

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Media Advisory

Feeding America CEO visiting Rochester to recognize innovative meal program and partnership between Channel One Regional Food Bank and Second Harvest Heartland

Who Members of the media are invited to hear from Virginia Merritt, executive director, Channel One Regional Food Bank who will be joined by Claire Babineaux-Fontenot, CEO, Feeding America and program partners hosted by one of the founding restaurant partners, Jennifer Lester, co-owner of Bleu Duck Kitchen.

When Wednesday, September 22nd at 2:30 pm. *Masks are required.*

Where Bleu Duck Kitchen
14 4th St SW
Rochester, MN 55902

Why Channel One Regional Food Bank and Second Harvest Heartland have received a \$200,000 boundless collaboration grant from Feeding America. The funds will be used to expand Second Harvest's prepared meals program, Minnesota Central Kitchen, to the Rochester area.

Fueled by the pandemic, 1 in 9 Minnesotans are experiencing hunger today. Transportation and meal preparation remain significant barriers to nutrition, particularly for homebound and older Minnesotans. Channel One and Minnesota Central Kitchen are stepping in to provide prepared meals to those who need them most. This collaboration between Channel One, restaurants, caterers and community partners will result in the distribution of 2,000+ meals per week to those facing food insecurity in Rochester.

With the expansion of Minnesota Central Kitchen to Rochester, Channel One Regional Food Bank will pair its ability to source donated and rescued food with restaurants' expertise in food preparation to fill a crucial need. Commercial kitchens that partnered with Minnesota Central Kitchen in the Twin Cities reported that the partnership provided critical support for their business and its staff during unpredictable times.

Any restaurants interested in donating their kitchens, talent, food or distribution capabilities are encouraged to contact Kimberly Fox at 507-424-1716 or kimberlyfox@channel-one.org

Provided Quotes *Virginia Merritt, Channel One Regional Food Bank:*
"We appreciate our partners like Second Harvest Heartland for working with us on collaborative programming and we're continually impressed with our local partners for their willingness to innovate in order to serve the needs of our community. We look forward to seeing this program and our partnerships grow."

Jennifer Lester, Bleu Duck Kitchen:

“As a restaurant owner, I see how food brings people together and how important it is to connect in this way. I realize not everyone has the resources to eat at a restaurant or even cook their meals in a home, but no one should have to go without access to healthy food. We are proud to support our neighbors who face food insecurity and have the chance to give back to a community that has supported us. The Minnesota Central Kitchen program is the perfect fit to bring the food resources of a food bank and the preparation resources of restaurants together to get meals into the hands of those in need.”

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Channel One Regional Food Bank, a member of Feeding America, strengthens food access and builds healthy communities. Channel One operates food programs to serve local and area needs such as: a food bank, a food shelf, mobile pantries, Childhood Hunger Programs, and the Nutrition Assistance Program for Seniors (NAPS). Channel One Regional Food Bank mobilizes organizations, volunteers, and donors to serve the network of more than 200 nonprofit programs that provide food for children, adults, and families in need. Channel One serves 14 counties across southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. For more information, call 507.287.2350 or visit helpingfeedpeople.org

Minnesota Central Kitchen turns food bank-supplied ingredients into nourishing, ready-made meals for our hungry neighbors through partnerships with restaurants, caterers and community partners. What began as a COVID-response initiative of Second Harvest Heartland to address immediate hunger, employment, and food rescue needs, steadily evolved into a collaboration of more than 100 partners working together to nourish our community. In its first year, Minnesota Central Kitchen has provided more than 1.3 million prepared meals across the Twin Cities metro. Learn more at 2harvest.org/mck.

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