

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MISSISSIPPI STATE, OLE MISS, UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS JOIN  
KROGER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER IN THEIR HOME STATES**

***Mid-South Food Bank, Mississippi Food Network to Benefit from New Collegiate Initiative***

**MEMPHIS, Tenn. (Aug. XX, 2012)** – In an effort to help curb the hunger epidemic in Western Tennessee and Mississippi, three collegiate rivals will combine their resources with Kroger to kick off an inaugural initiative – “The Million Meals Challenge” – to benefit the Mid-South Food Bank and the Mississippi Food Network.

The collaborative effort to provide one million meals for people in Western Tennessee and throughout Mississippi will be fueled by significant involvement on and off campus, as well as through on-site collections at Kroger stores in Starkville, Oxford, and select locations in Memphis. The idea behind this collegiate endeavor with Kroger was developed and will be activated by the schools’ respective, athletic multimedia rights holders: Learfield Sports’ Tiger Sports Properties (University of Memphis); Learfield Sports’ Bulldog Sports Properties (Mississippi State University) and the University of Mississippi’s Ole Miss Sports Properties, a division of Telesouth Communications. Inc.

“We’re pleased to see Kroger embrace this concept and help us put it in motion,” said Todd Kucinski, Tiger Sports Properties’ associate general manager. “Fighting hunger in our two states is an obvious need we wanted to tackle, knowing it would best be leveraged by tapping into the marketing muscle and campus communities that our three college campuses could deliver.”

Ole Miss, Mississippi State and the University of Memphis individually will be reaching out to their respective student body, alumni and campus communities to help donate their time, money and/or food in support of the “The Million Meals Challenge”.

TheMillionMealsChallenge.com website provides the necessary details, and browsers that one can select their school to support when making a monetary donation from anywhere in the country. Monetary donations are made online, and food donations can be made at one of the select Kroger locations.

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Throughout the year, various on-campus events will accept food donations, and a grand finale food drive will be held at each of the three schools' last home football and men's basketball games for the 2012-13 athletic season. All three schools will be dedicating numerous print, radio and TV ads to this effort throughout the entire year as well.

"The Million Meals Challenge is an extraordinary opportunity for Kroger to mobilize team rivalry and join forces with the universities in the war on fighting hunger," said Joe Bell, manager of marketing and public affairs for Kroger's Delta Division, based in Memphis. "If you look at the true spirit of this campaign, it is working together to raise awareness in our communities of the severity of hunger, plus support the needs of the Mid-South Food Bank and the Mississippi Food Network."

According to Estella Mayhue-Greer, president and CEO of Mid-South Food Bank, "a joint effort like this couldn't come at a better time. There is a continual need at the Food Bank to assist children, families and seniors in our communities, and we sincerely appreciate the generosity of those associated with the University of Memphis, Ole Miss, Mississippi State and Kroger for stepping up and helping us reach our goal."

"The Million Meals Challenge presents an outstanding opportunity for our three campuses to come together and be a real triple threat against hunger throughout Tennessee and Mississippi," said Bulldog Sports Properties' Account Executive Bill Atkins. "Combing our resources with Ole Miss and the Memphis Tigers will be a one-of-a-kind opportunity, and we're all excited to make a difference."

Ole Miss Properties' Director of Sales Tim Fritts added, "By educating our three schools' fan bases on the needs of those that are hungry in our region will create renewed awareness and hopefully support of the Mississippi Food Network and Mid South Food Bank and the many food pantries and local communities they serve."

Kroger's Delta Division currently operates 115 stores and 70 fuel centers in five states under the Kroger banner in Memphis and West Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, Southern Missouri, and Southwest Kentucky. Last year, Kroger's Delta Division contributed more than \$3.5 million to the local communities it serves. Kroger focuses its charitable efforts on hunger relief, education and women's health issues.

Mid-South Food Bank collects and distributes food to a network of more than 300 charitable feeding programs in west Tennessee, north Mississippi and east Arkansas. In 2011, Mid-South Food Bank distributed 10.3 million pounds of wholesome food and other grocery items to food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, youth programs, senior programs, rehabilitation and residential centers, daycares and schools. For more, visit [www.midsouthfoodbank.org](http://www.midsouthfoodbank.org).

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Jackson-based Mississippi Food Network is the only food bank located in the state and serves more than 415 member agencies. More than 175,000 people are served and more than 1.5 million pounds of food distributed each month. For more, visit [www.msfoodnet.org](http://www.msfoodnet.org).

In addition to the University of Memphis and Mississippi State, Learfield Sports manages the multimedia and sponsorship rights for more than 50 collegiate institutions, conferences and associations and titles the Learfield Sports Directors' Cup. For additional information about the company, its 40-year history and comprehensive collegiate portfolio, visit [learfieldsports.com](http://learfieldsports.com).