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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Portland food pantry demand increases six-fold on Saturday

- Media invited to open pantry day on Thursday, March 26, between 1 to 3 p.m.
- Investment of \$211,000-\$682,000 needed for staff, equipment, support as donations drop.
- Community volunteers needed to help feed families during COVID-19 Pandemic.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Northeast Emergency Food Program (NEFP), a program of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, has seen a dramatic increase in the need for food in our community.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, NEFP served an average of 100 families during a typical three-hour window. On Saturday, March 21, NEFP served over 600 families (representing over 2,000 individuals) in two hours, at a time when NEFP's volunteer capacity has dropped by two-thirds.

This sharp increase in need is due to layoffs because of the pandemic, and because NEFP has become a hub for other food programs running low on resources and volunteers.

"No matter what, we're going to serve our people," said A'Jay Scipio, NEFP program manager. "NEFP won't turn anyone away. That's not what we do."

"Now is the moment for our state leaders to step forward to make sure children and families do not go hungry," said Britt Conroy, Public Policy Advocacy director at EMO. "An investment of roughly \$200,000 and the support of the National Guard will allow NEFP to meet the dramatically increased need for food over the next 90 days. Without National Guard support, NEFP will need a 90-day investment of \$680,000 to hire staff to meet the demand for food in our region."

To protect the health of our clients, volunteers and staff, the pick-up window for food has been shortened to two hours, and the pantry is operating on a drive-through (or walk- or bike-through) model.

While NEFP is filling the increased food demands in our community, the program is seeking volunteers to package and distribute food boxes. Anyone interested in volunteering may email their availability to nefp@emoregon.org. NEFP is open Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 1 to 3 p.m. Immigration status is not a factor; everyone is welcome. NEFP is located at 4800 NE 72nd Ave, Portland.

The Northeast Emergency Food Program invites the members of the media to join us for an open pantry day on Thursday, March 26, between 1 to 3 p.m. To schedule a visit on another Thursday or Saturday, contact A'Jay Scipio in advance (contact information above).