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Channel One Regional Food Bank Launches OrderAhead, a Convenient Online Grocery Ordering System That Reduces Physical and Social Barriers to Accessing Food

Rochester, MN August 2nd – Over the past year, many of our neighbors faced a difficult realization: for the first time, they were not able to afford food for themselves or their families, as layoffs and business closures interrupted the incomes of many people in America.

Nationally, food banks are serving 55 percent more people now than before the pandemic. To provide more meals to our neighbors in need who may have challenges accessing food through traditional distribution methods, Channel One Regional Food Bank is using [OrderAhead](#) to help connect more people to food.

OrderAhead was created by Feeding America®, a nationwide network of food banks, to help neighbors facing hunger order food from a food bank or community partner and pick it up at convenient locations, like schools, drive-through distributions, and libraries. Home delivery is also an option. This program expands access to charitable food through a private, discreet and convenient ‘click and collect’ grocery ordering system that reduces the physical and social barriers encountered by our neighbors facing food insecurity.

“Our 14-county region has faced numerous challenges this past year and we have worked hard to serve our neighbors in their time of need,” said Virginia Merritt, executive director at Channel One, “The OrderAhead program will help to remove barriers to connecting more people facing hunger to nutritious food.”

For people who are uncomfortable seeking food assistance, the platform offers a more private and discreet experience. The OrderAhead program also represents a direct-to-neighbor online engagement channel for Feeding America and other member food banks.

Channel One has worked with public and private partners across the state to address the increased rate of food insecurity as a result of the pandemic. The food bank held more than 100 mobile pantries to reach those facing hunger in rural communities and added home delivery as an option for shoppers with transportation as a barrier to access. It also created its first program providing prepared meals in Olmsted County and worked with public schools in the region to address childhood hunger for students that have been distance learning.

OrderAhead is made possible thanks to support from the Walmart Foundation. Walmart and the Walmart Foundation provide donations of both food and funds to the Feeding America nationwide network of 200 local food banks. Locally, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation have donated nearly one million pounds of food to Channel One Regional Food Bank. Plus, Walmart, its’ suppliers and customers donate funds annually through the Fight Hunger, Spark Change campaign.

More information can be found at: <https://www.orderahead.org/>

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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