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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EIGHTH ANNUAL BAG-A-THON FOOD DRIVE KICKS OFF FOR INTERFAITH COMMUNITY SERVICES FOOD BANK

The single-largest food collection event for the Interfaith Community Services Food Bank, 2820 W. Ina Road, is already underway and has expanded to include more of Southern Arizona in the effort.

It's the Edward Jones Bag-a-Thon, which culminates in a public breakfast and community collection day from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday, Nov. 8 at the Edward Jones office at 10355 N. La Canada Drive – that's the office at La Canada and West Lambert Lane. There, food donations will be sorted, loaded into trucks and transported to the ICS Food Bank to be given to households in need.

This year's food drive involves 32 Southern Arizona Edward Jones offices, the town of Oro Valley and dozens of schools and scouting groups across Pima County, all of whom are joining the effort to collect 100,000 pounds of food for ICS and other Southern Arizona food pantries.

The Sun City Community Foundation has already provided an \$8,000 grant to purchase protein items for holiday food bags to be distributed after the drive. And the Sun City Vistoso Cyclists have been busy for several weeks raising food and funds.

Anyone who wants to help can take donations to their nearest Edward Jones office, and it will count toward this year's 100,000-pound goal.

The Bag-a-Thon began seven years ago with the admirable goal of 1,000 pounds collected, and it doubled that. Each successive year, Bag-a-Thon founder Ken Blanchard of Edward Jones would set higher and higher goals, far exceeding them each time.

Though Blanchard has moved away, his 2013 food drive co-chair Peggy Klein has taken over the project, which exceeded its 75,000-pound goal last year.

Klein says it's important to remember the Bag-a-Thon is a community effort, not her effort.

"When Ken Blanchard started this, his concern was for the people in the northwest who our hungry in our own backyards," she said. "As I have worked with Ken over the past few years on this, and visited

ICS, we at Edward Jones feel it's important to do our part to help our neighbors here in northwest Tucson. ICS does a wonderful job in many areas of helping people, and we are only a small part of that."

Edward Jones wants to use the annual Bag-a-Thon as a model for other parts of the country, Klein said.

"To that regard, we have incorporated our whole Southern Arizona area, so that other areas of Southern Arizona benefit from this idea, and in that respect, we've gone beyond our borders. It's not just northwest Tucson. We've gone across Southern Arizona, from Yuma to Willcox, Oro Valley to Nogales," she said.

In 2013, the ICS Food Bank distributed more than \$1.7 million worth of food to nearly 26,000 people in more than 7,900 households. The operation has grown so much, ICS moved its food bank operation in 2011, from a 400-square-foot space to an adjoining 2,700-square-foot facility to better handle the volume.

"The need for emergency food remains great throughout our community," said ICS Chief Executive Officer Bonnie Kampa. "We have come to depend on the Bag-a-Thon each year to give us a much-needed boost in anticipation of the busy winter months."

A complete list of dropoff locations and most-needed items is available at www.icstucson.org.

For information on how to get your group involved with the drive, contact Shar Caulley at (520) 297-6049, Ext. 209 or scaulley@icstucson.org.

About ICS: ICS provides food, job assistance, and emergency financial assistance to Pima County residents in need and mobilizes volunteers to provide seniors and disabled individuals with Mobile Meals, transportation, home repairs, calls and visits, and health and safety referrals. ICS offers compassionate support by connecting 660 volunteers and 76 faith communities with our community's most vulnerable residents. From nutritious food to health evaluations to a ride to the doctor's office, ICS helps more than 36,500 people a year. ICS has received Charity Navigator's highest rating of four stars five years in a row for its fiscal responsibility and best practices.

IF YOU GO

What: Eighth Annual Edward Jones Bag-a-Thon Collection Day and Community Breakfast

When: 8 a.m. to noon Nov. 8

Where: Edward Jones office at North La Canada Drive and West Lambert Lane

Why: This event has become the single-largest annual food collection effort for the Interfaith Community Services Food Bank, which serves nearly 26,000 people a year.

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