CSG Packs 31,000 Meals for Food Insecure

By Lisa McKinney [1]
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Seventeen percent of Tennessee’s population is considered food insecure and in need of food assistance. Members of The Council of State Governments gathered at the culmination of the 2015 CSG National Conference Dec. 13 in Nashville, Tenn. to help address the need in the Volunteer State as part of the CSG Campaign Against Hunger initiative.

“The Campaign Against Hunger is a valuable opportunity to bring public servants together to make a difference in the communities in which we hold our meetings,” said David Adkins, CSG executive director. “This is an event that not only gives us a chance to give back to those in need, but also give our members good feelings about impacting people’s lives.”

Outreach Inc., in conjunction with the CSG State Pathways to Prosperity initiative, organized attendees to package 31,000 meals for the hungry in central Tennessee. Outreach is a nonprofit organization that works to provide safe water, food and medical care to those in need.

The pre-packaged meals assembled at Outreach’s events are particularly great for backpack meal programs, said Floyd Hammer, who founded Outreach with his wife Kathy Hamilton in 2004. Backpack meal programs send children in need of food assistance home from school on Fridays with meals for the weekend.

“In Tennessee, 24.8 percent of children are food insecure,” said Hammer. “What do they do on Saturday and Sunday when they are not receiving food at school and many food banks aren’t open?”

Hammer said there is enough food in each of the 31,000 meals packaged to serve six people, so meals sent home through backpack programs are often able to feed whole families.

The CSG Campaign Against Hunger began as an initiative of Tennessee Senate Majority Leader Mark Norris, former chair of the Southern Legislative Conference, or SLC, of The Council of State Governments, who spearheaded food packaging events at SLC annual meetings. CSG also adopted the tradition at their national conferences.

“Hunger is a huge problem; it interferes in so many ways with both children and adults,” said Norris. “Hungry folks don’t work as well and hungry kids don’t learn as well.”

Meals packaged at the CSG Campaign Against Hunger event were donated to Second Harvest Food Bank, which will distribute them to the food insecure in central Tennessee. In addition, CSG presented Second Harvest Food Bank with a $5,000 donation at the food packaging even.

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