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NEWS RELEASE

SAVING GRACE CELEBRATES FIVE YEARS OF FEEDING THE HUNGRY WITH EXCESS PERISHABLE FOOD

2,687,820 meals to feed the hungry - using excess healthy perishable food that otherwise would have been thrown into dumpsters.

That's the impact Saving Grace Perishable Food Rescue has made during its first five years of operations with a simple, yet powerful, mission: Connect excess perishable food from local food purveyors to local nonprofits that feed our hungry, while raising awareness and educating the community on food waste and hunger.

The grassroots nonprofit agency founded by Beth Ostdiek Smith in 2013 celebrated its fifth birthday on September 30. Operations began with one refrigerated truck and professional driver who picked up excess perishable food from three local businesses and delivered it the same day – free of charge – to three food pantries. Today, Saving Grace's three refrigerated trucks operate at capacity, and plans are underway to add a fourth truck to meet increasing demand for services.

"As I reflect on our significant growth in our first five years, it's because we've created a sustainable model to address food waste and hunger in the Greater Omaha area," Smith says. "I'm grateful for our growing network of food donors who realize the value of donating healthy excess perishable food to feed the hungry rather than tossing it in the dumpster, as well as our partner agencies that use this good food to feed their clients. It's also gratifying to see community members embrace our 'no food waste' movement."

Saving Grace currently picks up donations from 51 locations – grocery stores, restaurants, caterers, event centers, convenience stores, wholesalers and schools. These donated fruits and vegetables, dairy products, prepared and prepackaged meals, meats, grain products and other healthy foods are delivered to a network of 37 nonprofit partner agencies operating at 40 locations. The after-school programs, food pantries, shelters, transitional living facilities, senior centers, on-site meal programs and health clinics feed some of the most challenged children, seniors, veterans and families in the Omaha area.

"Saving Grace has provided a collaborative and unique approach in donating food to Omaha's most vulnerable citizens," says Lonnie Michael Jr., a Saving Grace board member since 2013. "Providing healthy perishable food options to communities who could not otherwise afford it is a game changer in our city."

Consider Saving Grace's impact during its first five years:

- The 2.6 million pounds of excess perishable food rescued is valued at more than \$4.5 million.
- More than 1,300 tons of food has been saved from entering the landfills.
- Thousands of community members have engaged in the “no food waste” movement created by Saving Grace by pledging to reduce food waste in their own lives and in their community and by supporting Saving Grace’s work.
- 51 business locations are helping feed the hungry, supporting their sustainability plans and saving on dumpster costs by donating their excess food to Saving Grace.
- 37 nonprofit partner agencies are providing nutritious foods delivered by Saving Grace to their clients, which saves on agency food costs and enables them to direct more of their resources to other client programs.
- Saving Grace experienced a 270% growth in food rescued from 2014 (the first full year of operations) through 2017. Donations for 2018 total 651,541 pounds through the end of September, which is on track toward the 2018 goal of rescuing and redistributing 826,000 pounds of food.

“I am really happy to see that Saving Grace can collect and reuse a lot of food,” says Nathan Newhouse, owner of Attitude on Food. “I am glad we can help in the community.” Without Saving Grace, Attitude on Food would throw away thousands of pounds of food annually.

“You hate to see food go to waste when you see so many people in need,” says Eric Crawford, chief executive officer of Heart Ministry Center. He appreciates the variety of food Saving Grace provides for Heart Ministry Center’s pantry, as well as the relationship the agency has with Saving Grace. “Both of us have the goal of trying to assist people with food needs. Being able to take that issue on with each other is helpful.”



Cutline: Saving Grace professional driver/food handler Stacey Lee prepares to unload food donated by Greenberg Fruit at Heartland Hope Mission. They are two of Saving Grace’s six original food donor and food recipient partners.

About Saving Grace Perishable Food Rescue

Saving Grace connects excess perishable food from local food purveyors with local nonprofits that feed the hungry, while also raising awareness and educating the community about food waste and hunger. Find out more at www.savinggracefoodrescue.org.