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Cooperative Elevator Co. Raises Funds to Help Feed Local Families

Thumb agriculture cooperative committed to helping community

PIGEON – **Cooperative Elevator Co.** is doing its part to help families in the area during these tough economic times, providing more than \$11,000 to the **Thumb Breadbasket** to help supplement the food needs of families in the community. The partnership with Thumb Breadbasket is one of Cooperative Elevator Co.'s many commitments to sharing the abundance of the harvest with communities in Michigan, nationally and across the globe through projects including Foods Resources Bank and Operation Blessing.

“Cooperative Elevator Co. is proud to support families in the Thumb and give back to this community, which has stood with us for generations,” **Cooperative Elevator** CEO Pat Anderson said. “We recognize these are tough times for many families, and we want to do everything we can to continue to support this community. As a community, we will stand together because in unity there is strength.”

Cooperative Elevator Co. is donating \$50 in the name of each board of director and employee, and the company also received a \$2,126 grant from the Land O'Lakes Foundation, altogether totaling \$11,602 compared to \$10,176 given in 2008. The money will go to the Thumb Breadbasket and 100% of the money will be used to purchase and distribute food to families in need.

Formed in January 2008, Thumb Breadbasket aims to help supplement the food needs of Thumb families and support local food pantries, which provide emergency food. The Thumb Breadbasket strives to provide supplemental food twice a month as each family needs. In 2009, the Thumb Breadbasket distributed over 60,000 pounds of food to 2,344 people representing 751 families compared with 53,086 pounds of food to 1,476 people representing 480 families in 2008. The food was purchased from the Eastern Michigan Food Bank at a reduced price. Eggs, beans, sugar, ice cream, beef, pork sausage, bread and produce were also donated in 2009 by local businesses and farmers. Other donations included distribution site, transportation, storage, refrigeration, and promotion/postage.

“The Cooperative Elevator is a mainstay and backbone of the Thumb, supplying jobs and services not only to the ag community but to the overall economy,” **Thumb Breadbasket** coordinator **Rhonda Buehler** said. “The Cooperative has been a community supporter, innovator in energy and environment and educator to both young and old. As part of the Thumb Breadbasket bi-monthly food distribution, we have been overwhelmed with the corporate generosity and support in this ongoing project. Our goal has been to assist in the food needs of families in a three-county area. The Coop has provided navy and black beans at each of the distributions, giving the families a protein source. Their financial partnering is a blessing during these tough economic times with a greater need for assistance growing monthly.”

Established in 1915, Cooperative Elevator Co. is an agricultural cooperative owned by 943 farmers. It currently employs 138 full-time people and is based in the Thumb, a rich agricultural region offering fertile soils, tilled fields, adequate rainfall, and temperatures moderated by Lake Huron and Saginaw Bay.

Cooperative Elevator has plants in Akron, Bad Axe, Deckerville, Elkton, Fairgrove, Gagetown, North Branch, Pigeon, Ruth, and Sebewaing. It also provides farm inputs to member patrons. These farm supplies include feed, seed, fertilizer, chemicals, and petroleum.