



# THE COLUMBUS FOUNDATION

## **The Ohio Benefit Bank Express Ribbon Cutting Ceremony**

March 5, 2009

Remarks by Douglas F. Kridler,  
President and CEO of The Columbus Foundation

Thank you, Governor Strickland. You have been a tremendous advocate for the Ohio Benefit Bank right from the start, and it has certainly paid dividends to the people of the state of Ohio, especially to the working poor.

And what a success the Ohio Benefit bank has been. The Ohio Benefit Bank was started in Ohio by grants totaling \$213,000 from the donors of The Columbus Foundation three years ago this month. I stand here before you to say that there is no grant in the history of The Columbus Foundation that has leveraged so much for so many people as has our support of the Ohio Benefit Bank. In those terms, the grant to start up the Benefit Bank is the single most successful grant we have made in our 65 year history.

The momentum of this Ohio Benefit Bank is building to astonishing proportions. In the month of February alone, over \$17.8 million in benefits were received by the people in Ohio, in the form of tax credits, public benefits, and other assistance. In total, more than 59,000 Ohioans have been connected with over \$85 million in support in the three years of operation.

The support that people are receiving from the Ohio Benefit Bank can help reduce poverty and hunger, increase employment and education, and reduce recidivism. And, at this time when everyone is talking about economic stimuli, please note that these benefits, when received by Ohioans, also boosts spending in our local communities. For example, the federal government pays 100% of all food stamp benefits and every \$5 in food stamp spending generates an additional \$9.20 in economic activity.

The problem is that over \$1.5 billion in mostly-federal work supports is unclaimed every year in Ohio; over \$39 billion is unclaimed nationally. We want the people of Ohio to receive their fair and full share of these benefits. That's what the Ohio Benefit Bank is all about – helping Ohioans compete for resources they deserve.

We wouldn't be standing before you today without the support and leadership of our Governing Committee, a selfless group of civic leaders committed to strengthening and improving our community for the benefit of all of its residents. David Meuse, the Foundation's Governing Committee chair is with us today, as is Governing Committee member Michael Fiorile. I stand up at occasions such as this to deliver the speeches, but they are the ones without whose approval none of these investments happen.

The Ohio Benefit Bank also wouldn't have been successful without the careful and expert stewardship of its growth by the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks. There is no effective philanthropy without effective nonprofits, and Second Harvest is one very effective nonprofit. So much so, that The Columbus Foundation singled Second Harvest out to receive our first multi-year, deep commitment— a funding partnership under our Continuous Improvement grants program started this year.

It is under this program, with the guidance of Foundation staff Lisa Courtice and Emily Savors, we made a grant investment of \$350,000 to cover the entire cost of this Ohio Benefit Bank Van, including its operation for the first two years. Built in central Ohio for Ohioans, funded by central Ohio donors – this is a great example of our community's concern for others, a defining attribute of Columbus, Ohio.

So, it has come time for The Columbus Foundation to hand the keys to this extraordinary mobile resource - the Ohio Benefit Bank Express – to the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks. The Columbus Foundation is excited to be doing this because we know how much more flexibility this will give Second Harvest and their faith based and community partners help people in need, and we are excited because, going forward, the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks will be in the drivers seat of this powerful new engine of help for central Ohioans – and we couldn't hope for anyone better to take this to the streets from here. In the race for relief for thousands of central Ohioans in need, Second Harvest and their faith based and community partners couldn't be a better team to support.

**For more information, please contact:**

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