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NEW MOBILE UNIT HELPS NEEDY OHIOANS ACCESS FREE BENEFITS
Ohio Benefit Bank provides on-the-go service to aid low- and moderate-income Ohioans

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Benefit Bank (OBB), a Web-based, counselor-assisted program that connects low- and moderate-income Ohioans with access to potential work supports, today rolled-out an all-new mobile unit that allows counselors to set up a Benefit Bank site anywhere in the state. The *OBB Express* was unveiled on the Ohio Statehouse Lawn during a ribbon-cutting event.

The van, funded through a major grant from The Columbus Foundation and built in Ohio by Farber’s Specialty Vehicles of Reynoldsburg, will be used in communities across the state to help connect needy Ohioans to potential work supports and other public benefits. Some of the benefits that can be claimed through OBB include health care coverage, home energy assistance, child care subsidies, food stamps and tax filing assistance.

“In Ohio, many working families and individuals struggling to make ends meet are not aware that they may be eligible for work support and public benefits,” said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director for the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks, the OBB lead agency. “In fact, each year, more than \$1.6 billion in tax credits and other work supports go unclaimed by eligible Ohioans who do not apply, and more than 95 percent of those credits are federal dollars.” Hamler-Fugitt said the *OBB Express* will make it even easier for needy Ohioans that do not have access to transportation to qualify for help in their local communities.

Among the van’s key features are:

- Two fixed work stations with monitors and laptops;
- Eight removable work stations including wireless laptops, two wireless printers, tables and chairs;
- Roll-out awning and pavilion tent for outdoor events; and
- Roof-mounted satellite for Internet access virtually anywhere in the state.

“The Ohio Benefit Bank is a critical tool in the fight against poverty in our state,” said Governor Ted Strickland. “The program helps restore stability for our low- and moderate-income working families, and it helps the state to make better use of available federal funds while acting as an

economic stimulus to boost Ohio's economy. I commend the staff of the Ohio Benefit Bank and The Columbus Foundation for their time and commitment to this successful collaboration."

"With so many families struggling to pay their bills and put food on the table in today's economic environment, we want to do our part to strengthen the infrastructure of our local communities," said Doug Kridler, president and CEO of The Columbus Foundation. "Our partnership with the Ohio Benefit Bank and the state's foodbank network reflects our commitment to doing more to help organizations that help Ohioans in need."

The *OBB Express* will be staffed by two full-time counselors, who will travel the state helping families qualify for these important programs through local community events at schools, libraries, churches and other locations. The mobile program will supplement OBB's existing outreach efforts, which include onsite locations in nearly all 88 Ohio counties.

Since September 1, 2006, OBB has grown to more than 860 sites, sponsored by more than 800 different faith-based, community and private sector organizations. More than 3,700 counselors across Ohio are trained to use the OBB to help low- and moderate-income Ohioans claim tax credits and public benefits for which they are eligible. Since the program's inception, OBB has helped more than 50,000 Ohioans claim over \$80 million in tax credits and public benefits.

To learn more about the Ohio Benefit Bank or to locate a site nearest you, call 1-800-648-1176 or visit www.OBB.Ohio.Gov.

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