



“Compassion in Action”

Ozarks Food Harvest's \$4.1 Million Campaign


OZARKS
Food Harvest
The Food Bank

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Hunger is a relentless enemy. It robs the body and distracts the mind. For anyone who has not seen hunger firsthand, it may seem hard to believe, but in this country, just blocks from bustling commerce and areas of affluence, there are individuals and families struggling to put food on the table.

Older adults on fixed incomes facing rising healthcare costs; low-income families struggling with the high price of food and gas; and individuals dealing with difficult circumstances such as unemployment or severe illnesses are just a few of those sometimes challenged by a lack of food.

Each year approximately 29 percent of America’s food supply goes to waste—roughly 53 million tons. At the same time there are many people for whom this “wasted” food would make all the difference in the world. That’s where Ozarks Food Harvest comes in. By efficiently connecting the food industry’s surplus with needs in the community, Ozarks Food Harvest serves as a clearinghouse for food that would otherwise go to waste.

Transforming Hunger into Hope

Ozarks Food Harvest distributes in excess of 4.5 million pounds of food annually to more than 400 nonprofit agencies in 29 counties in southwest Missouri. When asked to describe the services they provide to hungry families, Ozarks Food Harvest responds with a single word – hope.

“So many of our recipients are the working poor,” says Campaign Co-Chair and former Board president Jim Lewis. “They have families who depend on them. They are trying to be responsible, but at the end of the day they need a helping hand.”

For those struggling, hope often comes in the form of food. “We have a program—“Food 4 Thought”—that provides children with

Campaign Name: “Compassion in Action”

Campaign Goal: \$4.1 million

Amount Raised: \$4.4 million

Campaign Objective: To secure \$4.1 million to build a new 44,000 square foot facility to increase OFH’s ability to accept, process and deliver more than 10 million pounds of food annually to its 29 county service area in SW Missouri.

Campaign Highlights:

- Successfully completed first multi-million campaign in the 25-year history of Ozarks Food Harvest.
- Raised more than \$1.5 million in out-of-state opportunities leveraged by more than \$2.8 million in local and regional gifts.
- Secured grants from the JE and LE Mabee Foundation (Okla.), Kresge Foundation (Mich.), William T. Kemper Foundation (Mo.), Sunderland Foundation (Kan.) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Foundation (Ill.).

backpacks filled with food for the weekend,” says Executive Director Bart Brown. “We distribute more than 7,800 backpack meals annually to 25 elementary schools.”

“Food 4 Thought” is only one of the several programs carried out by Ozarks Food Harvest. Its largest service is providing food for area programs – soup kitchens, churches, community food pantries, youth organizations and other groups who then distribute the vast majority of the food collected and processed to those who need it most.

Disaster relief efforts also benefit from the work of Ozarks Food Harvest. Organizations such as the American Red Cross and The Salvation Army often use stored foods from the warehouse in their efforts to help communities hit by tornados, floods, ice storms or other disasters.

No More Room

Another day, another delivery. One day, a truckload of food arrives at Ozarks Food Harvest warehouse. The next day, a half-load of paper goods pulls out from the same location. Shortly after, a semi-truck full of emergency boxed food is delivered from FEMA...and on it goes. As a food bank, Ozarks Food Harvest serves as a clearinghouse for food distribution to food pantries and nonprofit agencies.

As an organization, they had the know-how, passion and determination to serve. There was no shortage of food, and donations were available and accessible. The problem was a lack of space which drastically reduced the types of food that could be solicited, stored and distributed.

“Simply put, we ran out of space,” says Campaign Co-Chair and current Board president Mike Mattson. “For 15 years we had been providing the region with food. Then demand outstripped our capacity to accept, process and distribute the sufficient amount needed.”

The 24,000-square foot warehouse facility no longer had sufficient space, or the right type of space, to allow Ozarks Food Harvest to accept and process all the food donations that were possible.



Depending on the size of the trucks, food arrivals and departures were constantly a challenge. Cold storage was such that the organization regularly was forced to turn away healthy food donations. They did not have the freezer and cooler space for timely acceptance and processing.

Nothing created a greater need for a larger facility than the growing number of requests for service. “During the last five years we have seen an increase in the cost of prescription drugs for seniors; a growing number of working poor; rising gasoline prices; and soaring home heating costs,” said Brown. “All of these situations have driven more and more people to our door step.”

An effectively and efficiently configured facility with double the capacity was needed. The “Compassion in Action” campaign was conceived.

Compassion in Action

The decision to launch the quiet phase of a multi-million dollar campaign came once the campaign assessment was completed by Hartsook Companies, a full-service national fundraising consulting firm.

“The study confirmed what we believed to be true,” said Lewis. “We had an attractive mission and a track record of service that justified our request for help. Hartsook suggested that ‘compassion’ was the key word.”

Moving forward with a campaign was not an easy decision. Ozarks Food Harvest had no key people of affluence or influence on its Board. It did not have textbook campaign leadership prospects. Nor did it have a prospect pool of major donors with a long-standing connection to the organization. What Ozarks Food Harvest did have was a dedicated group of successful professionals

who believed in its mission.

“We were all concerned about our ability to make it happen,” said Mattson. “But we needed it to happen. We believed the need of clients outweighed the organization’s perceived limitations and the concerns of undertaking a campaign.”

Benchmark Funders

The “Compassion in Action” campaign was framed around benchmark funders – a big lead donor and major gift prospects who could put the organization in line for foundation funding.

“Hartsook Companies helped us frame and structure the campaign so we weren’t always focused on the daunting task of raising \$4.1 million,” said Director of Development Denise Gibson. “We learned that if we met certain benchmarks, it would qualify us to approach other major funders. We split the campaign into smaller goals and focused on reaching those benchmarks.”

Hartsook Companies President Robert Swanson, praised the professional staff and volunteer leadership of Ozarks Food Harvest for its effort to reach its goals and engage new funders. “They were successful in securing their lead donor and a \$600,000 gift,” said Swanson. “With 100 percent Board giving in place and the thoughtful sequencing of other local prospects, Ozarks Food Harvest methodically qualified itself for benchmark funders.”

A series of local foundations, financial institutions and other prospects accepted proposals and made gifts and pledges. A third of the way to goal a \$500,000 challenge grant was secured from the Kresge Foundation (Troy, Mich.). At fifty percent of goal a \$465,000 challenge grant was received from the J.E. and L.E. Mabee Foundation (Tulsa, Okla.).

“Hartsook Companies helped identify the prospects,” said Lewis. “They collaborated with us on drafting the proposals and prepped us to make the personal visits. Framing the campaign with the benchmark prospect strategy worked.”

Positive grant responses from benchmark prospects motivated the Campaign Leadership Committee to diligently pursue other individual donors, businesses and foundations. Campaign highlights included additional out-of-county and out-of-state funders from Missouri, Illinois and Kansas.

These successes positioned the organization to qualify for and receive \$1 million in charitable tax credits from the State of Missouri. “Director of Development Denise Gibson and Executive Director Bart Brown took the lead on this state-supported program,” said Swanson. “Always looking for new prospects, they seized this opportunity and secured the credits.”

Extra Benefits

Ozarks Food Harvest’s campaign generated benefits beyond a new facility. “We were told by Robert Swanson that campaigns serve to engage more people in the life of an organization and increase its profile,” said Brown. “That’s exactly what happened for us—operating dollars increased and we created new advocates in the community and across the state for Ozarks Food Harvest.”



A local group of professional women, Female Leaders in Philanthropy, learned about the organization’s “Food 4 Thought” program. They committed to raising \$200,000 over three years for the expansion of that particular initiative. They even volunteered and processed backpacks for distribution. Operation grants became more accessible and frequent as community funders learned more about the organization’s mission through the campaign.

The campaign also opened doors for major political figures to learn more about the organization and its mission. “From the Majority Whip of the U.S. Congress, to our Governor and U.S. Senator, the campaign was cause for elected officials to visit Ozarks Food Harvest to learn about the services we offered to more than 25 percent of the state,” said Brown.

“Perhaps the most important campaign lesson we’ve learned,” said Denise Gibson, “was that strong local support serves to engage strong regional and national support – it’s not either/or, but a combination of. A campaign of this magnitude was not easy for Ozarks Food Harvest, but because those in our own community believe in our mission and became involved, it was significantly easier for funders from outside southwest Missouri to become involved.”

About the Consultant – Robert G. Swanson, President, Hartsook Companies, has helped countless nonprofit organizations in social services, higher education, youth services, the arts, museums and healthcare raise funds as they seek to expand and improve services for their clients. In his more than 21 years as a fundraising professional, Robert has helped clients secure more than \$300 million in gifts and grants. Robert can be reached at robert@hartsookcompanies.com.

About Hartsook Companies, Inc. – Hartsook Companies, Inc., has served nonprofits nationwide with capital, endowment and annual campaigns; leadership support; board training; marketing and more since 1987. The firm has conducted more than 1,700 campaigns ranging from \$500,000 to more than \$1 billion. The web site: www.hartsookcompanies.com.

