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CONTACT: Cindy Elder, celder@rifoodbank.org or 401-942-6325, Ext. 213

Families, First Lady, Sen. Reed and Blue Cross & Blue Shield of RI Contribute to Food Bank's Holiday Meal Drive

Non-perishable food and cash donations help the Food Bank feed hungry Rhode Islanders

PROVIDENCE, RI – Responding to an urgent need for food assistance around the state, Rhode Islanders turned out with contributions of non-perishable food and cash donations in support of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank's Holiday Meal Drive Open House on Saturday, Dec. 3.

On Nov. 9, the Food Bank set an ambitious goal of collecting an additional 350,000 pounds of food by Dec. 30th. Thus far, the Food Bank has collected 150,000 pounds, including donated food as well as cash contributions, which equal more than three pounds of food for every dollar donated.

At the Open House, Michele Lederberg, Chief Administration Officer of Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, presented a gift of \$10,000, which will allow the Food Bank to acquire an additional 32,000 lbs. of food. First Lady Stephanie Chafee dropped by with a full carload of food to contribute, pitching in side by side with families and community members who came by to drop off contributions, sort donated food and tour the Food Bank. Sen. Jack Reed also attended the event.

Visitors also returned their "Nothing" cans, filled with spare change as a donation to the Food Bank. This autumn, the Food Bank sold cans of "Nothing" that symbolize the hunger experienced by many Rhode Islanders. Each can has a coin slot on top, and many people have been using them to collect donations for the Food Bank.

More than 60,000 Rhode Islanders now rely on the Rhode Island Community Food Bank's statewide network of 163 emergency food pantries to help meet their basic food needs. The need for food assistance in Rhode Island has risen 58% since the start of the recession four years ago.

"Most of us think of the holidays as a time of plenty, but many people in Rhode Island are struggling to put food on the table," says Andrew Schiff, CEO of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. "We want to be sure that all families have a good holiday meal, but even more importantly, we want to focus on helping families to have nutritious food every day of the month."

Between now and Dec. 30, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank will be accepting donations of non-perishable food every weekday between 7:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. at its facility at 200 Niantic Avenue in Providence. Most needed items include: peanut butter, canned tuna, canned fruits and vegetables, dried or canned beans, pasta, rice, breakfast cereal, and canned soups, stews or chili. For more information, visit www.rifoodbank.org/HolidayMealDrive.

The Rhode Island Community Food Bank is a non-profit organization located in Providence, RI. The Food Bank solicits, stores and distributes food products donated by supermarkets, wholesalers, food processors, local farmers and community food drives. The food is then distributed to the Food Bank's statewide network of more than 250 member agency programs. In the past fiscal year, the Food Bank distributed 9.4 million pounds of food. For more information about the Food Bank, please visit www.rifoodbank.org.

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