



PRESS RELEASE

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**RI Community Food Bank Thanks Community for 25 Years of Support
with Help from Author & Keynote Speaker Christopher Gardner**

His Autobiography "The Pursuit of Happiness" Chronicles His Homeless to Wall Street Success Story

PROVIDENCE, R.I. For more than 25 years, Rhode Islanders have been supporting the work of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank and their mission of alleviating hunger in the Ocean State. At Wednesday's anniversary celebration, the Food Bank returned the favor by thanking hundreds of supporters, volunteers and agency representatives for making it all possible. More than 700 people attended the event, which generated over \$220,000 for the Food Bank.

The Food Bank's 25th Anniversary Luncheon was highlighted by keynote speaker, Christopher Gardner. Mr. Gardner is the owner and CEO of Christopher Gardner International Holdings and Author of the *New York Times* bestseller and major motion picture *The Pursuit of Happiness* which chronicles his rags-to-riches story from homelessness to Wall Street success.

"I'm proud to be here, to be a part of something that is so important," started Gardner. "Hunger and homelessness is something that I understand. Every dollar that came into the door, I had a decision to make, a tough decision," continued Gardner. "Do I pay the rent or do I eat. I had to pay the rent, I had to have a roof over my family's head."

A series of unfortunate circumstances left Gardner homeless in the early 1980's and the sole guardian of his toddler son. Unwilling to give up Chris Jr. or his dream of financial independence, Gardner started at the bottom and eventually earned a spot in a training program at Dean Witter Reynolds. Spending his nights in either a church shelter or the bathroom of a Bay Area Rapid Transit station, Gardner was the sole trainee offered a job at the firm in 1981. He spent 1983-1987 at Bear Stearns & Co., where he became a top earner and in 1987, he founded the brokerage firm Gardner Rich & Co. in Chicago. Gardner is currently the owner and CEO of Christopher Gardner International Holdings. Surmounting acute obstacles on his road to success, Gardner is an avid motivational speaker, addressing the keys to self-empowerment, beating odds and breaking cycles.

"Over the past 25-years, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank has grown from its humble beginnings on Allens Avenue to a state-of-the-art food bank that distributes over 8 million pounds annually," commented Andrew Schiff, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. "One thing that has not changed, however, is the dedication of the countless Rhode Islanders who help set a place at the table for everyone, each and every day," added Schiff. "It's because of you, that someone who otherwise may have gone hungry will have a meal."

Currently, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank is feeding tens of thousands of Rhode Islanders in need each month through a network of over 300 certified member agency programs. A recent USDA statistical study on food insecurity shows that over 17% of Rhode Island's children, 1 out of every 6, suffer from food insecurity. Additionally, 11.3% of Rhode Island households, representing 48,000 families, do not know where their next meal will come from.

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The Rhode Island Community Food Bank s 25th Anniversary Luncheon was made possible by these generous sponsors: **25th Anniversary Season Sponsors:** Bank of America, Hasbro, NBC-10, The Robert F. Stoico/FIRSTFED Charitable Foundation, Rhode Island Monthly, Whole Foods Market and Textron. **Video Underwritten By:** Citizens Bank Foundation. **Protein Sponsors:** LiteRock 105, WPRO News Talk 630, CVS Pharmacy, GTECH and Collette Vacations. **Whole Grain Sponsors:** Arden Engineering, Cameron & Mittleman, Delta Dental, Residential Properties, Pumpkin Patch Early Learning Center, Charles S. & Elizabeth R. T. Fradin, Goldine Controls, Shaw s,'PrintSource Group, Twin River, National Grid, Webster Bank, Stop & Shop, Winkler Group and UBS. **Fruit & Vegetable Sponsors:** Edwards, Angell, Palmer and Dodge, Fidelity Investments, Garden City Center, Heritage Consulting Group, Inc., Hinckley, Allen & Snyder LLP, Johnson & Wales University, Lifespan, Jack & Sara McConnell, Neighborhood Health Plan of RI, Partridge Snow & Hahn LLP, Pawtucket Red Sox, The Providence Journal, R&F Enterprises and The Washington Trust Company. **Extra Virgin Olive Oil Sponsors:** BankRI, Cirelli Foods, Inc., Kahn, Litwin, Renza & Co., Ltd., Mihaly International, Monitise Americas, Mullen Scorpio Cerilli and Pepsi Bottling Company.

**Photos of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank s'
25th Anniversary Luncheon available upon request.
Please contact Michael Cerio at (401) 942-6325 ext. 213.**

The Rhode Island Community Food Bank is a non-profit organization located in Providence, RI. The Food Bank solicits, stores and distributes food products donated by supermarkets, wholesalers, food processors, local farmers and community food drives. The food is then distributed to the Food Bank s' network of over 300 member agency programs. In the past fiscal year, the Food Bank distributed 8.4 million pounds of food. For more information about the Food Bank, please visit www.rifoodbank.org

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