STOMP OUT HUNGER
The Mason County Retired Senior Volunteer Program is now a permanent drop-off location for the Mason County Schools backpack program.

Angela Turner, Mason County RSVP director, said the center will begin collecting items for the backpack program on Monday.

According to Turner, items that are needed include, but are not limited to, puddings, Jell-O, cookie snack packs, snack mix, cereal, chips and other items.

Turner said some items, such as granola bars, cannot be accepted because they contain nuts.

“This program aids in feeding around 200 students distinctive throughout the weekends. The donations that we seek are individually packaged snack items that do not contain nuts and that are not processed in a factory with nuts,” she said.

However, she does have a backup plan if such items are donated.

“If we receive something that can’t go to the backpack program, we can send it to the food bank,” she said. “So it won’t go to waste.”

Turner said the RSVP chose to become a drop off location in order to help the school district.

“We want to be more involved with the backpack program,” she said. “It helps our community and they help us.”

RSVP is located in the welcome center off the Simon Kenton Bridge.

Food insecurity is described as “the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.”

And while a state of hunger may most often be associated with life in a third-world country, that is not always the case. Sometimes it applies to those who live in our own communities.

According to Feeding America, a non-profit nationwide network of food banks, one in six children in the United States may not know where they will get their next meal.

Area food banks help by providing groceries to stretch food dollars. And many school districts offer or work with other agencies on a backpack program which discreetly sends food home with children for weekends and holidays when school cafeterias are closed, providing students with nutritious and easily prepared food items when school meals are not available.

Item drop off will begin on Monday at 10 a.m. Items will be collected during business hours Monday through Friday between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Mason County Schools Superintendent Rick Ross said he was very appreciative of the efforts.

“Every year, we have more and more students who are relying on that program,” he said. “We appreciate the RSVP organization doing this; and we appreciate all of the community efforts to assist with that program.”

Programs available to fight hunger

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 12 percent of the U.S. population has limited access to nutritious food. Hunger can impact your work performance, mood, overall health, and the rate that children learn and grow. USDA works to increase food security and reduce hunger by providing children and low-income individuals with access to food, health and nutrition information, and education.

In honor of National Hunger Awareness Month, Benefits.gov wants to highlight some of the food and nutrition programs available to nutritionally at-risk infants and children up to age five who are nutritionally at-risk.

Special Nutrition Program for Women, Children, and Infants

This program provides federal grants to states for health care referrals, supplemental foods, and nutrition information for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, or postpartum women, as well as infants and children up to age five who are nutritionally at-risk.

Farmers Market Nutrition Program

This program provides coupons for fresh, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs to eligible individuals. Coupons can be used to buy certain foods at approved farmer’s markets and roadside stands or directly from farmers.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

The largest food and nutrition program in the United States, the Food and Nutrition Service partners with state agencies, nutrition educators and local organizations, to help eligible families and individuals buy healthy food and educate them on nutritional choices.

If you need nutritional assistance immediately, contact the National Hunger Hotline at 1-866-348-6479 or 1-877-842-6273 (in Spanish). Hotline staff can help you find food near your home. We encourage you to take our Benefit Finder questionnaire to help determine your eligibility for over 1,200 benefits. You can also browse the Food and Nutrition category of benefits to find additional resources.

RSVP began collecting items for the Mason County Schools backpack program recently.

Terry Prather, The Ledger Independent

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September is Hunger Awareness Month

Hunger fast facts

Hunger is the world’s number one health risk. It kills more people every year than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined. (Source: Hunger stats, World Food Programme)

One in seven people in the world will go to bed hungry tonight. (Source: Hunger stats, World Food Programme)

925 million people do not have enough to eat, 16 percent of the world’s hungry population and do not qualify for any federal nutrition assistance programs. (Source: FAO news release, September 2010)

65 percent of the world’s hungry live in only seven countries: India, China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Ethiopia. (Source: FAO news release, September 2010)

Under-nutrition contributes to five million deaths of children under 5 each year in developing countries. (Source: Under five deaths by cause, UNICEF, 2006)

There are more hungry people in the world than the combined populations of the United States, Canada, and the European Union. (Source: Hunger stats, World Food Programme)

Women make up a little over half of the world’s population, but they account for more than 60 percent of the world’s hungry. (Source: Strengthening efforts to eradicate hunger, ECO- SOC, 2007)

Iron deficiency is the most prevalent form of malnutrition worldwide, affecting an estimated 2 billion people. Eradicating iron deficiency can improve national productivity levels by as much as 20 percent. (Source: World Health Organization, WHO Global Database on Anaemia)

Federal SNAP benefits, once called food stamps, and free school lunches can be a life-saver for area residents who find themselves unable to buy enough groceries to last a month or even a week.

September is Hunger Awareness Month and during the entire month, the Ledger Independent will be putting the spotlight on hunger and food insecurity in our area and on helping local food banks stock their shelves.

A new report released recently by the United Nations Department of Agriculture on food insecurity found that one in seven people in the United States encountered difficulty at some time during 2018 in providing enough food for their family.

The report underscores that while progress has been made, Kentucky has more work to do to address food insecurity. Food insecurity is a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members.

The prevalence of food insecurity in Kentucky remains higher than the national average. The average rate of household food insecurity among Kentucky households from 2016 – 2018 was 14.7 percent. The average national rate over the same time period was 12.7 percent. State-level estimates were obtained by averaging 3 years of data in order to have a larger sample size to provide more reliable statistics.

Even though higher than the national rate, the prevalence of food insecurity in Kentucky has gone down by 2.9 percentage points. The 2013-2015 average food insecurity rate for the commonwealth was 17.6 percent.

“We are encouraged to see movement in the right direction on hunger in Kentucky,” said Feeding Kentucky Executive Director Tamara Sandberg. “We must continue to work together to close the hunger gap. It is unacceptable that any Kentuckian would struggle to put food on the table—let alone one in seven.”

Among people who are food insecure, approximately 10 percent have incomes above 185 percent of the federal poverty line and do not qualify for any federal nutrition assistance programs. For these households, charitable food assistance may be the only option to put food on the table.

Other key national findings from the report:

— In 2018, the typical food-secure household spent 21 percent more on food than the typical food-insecure household of the same size and household composition.

— Rates of food insecurity were higher than the national average for all households with children and particularly households with children headed by single women or single men; for women and men living alone; and for Black and Hispanic- headed households.

— Households in rural areas experienced considerably deeper struggles with hunger compared to those in metro areas, with higher rates of food insecurity overall (12.7 percent compared to 10.1 percent), and higher rates of very low food security (4.8 percent compared to 4.2 percent).

“September is designated as Hunger Action Month and we are working with local businesses and community groups to gather food for our local food banks,” said Ledger Independent Publisher Rod Baker. “I did some research and found out that in our coverage area it is estimated that one in seven people struggle with hunger, and we have the means to rally the community to help out in this effort.”

The Ledger Independent, in cooperation with Stover Diners, will be conducting a food drive during the month of September with drop-off locations in the newspaper lobby at 120 Lime- stone Street, at Stover Diners, 1781 Downey Drive and Odyssey Canvas, 6889 U.S. 52 in Ripley. More locations may be added later. Suggested items include:

— Canned fruits and vegetables
— Baked macaroni and cheese
— Canned pastas (ravioli, spaghetti and meat- balls, etc.)
— Dried pastas (spaghetti, macaroni, etc.)
— Pasta sauce
— Canned soup
— Peanut butter
— Saltine crackers
— Cereal
— Oatmeal
— Cornbread mix
— Dried beans
— Canned beans

Cash donations will also be accepted.

“I’d encourage you to take a moment and bring a items to us or one of the drop off points. All the rest of the month we will be gathering what’s collected and distributing it to our local food banks. I can’t think of a better way to kick off the holidays season than this and I want to thank you in advance for your participation,” Baker said.

The report, Household Food Security in the United States in 2018, is published by USDA’s Economic Research Service on data collected in December 2018. Data for the ERS food security reports come from an annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau as the December supplement to the monthly Current Population Survey.

To see the full report, visit https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/94849/err- 270.pdf?v=9631
GEAR UP AGAINST HUNGER

STOBER Drives is gearing up against hunger for Hunger Action Month. By raising awareness, donating non-perishables and motivating the community to get involved, we will provide multiple families with proper meals and nutrition. Millions of Americans are in need of assistance. Every donation, every meal, and every act of kindness counts. Please help us drive out hunger!

www.stober.com