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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**One Year Into the COVID-19 Pandemic, North Texas Food Bank Reports
Significant Increases in Hunger and Response***Food Insecurity Increased by 25 Percent, Meal Distribution Increased by 45 Percent*

March 15, 2021 (Dallas) – As the nation takes stock of the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the North Texas Food Bank (NTFB) today disclosed the impact the crisis has had on hunger in North Texas.

Over the past year, food insecurity among North Texans has increased by 25 percent. This reflects a significant rise in those seeking food assistance from the NTFB Feeding Network for the very first time – approximately 40 percent of those served by the organization since the start of the pandemic. These figures reflect the historic increase in hunger across the organization’s 13-county service area. Almost 900,000 North Texans now face immediate and sustained food insecurity.

In response, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the NTFB has provided nearly 120 million meals to North Texans – a 45 percent increase over the prior year. The organization has provided over 113 million pounds of food – a 72 percent increase from the prior year – including 600,000 pounds to approximately 25,000 North Texans at a single Mobile Food Pantry event in Dallas’ Fair Park.

Early into the pandemic, the North Texas Food Bank instituted several immediate and sweeping changes to its operations that allowed the organization to not only sustain its support, but to significantly increase the food assistance it provides.

“We flipped our business model virtually overnight,” said Trisha Cunningham, CEO, North Texas Food Bank. “Our leadership team quickly recognized that we could not operate ‘business as usual’ in the face of this historic crisis. The staggering level of unemployment and public health requirements meant we needed to reimagine how to feed our hungry neighbors.”

The NTFB’s changes impacted several areas of operation:

- **Mobile Food Pantries:** Recognizing the need to get food immediately into the hands of North Texans, the food bank ramped up its Mobile Pantry program, bringing large-scale, low-touch, drive-through food assistance directly to under-served communities. Since the start of the pandemic locally, the food bank has conducted more than 375 mobile food pantry distribution events, serving nearly 150,000 families. All told, the program has provided almost 12 million meals to the North Texas community.
- **Kitted Meals:** The food bank significantly increased weekly production of kitted meal boxes to include 25-pound family meal boxes full of shelf-stable items as well as 15-pound assorted produce boxes.

- **Volunteers:** Social distancing and other public health considerations required a complete re-tooling of the NTFB’s volunteer program. Through an innovative partnership with Get Shift Done that engaged out-of-work restaurant workers, and support from the National Guard, among other changes, the food bank was able to ensure that food was safely and efficiently packaged, transported and delivered to those in need.

The NTFB also transformed its 240,000 square foot warehouse into a 24-hour operation to allow staff and volunteers to adhere to social distancing requirement while coordinating food packaging and delivery.

“The decisions we made and actions we took last year were transformative, not just for the NTFB, but for the community,” said Brad Stewart, COO, North Texas Food Bank. “Our innovative changes have made the North Texas Food Bank an even stronger, more efficient and more effective organization in the fight against hunger.”

Yet the food bank’s response to the area’s historic need have come at a cost. The NTFB projects that COVID-related costs for the organization will reach more than \$67 million since the pandemic’s onset.

The COVID-19 pandemic is also expected to have a lasting economic impact on North Texas and other communities across the country. The Dallas area is forecasted to recover economically in 2022 (source: LaborIQ), meaning many families will continue to struggle to put food on their table. According to Feeding America, the pandemic reversed the last decade's progress towards ending hunger in the United States. In 2021, an estimated 42 million people, including 13 million children, may face food insecurity.

“One year ago, the COVID-19 pandemic completely changed our way of life in North Texas, as it did for millions of people across the globe,” said Trisha Cunningham. “Thanks to the generosity of our community, the government, and to our dedicated team and Feeding Network partners, we’ve been able to provide countless families with nutritious meals, and with hope. While we have much to be thankful for, we recognize there is still much to do.”

About North Texas Food Bank

The North Texas Food Bank (NTFB) is a top-ranked nonprofit hunger-relief organization operating a state-of-the-art volunteer and distribution center in Plano, the Perot Family Campus. Last year, the Food Bank worked hard in partnership with member agencies from our Feeding Network to provide access to almost 97 million nutritious meals across a diverse 13-county service area, exceeding our goal by five years to provide access to 92 million annual meals by 2025. But the need for hunger relief is complex and in order to meet the continued need, the NTFB is always working to increase our food distribution efforts and bridge the hunger gap for children, seniors, and families in North Texas.

NTFB is a member of Feeding America, a national hunger-relief organization.

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