

# VOLUNTEER SHOWCASE

November 2012, Missouri

## More Than 30,000 Pounds of Watermelon Collected and Donated By Earth Team Volunteers

In just one week, the Scott County USDA Service Center in Missouri coordinated two watermelon gleaning events, donating a total of 33,552 pounds of fresh produce to local food banks. Gleaning, the process of collecting leftover crop, is an option for producers to make sure the crop remaining after harvest does not go to waste.

Harvesting the watermelons were twenty-eight Earth Team volunteers from five Missouri counties.

The first gleaning effort, was presented when SWCD District Technician Brad Kenedy noticed Mississippi County farmer Keith Edwards' watermelon field on his way home from work.

"I spoke with the farmer, one of the districts' long-time cooperators, and asked if he would allow the un-picked watermelons to be harvested and donated to a local food pantry," said Kenedy. He agreed to delay disking his field and we quickly coordinated an effort to bring in staff from surrounding counties to help glean."

The seven tons of gleaned watermelons were donated to local food banks and distributed to those in need by noon the next day.

The following week, County Executive Director Chris Grojean received an offer from Scott County farmer Donnie Beggs to glean his watermelon field. Grojean knew it was too good of an opportunity to pass up.



*Earth Team volunteers collecting watermelons from a field in Missouri.*



*During harvest season, a portion of the crop often remains on the field, un-harvested. These volunteers helped collect more than 30,000 pounds of watermelons that were remaining in two fields in Missouri.*

With area and state office approval, word was spread to neighboring county USDA offices to solicit volunteers. Volunteers were briefed on safety and caravanned to the melon field. By noon, more than 9.7 tons of watermelons were harvested and delivered to Missouri food banks.

The watermelons were donated as part of Feds Feed Families, a nationwide event that offers federal agencies the unique opportunity to give back to their local communities each summer. Founded in 2009 as part of President Obama's United We Serve campaign, Feds Feed Families was designed to help food banks and pantries stay stocked during the summer months. In three years, this nationwide event has donated nearly 8.5 million pounds of food to families in need.



The Earth Team is the volunteer component of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a USDA agency. For more about NRCS and the Earth Team, visit [www.usda.nrcs.gov](http://www.usda.nrcs.gov).

If you are interested in volunteering, call (888) 526-3227 or visit your local NRCS office to learn about volunteer opportunities.