

NEWS RELEASE

Society of St. Andrew

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Society of St. Andrew expands hunger relief work in southern Georgia

St. Marys United Methodist Church Foundation, Inc., provides substantial grant to establish a full-time gleaning operation.

Big Island, VA – St. Marys United Methodist Church Foundation, Inc., located in St. Marys, Georgia, has awarded a \$135,000 grant to the Society of St. Andrew to establish a full-time regional gleaning office in the agriculture-rich southern half of the state.

Georgia is ranked 10th in the list of states with the highest food insecurity among its residents. According to federal statistics, 12.9% of the households in Georgia are rated as food insecure. Hunger is a reality in Georgia and the Society of St. Andrew, a national faith-based, non-denominational hunger-relief nonprofit organization, has plans to do something about it.

“This grant will truly make a huge difference in the lives of those who don’t get enough to eat in south Georgia,” said Mike Waldmann, the Society of St. Andrew’s Director of Operations. “Establishing a full-time gleaning network will continue to make a strong, positive impact for many years to come. The grant will cover the expense of getting the office set up and running for the first full year and providing over one million servings of nutritious food to the area’s hungry people.”

The Society of St. Andrew (SoSA) is the nation’s largest gleaner of fresh produce donated to feed hungry Americans, each year saving as much as forty million pounds of perfectly good, nutritious produce that will not make it to market. From growing fields and packing houses it salvages fresh produce – after the harvest – that will go to waste and distributes it to serving agencies. The Society’s major hunger-relief programs are its *Gleaning Network*, *Potato Project*, *Harvest of Hope*, and *Hunger Relief Advocate Initiative*, which provide food for the hungry with the help of 30,000-40,000 volunteers each year. The Society of St. Andrew maintains an operating overhead of well under ten percent. Ninety to ninety-five cents of every donated dollar goes directly into providing food for the hungry. SoSA has offices and active gleaning networks in 22 states and distributes food throughout the 48 contiguous states. It maintains its national headquarters in Big Island, Virginia, where it was founded in 1979.

In 2003 the Society of St. Andrew expanded its *Hunger Relief Advocate Initiative*, a partnership with United Methodist Men, into south Georgia, appointing Art Shoemaker of Albany as the volunteer part-time Hunger Relief Advocate for that region. “One of the Hunger Relief Advocate’s (HRA) responsibilities is to establish a gleaning network to gather fresh food left in

farm fields after the harvest and get it delivered to local feeding agencies,” said SoSA’s HRA director, Ken Bradford. “The south Georgia gleaning network has so far been responsible for saving nearly 300,000 pounds of fresh produce, which has provided more than 890,000 servings of nutritious food to hungry families in Georgia. 722 volunteers throughout the region have gleaned and distributed all of this nourishing food to 229 agencies for their hungry brothers and sisters.”

In announcing the grant, Jeff Barker, President of St. Marys United Methodist Church Foundation, Inc. said, “Your (Society of St. Andrew) proposal to establish a full-time gleaning office in south Georgia ranked very high in our analysis. We are very excited about this partnership and look forward to implementation.”

The Society of St. Andrew is actively searching for the right location for the new regional office, exploring the possibilities in Albany, Cordele, Moultrie and Tifton. Once established, this regional gleaning network will be under the direction of a full-time program coordinator and part-time Hunger Relief Advocate. The objective is to establish the office and have the operation up and running by mid-summer.

Waldmann said the full-time operation will provide a sustainable source of free, fresh produce for local feeding agencies in South Georgia. “Since our programs provide more bang for the buck,” he continued, “this initiative will benefit hungry people throughout the state, as well. Our experience with new, full-time regional gleaning offices is both inspiring and successful. A typical regional gleaning office should yield dramatic results each year, including three million pounds of fresh produce saved and distributed to agencies, and growing opportunities for churches across Georgia to become more involved in feeding hungry people.”

“Hunger and abundance don’t belong together,” Ken Horne, the Society of St. Andrew’s Executive Director, has commented. “God won’t stand for it, and neither do we. Our approach is sensible, successful and efficient.”

“St. Marys United Methodist Church Foundation, Inc. can be proud that they got this full-time ministry started in a region that needs it desperately,” Mike Waldmann said. “We greatly appreciate their partnership in this ministry as we all strive to love our brothers and sisters ‘in deed and in truth.’”

For more information about the Society of St. Andrew and its hunger relief programs: call toll free 800-333-4597; e-mail sosausa@endhunger.org; online at www.endhunger.org. The Society of St. Andrew – Gleaning America’s Fields ~ Feeding America’s Hungry.

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