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Virginia Peanut Growers Association and Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services partner with Federation of Virginia Food Banks

(March 17, 2009) --- The Virginia Peanut Growers Association (VPGA) presented the Federation of Virginia Food Banks with \$8,000 today to purchase jars of peanut butter for seven food banks throughout the Virginia/DC area. The funds were collected among members of the Virginia peanut industry.

The Virginia Peanut Growers Association (VPGA) kicked off a Food Bank Peanut Butter Drive at their February annual meeting with President Lewis Everett and Executive Secretary Dell Cotton making an appeal for peanut butter donations to address the expressed need of food banks for peanut butter. Growers responded immediately with a collection at the meeting of nearly \$1,000 to be used toward the purchase of peanut butter for the Federation of Virginia Food Banks. More growers followed with donations in the ensuing days, and these initial contributions were supplemented with donations from others in the Virginia peanut industry, including shellers, processors, manufacturers, research and farm-related organizations and other individuals associated with Virginia's peanut industry.

“After the past few weeks of confusing press, producers have been ready for a good, positive story,” said Dell Cotton of VPGA. “Not only is this the best of causes at a critical time, but growers are leading by example in showing that it remains safe to eat peanut butter making it a perfect item to be donated to food banks due to many reasons including the nutritional benefits.

In addition to these funds, Commissioner of Agriculture Todd Haymore asked the general public and state agencies to make donations of jars of peanut butter specifically for food banks during March – also National Peanut Month. Collection boxes are now in many state government offices and in the food banks.

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“We are extremely grateful for the generosity of the members of the Virginia Peanut Growers Association and the state’s peanut industry. Some people have assumed that jars of peanut butter were part of the recall, so donations have been affected on a product we need to keep in stock because it is an excellent source of protein,” said Leslie Van Horn, Executive Director of the Federation of Virginia Food Banks. “Our food banks depend on jars of peanut butter to be accessible to the individuals we serve throughout the state and these funds will enable us to begin restocking our shelves.”

About the Federation of Virginia Food Banks

The Federation of Virginia Food Banks is a state association of food banks affiliated with Feeding America (formerly America’s Second Harvest) and is the largest hunger-relief network in the Commonwealth. The Federation is comprised of the 7 regional Virginia and Washington DC food banks, consisting of facilities in 14 strategic locations. The Federation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation created to support the food banks in providing food, funding, education, advocacy, and awareness services and programs throughout the Commonwealth. www.vafoodbanks.org.

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