

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF SECOND HARVEST FOODBANKS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Ohio Veterans Urged to Take Advantage of Up to \$18,000 in Education Benefits *Many of Ohio's veterans could be eligible for help with tuition and more*

COLUMBUS – As Memorial Day approaches, Ohioans are reminded that thousands of servicemen and women are facing the challenge of transitioning from an environment of instability and danger to a new chapter of returning to civilian life. To connect veterans and their families with the benefits they have earned and the resources they need to succeed in civilian life, The Ohio Benefit Bank™ has integrated a variety of veterans education benefits into its innovative online service.

“History tells us that the costs of war continue to grow years after operational missions have ended,” said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks, home of The Ohio Benefit Bank (OBB™). “As our veterans return home, we have the opportunity, and responsibility, to help them be successful as civilians.”

According to a recent national report, with the large number of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, connecting veterans to education supports represents a major opportunity to boost college completion rates and reduce homelessness among veterans. As of 2010, just 13,314 of Ohio's veterans were using their GI Bill education benefits, but many more may be eligible.

Specifically, the OBB provides eligibility assessments and helps with filling out application forms for a variety of benefits to pay for tuition, fees, housing, books and more for education or training. Veterans may be eligible for up to \$18,000 in education assistance.

Veterans can find out if they are eligible in three ways:

- Visit an OBB site: Find a site by going to www.ohiobenefits.org
- Call the OBB hotline toll-free at 1-800-648-1176
- Complete applications through the OBB on your own at www.ohiobenefits.org

This is a free service aimed at simplifying the sometimes daunting task of applying for these education benefits. OBB is ready to help individuals find the specific resources they need and ensure that available benefits are best matched with those who are eligible to receive them.

About the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks

OASHF is Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger, representing Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks and their more than 3,300 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. In SFY 2011, OASHF and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute more than 150 million pounds of food and grocery items. Follow @OASHF on Twitter and stay connected on Facebook at www.facebook.com/oashf.

About The Ohio Benefit Bank

Since its inception, the OBB has connected more than 329,000 Ohioans with over \$662 million in potential work support programs and tax credits.

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