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For Immediate Release

COMMUNITY KITCHEN TEMPORARILY CLOSED

Kids Cafe Meal Service Resumes June 1 With Summer Food Service Program

AMARILLO, TX, May 14, 2020 —High Plains Food Bank is temporarily closing the Community Kitchen and suspending Kids Cafe meal service until June 1, 2020.

"The safety of our staff and community is of the utmost importance," said Zack Wilson, executive director of High Plains Food Bank. "Our staff works very hard to serve more than 1,000 meals a day, and they have a heart for our mission. We look forward to re-opening Kids Cafe, with a full and healthy team, so we can continue to safely feed our community through the Kids Cafe summer food meal service."

This week, two Community Kitchen team members awoke with symptoms of illness and did not report to work. It was confirmed today that both tested positive for COVID-19. It is important to note that neither team member displayed symptoms of illness while at work nor did our staff report to work after becoming symptomatic.

High Plains Food Bank willingly reported both cases in full transparency to ensure that every effort is made to act fully under the guidance of the health department with regard to meal distribution.

"Although the City advised us that Kids Cafe could continue full operation, it is out of an abundance of caution for our staff and those we serve, that we chose to close the kitchen immediately," Wilson said. "This will allow us to conduct additional sanitation to ensure our Community Kitchen's continued safe operation. Food safety, the health of our employees, and sanitation continue to be our highest priority as we work to alleviate hunger."

Neither team member has entered the main warehouse facility or been in the vicinity of operations staff, agencies/partners, or food distributions. The High Plains Food Bank's main facility and warehouse are still open, and staff continues to follow the proper guidelines for safety.

Since the beginning of March, the Community Kitchen, which provides meals for our Kid's Cafe program, has increased sanitary measures and has followed all recommended CDC guidelines. During that time, staff has worn additional PPE and has observed the proper social distancing of over six feet, even while in production in our kitchen. Staff conducts a thorough cleaning and sanitizing regimen twice a day for the entire facility and follows extended sanitizing protocol for all surfaces throughout the day. In addition, our kitchen is routinely inspected by the City of Amarillo Health Department and consistently receives exemplary food safety scores.

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About High Plains Food Bank

High Plains Food Bank's mission is to alleviate hunger in the Texas Panhandle. HPFB secures, sorts, stores, and distributes food to 185 feeding partners, across the top 29 counties in Texas. These food pantries provide a safety net that provides food assistance directly to the 1 in 7 neighbors, including 1 in 5 children, who struggle with food insecurity. In 2019, HPFB distributed a record-breaking 9.03 million pounds of food.

To combat food insecurity and improve the overall health of people we serve, HPFB provides a variety of community programs, including: Kids Cafe, Direct Mobile Distribution, a senior adult food box program (CSFP), Mobile Harvest produce distribution, and nutrition education through The Garden at High Plains Food Bank. HPFB can also help individuals apply for SNAP, CHIP, and Medicaid and refer them to other organizations and programs that can help them establish food security, improved health, and self-sufficiency.

In addition to fighting hunger and supporting better health, food banking decreases waste by distributing food that would otherwise go uneaten to people who need it.

*High Plains Food Bank is an equal opportunity provider.