This program will put fresh milk in the hands of families who need it most and will advance our efforts to increase the availability of nutritious products on our pantry shelves."

Cold storage capacity has long been one of the greatest barriers to providing milk through the food bank network. In response, The Dairy Alliance granted \$49,000 in new refrigeration units to eighteen pantries throughout the Commonwealth. Additionally, the American Dairy Association North East, which supports the dairy industry in five northern Virginia localities, granted \$8,250 for new coolers at three Alexandria pantries.

“On behalf of the dairy farm families of Virginia and the Southeast, The Dairy Alliance is proud to partner in the implementation of the *Milk for Good* program, helping to ensure that hungry families across Virginia have better access to nutrient-rich, wholesome milk,” stated Molly Szymanski, Chief Operating Officer for The Dairy Alliance.

To support the *Milk for Good* program and help it reach even more families, visit <http://vafoodbanks.org/milk> and make a donation today.

About Feeding America Southwest Virginia

Feeding America Southwest Virginia was founded locally in 1981 and proudly commemorates 37 years of fighting hunger and changing lives through community partnerships. For the last three and a half decades, the Food Bank's ultimate mission has remained the same: eliminate hunger in the region. The primary function of the Food Bank is to secure and distribute large quantities of food for Southwest Virginia's hungry. Approximately \$26.5 million worth of food and grocery related products are channeled annually through a network of more than 330 partner feeding programs in our 26-county, 9-city region that provide food or meals to those in need. The local Food Bank is an affiliate member of Feeding America. Visit www.faswva.org for more information or like us on [Facebook](#).

About the Federation of Virginia Food Banks

The Federation of Virginia Food Banks is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit state association of food banks affiliated with Feeding America and is the largest hunger-relief network in the state. The Federation supports the seven regional food banks serving Virginia and greater Washington DC in providing food, funding, education, advocacy and awareness services and programs. Last year, Federation members distributed more than 120 million pounds of food through 2,000 community agencies.