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**FEEDING AMERICA® FOOD BANKS HAVE CRUCIAL NEED FOR MORE MILK
*‘The Great American Milk Drive’ Launches to Make it Easy to Give a Gallon of Nutrient-Rich Milk to Your Local Food Bank with a Click of a Mouse or Text Message***

**MIAMI, FL, April 2, 2014** -- That gallon of milk you consider a staple in your refrigerator is missing in many of America’s food banks.

According to Feeding America, the nation’s largest domestic hunger-relief organization, milk is one of the items most requested by food bank clients, yet there is a nationwide shortage because it is rarely donated. That will soon change with today’s launch of [**The Great American Milk Drive**](http://www.MilkLife.com/give), the first-ever national program to help deliver highly desired and nutrient-rich gallons of milk to hungry families who need it most.

Hunger impacts 1 in 6 Americans, including 12.5 million families who do not have access to adequate nourishment to help them reach their full potential. Hunger has no boundaries and is a problem that exists in urban, suburban and rural communities. [Map the Meal Gap](http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx) shows how hunger impacts every county in the country. With its network of more than 200 food banks and 61,000 food pantries, soup kitchens and emergency shelters throughout the country, Feeding America helps provide food to families in need.

It’s been a challenge for Feeding America to meet the demand for milk due to the lack of donations – canned goods and other non-perishable items are more likely to be donated. Now, it’s going to be easier for Americans to lend a hand and contribute nutritious milk to food insecure families.

With a simple click of a mouse ([www.MilkLife.com/give](http://www.MilkLife.com/give)) or text message (text “Milk” to 80077), it will now be possible to buy much-needed milk and donate it for as little as $5.00 to a family who does not have regular access to milk. By entering your zip code, you can ensure that the milk is delivered from the farm to a local Feeding America food bank in your very own community.

“We serve 37 million Americans each year through our network of food banks but, unfortunately, our clients receive the equivalent of less than one gallon of milk per person per year,” said Bob Aiken, CEO of Feeding America. “This has been an ongoing problem that hasn’t gotten the attention it deserves. Now we have a chance to do so much more, and I couldn’t be more thrilled. Increased donations of milk means increased protein and other nutrients for our clients and their families.”

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[The Great American Milk Drive](http://www.MilkLife.com/give)is made possible by the nation’s dairy farmers and milk companies. Barbara Bermudo of Univision’s *Primer Impacto* is joining the cause to help raise awareness of the scarcity of milk in food banks and help all families by increasing their access to fresh milk. The goal of the campaign is to deliver two million gallons of milk to food banks across the country.

**Nourishing Our Nation – The Need Is Greater Than Ever**

Many Americans are pressured financially due to a convergence of economic stresses – which means more people are turning to their local food bank for help. Compared to four years ago, one million more people are seeking emergency food assistance from the Feeding America network each week. Increasingly, food banks have introduced nutrition criteria for the meals served to clients. For Feeding America, two-thirds of the food banks in the network follow the USDA’s MyPlate guidelines for a balanced meal – which includes a serving of milk.

“We have a responsibility to make sure we are getting those in need the most nutritious food possible,” said Aiken. “Providing nourishing items like milk and fresh produce makes a huge difference in the nutritional quality of the meals we’re able to provide and hopefully makes a real difference in our clients’ lives.”

A recent network survey of Feeding America food banks revealed that 94 percent of respondents are actively working on improving the nutritional quality of meals provided to food bank clients. Yet, 95 percent of those surveyed say they do not receive enough milk to meet the demand. The number one reason cited is inadequate milk donations.

Milk tops the list of the food items most requested by food bank participants (85 percent), followed by fresh fruits (77 percent) and fresh vegetables (74 percent). While several recent initiatives have focused on getting more produce into feeding programs, The Great American Milk Drive is the first program to help resolve the milk shortage.

“Milk makes any meal more nutritious, which is important for all families, but it’s especially vital for those who are food insecure,” said registered dietitian and nutritionist Su-Nui Escobar. “Milk is a source of high-quality protein that’s often in short supply in feeding programs, and it offers three of the top nutrients most likely to be missing in the American diet – calcium, vitamin D and potassium. Milk can help power potential – but only if you have access to it. We need to be sure everyone has access to nutrient-rich milk, and together we can get more nutritious food to those who need it most.”

Feeding America, whose network includes more than 200 food banks, is encouraging Americans to join [The Great American Milk Drive](http://www.MilkLife.com/give)to help provide the much-needed milk to food banks in their area. By visiting [www.MilkLife.com/give](http://www.MilkLife.com/give), you can learn more about the need for more nutritious foods like milk in America’s food banks and how a small donation can make a significant impact.

**About Feeding America**

Feeding America is a nationwide network of more than 200 food banks that leads the fight against hunger in the United States. Together, we provide food to more than 37 million people through 61,000 food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters in communities across America. Feeding America also supports programs that improve food security among the people we serve; educates the public about the problem of hunger; and advocates for legislation that protects people from going hungry. Individuals, charities, businesses and government all have a role in ending hunger. Donate. Volunteer. Advocate. Educate. Together we can solve hunger. Visit <http://www.feedingamerica.org/>. Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/FeedingAmerica](http://www.facebook.com/FeedingAmerica) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/FeedingAmerica](http://www.twitter.com/FeedingAmerica).

**About MilkPEP**

The Milk Processor Education Program (MilkPEP), Washington, D.C., is funded by the nation's milk companies, who are committed to increasing fluid milk consumption. The MilkPEP Board runs the Milk Life campaign, a multi-faceted campaign designed to educate consumers about the powerful nutritional benefits of milk – with 9 essential nutrients, including high-quality protein, in each 8 ounce glass. For more information, go to www.MilkLife.com. Lowe Campbell Ewald is creative agency for the Milk Life campaign – from America’s milk companies. MGSCOMM is the agency for the Hispanic Milk Mustache “got milk?”® campaign.

**About National Dairy Council**
National Dairy Council® (NDC), the non-profit organization founded by dairy farmers, is committed to nutrition education and research-based communications. NDC provides science-based nutrition information to, and in collaboration with, a variety of stakeholders committed to fostering a healthier nation, including health professionals, educators, school nutrition directors, academia, industry, consumers and media. Established in 1915, NDC comprises a staff of registered dietitians and nutrition research and communications experts across the country. NDC is committed to promoting child health and wellness through programs such as Fuel Up to Play 60. Developed by NDC and the National Football League (NFL), Fuel Up to Play 60 encourages youth to consume nutrient-rich foods and achieve at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. For more information, visit [www.NationalDairyCouncil.org](http://www.nationaldairycouncil.org/PressandMedia/NewsAlertArchives/_layouts/www.NationalDairyCouncil.org).

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