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Food Bank Council of Michigan nutrition program improves access to healthy food statewide

DETROIT, Mich. – The Food Bank Council of Michigan is celebrating a successful first year of its Michigan Food Bank Access to Nutrition (MIFBAN) program, a significant first step in its efforts to make Michigan a food-secure state by increasing access to food in all 83 counties.

The Food Bank Council of Michigan received a \$5 million grant from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund in 2014 to support the initiative for two years, through October 2016. That crucial funding helped to establish the MIFBAN program’s goal to improve access, and encourage low-income residents in Michigan to eat healthier. The program is focused on seniors and children. MIFBAN collaborates with local food banks to coordinate the purchase of fresh produce that is then distributed to 129 mobile sites (surpassing the original goal of 66), including direct service to schools, senior centers and other areas that suffer from high rates of food insecurity, being without reliable access to a sufficient amount of food.

“We are very proud of the number of people we have been able to reach in the first year of the MIFBAN program,” said Phillip Knight, executive director of Food Bank Council of Michigan.

“Improving the quality of health in Michigan begins with the food we eat. MIFBAN’s mobile sites successfully span across 655 zip codes in Michigan and distribute locally grown produce.”

Since the implementation of the program, MIFBAN has also provided nutrition education to more than 10,600 people monthly. In addition, more than 3,400 seniors and more than 4,400 youth have received nutrition education each month. Another aspect of the program is providing cooking demonstrations, taste tests and recipe cards to help people make the connection between nutrition, the preparation of nutritious meals and the benefits of practicing healthy eating habits.

“We are proud to support The Food Bank Council of Michigan and the positive impact they are having on the health of Michigan’s seniors and children,” said Paul Hillegonds, executive director of Michigan Health Endowment Fund. “The MIFBAN is increasing access to healthier food and reducing the risk of chronic disease for thousands of Michigan’s most vulnerable citizens.”

The mission of the Michigan Health Endowment Fund is to improve the health of Michigan residents and reduce the cost of health care, with special emphasis on the health and wellness of children and seniors. The fund was created as part of 2013 state legislation that allowed Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan to become a nonprofit mutual health insurer. Nearly \$38 million in grants were awarded by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund in 2014 with an additional \$8.5 million awarded in December to 29 Michigan community health foundations.

Additional information can be found at the Food Bank Council of Michigan website at fbcmich.org.

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About the Food Bank Council of Michigan

The Food Bank Council of Michigan’s mission is to create a food secure state through advocacy, resource management, and collaboration among stakeholders and Michigan’s unified food bank network. FBCM works with its seven regional food banks and more than 3,000 hunger relief agencies, private companies, farmers, state and federal officials and other allies to make sure Michigan residents don’t go hungry. For more information, visit fbcmich.org or call 517-485-1202.