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Renovations Double the Storage Capacity for ECCO's Food Warehouse

Charleston, S.C. (June 4, 2014): East Cooper Community Outreach (ECCO) announces the renovation of its Food Warehouse. Thanks to a generous donor, ECCO is doubling its capacity to store and distribute food for East Cooper families living in poverty (which last year equated to 200,000 pounds). After months of research and planning, ECCO began the ten-day project last week. Volunteers and staff cleared out the entire warehouse and packed up all of the food and provisions, everything from canned peas and rice to toilet paper and soap.

While the organization has focused recently on expanding the health services and empowerment programs for local low-income residents, the highest percentage of clients still visit ECCO's 14,500 square foot Mount Pleasant facility for food and clothing. In recent years, the demand for food has been even greater during the summer, which is also a time when food donations slow down. Rachel Vane, Director of Volunteer Engagement noted that "most of us are thinking about vacations, barbecues, and spending time with our friends and family. However, our clients, especially those with kids, are spending their summers worrying about finding childcare and food." This is an issue across the country, and it plagues South Carolina as well. During the school year, children of low-income families receive free or reduced lunches.

Staff ramped up efforts early on this year to secure more food in preparation for the summer. Several new retail grocery stores were added to the weekly food pickup schedule, and the number of organized food drives with religious institutions, social groups, neighborhood associations, schools and more, has been expanded. The warehouse, which essentially had not been changed since the building was constructed over ten years ago, wasn't able to properly accommodate the influx of donations collected during this time.

Upon conclusion of this project, ECCO will have access to over 70 shelves, each able to hold up to 1,500 pounds - doubling the previous capacity limit. Additionally, a new sorting area has been added to the layout, which Vane is excited about and said, "We can now better utilize our volunteer resources through this streamlined process for order fulfillment." The Food Warehouse will reopen on Monday, June 9th at 10am, and will have the ability to provide clients with a larger variety of food items on a more consistent basis. Executive Director, Jack Little added, "The changes are very exciting, especially because of what it means for ECCO's clients."

Thanks to the following for providing the support and resources needed to ensure a smooth transition: South Carolina STRONG, Nucor, Big Guy Pressure Washing, Berlin's Restaurant Supply, BI-LO, Harris Teeter, and Custom Equipment Company.

East Cooper Community Outreach

The mission of East Cooper Community Outreach (ECCO) is to provide safety net services to our low-income neighbors, while empowering them to create better lives for themselves, their families and their communities. Founded in 1989 as an emergency relief effort after the devastation from Hurricane Hugo, ECCO strives to eliminate poverty in the East Cooper region, and focuses on three main program areas: Basic Needs, Health Services and Empowerment. More than 4,500 families a year receive emergency assistance for food, clothing, household furnishings and financial aid, and have access to dental care, nurse practitioner appointments, prescription assistance, financial literacy classes, job readiness training, and counseling.

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