

VFW Aims to End Food Insecurity

Alarmed at the number of veterans suffering from what is being called 'food insecurity,' VFW launched the Uniting to Combat Hunger campaign on June 6

Jun 01, 2018

A study by the University of Minnesota School of Public Health found that 27 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan war vets struggle to put food on the table. Furthermore, 1 out of 8 Americans do not have enough to eat. In Kansas City alone, 15 percent of the community faces the issue of food insecurity.

Food insecurity doesn't necessarily mean just being hungry. It also means not knowing when or where the next meal will come from or how a person will feed his or her family.

"This is something VFW won't tolerate," VFW Commander-in-Chief Keith Harman said. "That's why we are teaming with others to do something tangible in our Kansas City community."

Sponsored by VFW, After the Harvest, Harvesters—The Community Food Network and Humana, the campaign aims to provide 50,000 meals in Kansas City and the surrounding areas.

To kick it off, volunteers from each of the four organizations will participate in an After the Harvest "gleaning" on June 6 to gather fresh produce.

According to Lisa Ousley, executive director for After the Harvest, gleaning is hand picking edible crops that remain in the fields or orchards after a harvest. Typically, the produce isn't visually appealing for selling in grocery stores, but tastes the same.

Located in Kansas City, After the Harvest strives to provide fresh produce to food banks, pantries, shelters and community kitchens in Missouri and Kansas.

"We are honored to join forces with the VFW, Humana and Harvesters to elevate the issue of food insecurity, especially among vets of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars," Ousley said.

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In addition to gleaning, Harvesters also will provide a food-packing opportunity during VFW's national convention in July. Collection barrels will be placed at various businesses around Kansas City through the end of July.

Convention attendees are encouraged to bring canned goods to put in the Harvesters barrels around the Kansas City Convention Center. The Harvesters Mobile Pantry will be on site if attendees would rather purchase there.

In addition to the other efforts, "dip jars" will be strategically placed throughout the convention center for those wishing to donate money to Harvesters.

"This collaboration adds to the many ways that the VFW assists and advocates for veterans, military service members and their families," VFW Quartermaster General Debra Anderson said.

*This article is featured in the 2018 May/June issue of [Checkpoint](#), and was written by [Janie Dyhouse](#), senior editor, VFW magazine. Photo courtesy of *After the Harvest*.*