

For Immediate Release

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### **Butler County Launches Fourth Annual Holiday Community Project**

Social service agencies in Butler County want to make it simpler for families facing financial hardships to apply for help during the holiday season, and make it simpler for individuals or groups to donate or to volunteer.

This is the fourth year for the Butler County Holiday Community Project, a countywide effort to coordinate drives that offer holiday baskets between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Butler County United Way, Shared Harvest Foodbank and Butler County 2-1-1 are coordinating the project.

The goal is to make it easier for families who want to sponsor a family in need or volunteer their time while also making it easier for agencies to identify families who need assistance.

"Maximizing resources and leveraging additional volunteers is the right way to support Butler County families during this holiday season. The agencies which are part of this collaboration are committed to making sure more families have a special holiday season," says Maureen Noe of Butler County United Way.

Butler County 2-1-1 will maintain a list of all participating agencies in the Holiday Community Project and refer families needing help or families who want to help to the closest agency. A list of needs and available services for the Holidays will be constantly updated through the 2-1-1-information service.

"Based on the increase in the number of families requesting help for everyday basic needs, we expect this holiday season to follow suit." MaryAnn Baker of Butler County 211 explains.

Participants in the Holiday Community Project hope the use of Butler County 2-1-1 will make it easier for volunteers to find a local church or social service agency that needs help preparing or delivering holiday baskets.

Shared Harvest Foodbank has developed and will maintain a database of families receiving holiday food baskets or gifts, based on information provided by participating agencies.

The database will identify problems with duplication so the agencies involved can determine who will provide the baskets.

“All of the agencies participating in this project began meeting in August with the realization that resources are being stretched thin just keeping up with emergency needs, let alone providing for the holidays,” Tina Osso of Shared Harvest Foodbank explained. “With past years successful projects, we know that working together and sharing information is the best way to maximum our resources to serve as many families as possible. This project also provides a coordinated way for families, businesses, churches and schools to provide sponsorships and volunteers who want to help but don’t know what to do or who to call,” Osso goes on to say.

Osso said last year the Holiday Community Project resulted in serving 2,589 Families representing 4,168 Adults 4,458 Children with holiday baskets and gifts. Participating agencies this year are The Family Resource Center in Oxford, Family Services of Middletown, Lighthouse Food Pantry, Mercy Franciscan at St. Raphael’s, New Life Mission, Salvation Army-Hamilton, Oxford Community Choice Pantry, Hamilton Living Waters, Salvation Army-Middletown and Supports to Encourage Low Income Families. There are needs in the community that can only be filled by people volunteering their time, talent and treasure. Call Butler County 211, county-wide information and referral service, today to sponsor a family and/or volunteer!