

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF SECOND HARVEST FOODBANKS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

December 7, 2006

RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR LOW-INCOME, CONTINGENT AND SEASONAL WORKERS

Programs reach out to employers, offer seminars and onsite assistance to employees

COLUMBUS, OH – A new tool is available to enable Ohio employers to help their employees take advantage of programs and benefits from the state and federal government. The Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (OASHF), in partnership with The Benefit Bank, an Internet-based, counselor-assisted program, is helping low- and moderate-income households apply for tax credits, child care assistance and other state and federal tax credits and programs.

“We are reaching out to employers because they are an integral tool in helping employees access the benefits they are entitled to,” said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, OASHF executive director. “Many workers look to the human resource departments of their employers for counsel on these issues; by using the resources of The Benefit Bank, companies of all sizes are prepared to advise their employees.”

The Benefit Bank helps low- and moderate-income households apply for state and federal benefits and services, including:

- The child/dependent care credit, the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit;
- Federal Food Stamps;
- Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP);
- Healthy Start / Healthy Families; and
- Ohio Works First.

“We know that many families don’t understand that these benefits are available, or they don’t know how to access them,” said Hamler-Fugitt. “For some, the thought of going to several aid offices and filling out a number of confusing applications is overwhelming – The Benefit Bank makes the process easy by providing a one-stop resource for all programs and benefits.”

Through The Benefit Bank, Ohio’s families can become eligible for the assistance they need. 83 percent of families using The Benefit Bank found out they were eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit, and 72 percent learned they were eligible for badly needed food stamps. In 2004, when The Benefit Bank connected families to child care subsidies, those benefits averaged \$4,000 per child.

Hamler-Fugitt said that The Benefit Bank offers the following free resources to Ohio employers to help their employees learn more about these assistance programs and get necessary benefit information:

- Posters for breakrooms and common areas,
- Articles for company newsletters about aid and benefit programs,
- Presentations for management,
- Training for human resource and employee relations staff members, and
- Onsite employee clinics staffed by Benefit Bank workers and volunteers.

To learn more or to schedule a meeting with a representative from The Benefit Bank, call OASHF at 614/221-4336 or visit the association’s Web site at www.oashf.org.

###

CONTACT: Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, 614/221-4336 or 614/271-4803

51 North High Street, Suite 761 Columbus, OH 43215 614/221-4336 (P) 614/221-4338 (F) www.oashf.org