

News Release



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AMPLEHARVEST.ORG CAMPAIGN MARKS ITS THREE YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Fresh food previously unable to tens of millions of food pantry clients nationwide becomes increasingly available as AmpleHarvest.org, now three years old, enables more than 5,100 food pantries across all 50 states become “visible” to local growers with excess garden produce.

For Immediate Release

West Milford, NJ – (May 18 2012) – The AmpleHarvest.org Campaign, created by CNN Hero Gary Oppenheimer in March 2009 and rolled out nationally seven weeks later in May 2009 is celebrating its third birthday.

The AmpleHarvest.org Campaign was originally created to help growers share their garden bounty with those in need by providing an online clearing house (www.AmpleHarvest.org) to locate neighborhood food pantries accepting donations of freshly harvested produce. More than 5,100 food pantries (1 out of every 7 in America) spread across all fifty states have registered on the free site and more are signing up daily. A national map of the registered food pantries can be viewed at www.AmpleHarvest.org/map.

Created by a small team of volunteers and assisted by many organizations including Google Inc., the USDA, National Gardening Association, National Council of Churches and many more, the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign has been working to help neighborhood food pantries (also called food closets, food cupboards, food shelves or even food banks in some parts of the country) become visible to local gardeners at harvest time.

According to founder Gary Oppenheimer, “more than 50 million Americans including 1 out of 4 children under the age of six are food insecure, a fancy way of saying that they are hungry or are at real risk of becoming hungry. At the same time, more than 40 million people grow food in home gardens, often more than they

can use, preserve or give to friends. It doesn't have to be that way. Our goal has been to enable these millions of gardeners to easily find a neighborhood food pantry eager for their excess garden produce. Fresh produce is almost never available at food pantries.

“Gardeners historically have not donated their excess garden produce because they did not know that they should nor where they could donate because food pantries, usually located in a house of worship or other civic building without a prominent store front, sign or Internet presence, were invisible to the community. Additionally, many food pantries were not willing to accept produce because they thought they would need refrigeration and additional storage. AmpleHarvest.org utilizing what in business is called a ‘just in time’ strategy, solved all of these problems by creating an easy to use national registry of pantries and by enabling the food pantries to receive and distribute the produce on a same day/next day basis which solved their storage and refrigeration concerns. In short, AmpleHarvest.org is diminishing hunger in America not by supplying more food but by using the Internet to insure the best possible use of already available local food sources.”

The opportunity for home gardens to help food pantries nationwide is significant said Oppenheimer. “Last year, AmpleHarvest.org registered food pantries reported collectively receiving in excess of 20 million pounds of locally grown garden produce.”

Food banks, large warehouse operations that supply America's 33,500 food pantries, have been very enthusiastic about AmpleHarvest.org's work. Not only does the AmpleHarvest.org model actually cut their operating costs notes Jennifer Gilmore, executive director of Feeding America San Diego - the largest distributor of donated food in San Diego County and one of the most efficient non-profits in the nation, “AmpleHarvest.org offers everyone an easy way to help families struggling to keep food on the table. You should see the smiles the fresh fruits and veggies bring. AmpleHarvest.org is a ‘why didn't I think of that’ idea! Talk about a win-win concept - connecting gardeners with families struggling to keep food on the table”.

According to Oppenheimer, “because AmpleHarvest.org's innovative solution moves information instead of food, our biggest challenge has been attracting the support needed to expand our work. While AmpleHarvest.org has been supported in part by individual donors and small foundations supporting innovative solutions, we are increasingly relying on virtual food drives (see an example at www.AmpleHarvest.org/VirtualFoodDrive) held by corporations for their employees and trading partners. These virtual food drives enable AmpleHarvest.org to build permanent bridges between food pantries and local fresh food sources in the community rather than relying on recurring requests for money and packaged food.”

Any food pantry in America that is a non-profit organization and distributes food for free can register itself to be “findable” by local growers at www.AmpleHarvest.org. AmpleHarvest.org expects to have 10,000 food pantries, or about 1 out of every 3 in America, registered in two years. “It is our goal to enable any gardener anywhere in the country to easily find a neighborhood food pantry when they end up harvesting more from their garden than they can use. With additional support, our programs will include excess fresh food from farms, farmers markets, CSA's, and even some stores as part of our ‘no food left behind’ vision” commented Oppenheimer.

About AmpleHarvest.org, Inc.

AmpleHarvest.org, Inc. is a not-for-profit 501c3 charity which has received backing and support from the USDA, Google, Inc., National Gardening Association, the Garden Writers of America, National Council of Churches and many other groups. The AmpleHarvest.org Campaign works to diminish hunger in America by empowering growers to easily find a local food pantry eager to receive the excess garden bounty. For more information on the campaign, visit www.AmpleHarvest.org/press or call AMPLE-6-9880 (267-536-9880).

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