



*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **County HELP program progresses: Food Insecurity Program**

**June 8, 2023 (Warsaw, IN)** – The Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) Kosciusko has reached an exciting milestone with the County “Food Access and Education” project featured in the Strategic Investment Plan.

The project focuses on building and supporting community gardens, greenhouses, and food markets to address food deserts and food insecurity in our rural communities, and to develop a sustainable local food system by increasing accessibility to local produce, and offering nutrition education.

The HELP Kosciusko project team was invited to participate in the AgriNovus HungerTech Challenge, a business pitch contest that tasks innovators with creating and implementing tech-enabled business solutions that connect populations experiencing food insecurity to for-profit and not-for-profit food networks. The HELP team pitched an innovative project called “Double Snap” which uses an app to increase the efficiency of Snap Benefits and incentivizes buying healthy food.

“I was fortunate to be a part of the HungerTech Challenge. We live in the most agriculturally prosperous nation in the world, and yet we are challenged with food insecurities in our local communities. Our team labored over an idea that we believe will address the heart of the matter,” Tobe Forshtay, a participant on the HELP project team.

The next step for the project is a kickoff meeting for those working with food-insecure populations. The goal is to foster collaboration and create a “Food Insecurity Coalition.” Anyone interested in supporting this project is invited to attend.

The kickoff meeting will take place on:

**Thursday, June 22 at 1 p.m.** at the K21 Health Services Pavillion (1515 Provident Dr, Warsaw, IN 46580) in the second floor conference room.

“Our goal is to bring people together to discuss opportunities related to food access and education, and create a cohesive coalition for our county,” said Kosciusko County Community Coordinator Amy Roe. “An organized coalition will provide us more access to resources, whether it be grant opportunities or connecting with new volunteers. These efforts will contribute toward a healthier and happier Kosciusko County.”

To recap the HELP program thus far, Kosciusko County was one of three communities selected in 2021 by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) to participate in the first cohort of the



HELP program. HELP assists and equips rural communities with developing Strategic Investment Plans, resulting in a legacy project for each community focused on at least one of four community development pathways including **advancing e-connectivity, enhancing quality of place, promoting community wellness, and strengthening local economies.**

For updates on HELP Kosciusko visit [www.kcgov.com](http://www.kcgov.com) and follow HELP Kosciusko on Facebook @HELPKosciusko.

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**About the Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) in Kosciusko County**

The Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) supports communities directly by building capacity, creating a peer network system between communities participating in the program, developing a strategic investment plan and providing access to set-aside funding. HELP is a 52-week process culminating in a dynamic Strategic Investment Plan rooted in four pathways: advancing e-connectivity, promoting community wellness, enhancing quality of place, and strengthening local economies.

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