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MEDIA EVENT ALERT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 4, 2009

GILA RIVER CASINOS TEAMS WITH ST. MARY'S FOOD BANK ALLIANCE TO "SEND HUNGER PACKING" THIS SUMMER

Events Remind Public 'Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation'

Phoenix, AZ – As the summer months begin, those who have already been hit hard by unemployment and underemployment are now faced with Arizona's rising temperatures and the increased costs of feeding their children all day, every day, in June, July and August.

No longer able to rely on school breakfast and lunch programs to ease the burden, more and more families will turn to the agencies served by St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance – at a time when, even in the best of economies, Food Bank supplies struggle to meet the summer surge.

St. Mary's summer campaign begins in earnest on June 9 – proclaimed by Governor Jan Brewer as Hunger Awareness Day in Arizona – when "Send Hunger Packing" title sponsor Gila River Casinos presents a pair of events at the Food Bank, beginning with a breakfast rally from 7 to 9 am at St. Mary's Westside facility in Surprise, 13050

W. Elm, and continues with a luncheon at the Food Bank's main warehouse in Phoenix, 2831 N. 31st Avenue.

The events will highlight the particular challenges this summer poses and will feature a number of happenings and activities that will make it easy for the public to help. The community is encouraged also to visit the Food Bank's website at www.FirstFoodBank.org and its social networking sites for updates on what's happening in the community, from summer food drives sponsored by Albertson's, Fresh & Easy and Fry's grocery stores, the Scottsdale Police Department and Wells Fargo Bank to volunteer opportunities like the Food Bank's popular monthly "Rock 'N Box" packing nights.

"Contrary to popular belief, hunger doesn't take a vacation during the summer," said Terry Shannon, St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance's President and CEO. "We are very appreciative of Gila River Casinos' involvement in our attempts to send hunger packing."

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PHOTO/INTERVIEW OP: THE MEDIA CAN ATTEND EITHER OF THE *SEND HUNGER PACKING* KICK-OFF EVENTS ON JUNE 9: THE 7 A.M. BREAKFAST IN SURPRISE AND THE 11 A.M. LUNCH AT THE MAIN WAREHOUSE. THE BREAKFAST WILL FEATURE A 10-YARD DUMPTRUCK FILLED WITH FOOD COLLECTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS (LOCAL UNION NO. 428) DURING THEIR RECENT DRIVE, WHILE THE LUNCH WILL INCLUDE A REPLICA OF THE EIFFEL TOWER MADE OUT OF CANNED FOOD. ST. MARY'S PRESIDENT AND CEO TERRY SHANNON, AS WELL AS REPRESENTATIVES FROM GILA RIVER CASINOS, WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS.

For statistics on poverty and hunger, media inquiries, photos or interview requests, please contact Jerry Brown at (602) 343-3160, (602) 684-0939 or jjbrown@firstfoodbank.org.

ABOUT ST. MARY'S FOOD BANK ALLIANCE: St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance, the world's first food bank, is a non-sectarian, nonprofit organization that alleviates hunger by efficiently gathering and distributing food to more than 500 member agencies at 700

sites that serve the hungry. Serving 13 of Arizona's 15 counties, the organization is committed to volunteerism, building community relationships, and improving the quality of life for Arizonans in need. During Fiscal Year 2008-2009, the Food Bank will distribute more than 60 million pounds of food to families and individuals, provided enough food for 300,000 meals every day, and garnered more than 230,000 volunteer service hours.