

VFW Launches Campaign to Combat Hunger

The VFW's national convention this July in Kansas City will offer ideas and activities to help end food insecurity

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After learning that 1 out of 8 Americans doesn't have enough to eat and that 27 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan vets face hunger daily, VFW is working to put an end to food insecurity.

Along with After the Harvest, Harvesters—The Community Food Network and Humana, the VFW launched the campaign "Uniting to Combat Hunger" on June 6 in Kansas City, Mo.

"Some 25 percent of military households and 27 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan vets are affected by food insecurity," VFW Commander-in-Chief Keith Harman said. "This is something VFW won't tolerate. That's why we are teaming with others to do something tangible in our Kansas City community."

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.

In Kansas City alone, 15 percent of the community faces the issue of food insecurity. The goal of "Uniting to Combat Hunger" is to provide 50,000 meals in Kansas City and the surrounding areas.

"The VFW assault against food insecurity takes place fittingly on D-Day," VFW Adjutant General Brian Duffy said. "Let the assault begin."

To kick it off, volunteers 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.

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Located in Kansas City, After the Harvest aims 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. “The rate of food insecurity among this population surpasses the national average.”

In addition to gleaning, Harvesters also will provide a food-packing opportunity during convention. Harvester volunteers will place food collection barrels at various businesses around Kansas City through the end of July.

VFW Quartermaster General Debra Anderson encourages convention attendees 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.

For those who want to volunteer while in Kansas City for the convention, they can pack and sort food July 21-22 at the convention center.

“It’s an honor for Humana to raise awareness and fight food insecurity in Greater Kansas City and across the country,” said Jeff Fernandez, Segment Vice President for Humana. “Together, with the VFW, Harvesters, After the Harvest and hundreds of volunteers, we can help feed veterans and their families while increasing their ability to achieve their best health.”

“We are grateful to our community partners, like the VFW and Humana, who recognize the need in our community and step forward to help us fight hunger,” said Valerie Nicholson-Watson, president and CEO of Harvesters—The Community Food Network. “Hunger knows no season and is found in every county in both urban and rural communities. It takes all of us working together to end hunger.”

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,” Anderson said.

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