



For Immediate Release

San Luis Obispo Symphony Teams with the Food Bank Coalition to Orchestrate a Food Drive to Benefit Local Citizens in Need

*Joining a Nationwide Program Inspired by the Upcoming Film, The Soloist,
Food Collected at the Symphony's March Performances Will Help Homeless
and Other Hungry People in San Luis Obispo County*

San Luis Obispo County – (February 19, 2009) – It's hard to imagine a more fitting place to hold a food drive to mark the release of the much-anticipated film, The Soloist, than San Luis Obispo County. After all, playing the role of the Juilliard School Conductor who worked with Nathaniel Ayers, the formerly homeless musical prodigy and subject of the movie, is Michael Nowak, the Music Director of the San Luis Obispo Symphony.

Taking part in a nationwide program inspired by the film called "Orchestras Feeding America," the San Luis Obispo Symphony is calling on concert-goers to bring non-perishable food to their performances in March: the Youth Symphony's concert at the Clark Center in Arroyo Grande on March 1st, and the Symphony's free dress rehearsal and concert at the Performing Arts Center in SLO on March 7th. Food Bank staff will be on hand at all three events to offer information and accept much needed staples such as canned food, peanut butter, rice and beans and pasta as well as cash donations.

"It was a wonderful experience to be part of The Soloist and to play a role in telling the powerful story of Nathaniel Ayers's life," said the Symphony's Michael Nowak. "We very much look forward to bringing the experience alive here in SLO County by helping the Food Bank with its mission to feed the homeless and hungry."

At the national level, the League of American Orchestras is partnering with Feeding America, the nation's network of food banks, to fight hunger. The "Orchestras Feeding America" program they've created has the rallying cry of "1 in 8," highlighting the sad fact that 1 in 8 American citizens are not sure where their next meal will come from. More than 160 orchestras in almost all 50 states are participating in the program as a way to contribute to a solution.

Carl Hansen, Executive Director of the Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County, commented that the 1 in 8 equation holds true here in our area. "Unfortunately, we do serve 10 – 15% of the county's population," he said. "And through our direct food programs and our non-profit agency partners, including many that feed and shelter the homeless, we are seeing the demand increasing 25 – 30% in this tough economy."

According to Hansen, his team of staff and volunteers has been working hard to keep up with the rising demand. The Food Bank has been able to hang in there due in large part to the generosity of organizations and citizens of the Central Coast. "The outpouring of support we have received from groups like the SLO Symphony has been amazing," Hansen said. "Everyone seems to intuitively know we're in need now more than ever, and those who can help are stepping up."

The Food Bank stretches contributions to the fullest extent possible. Every dollar donated translates to 10 pounds of food the organization can acquire, and every 10 pounds of food can be transformed into 7 meals. Both the Food Bank and the San Luis Obispo Symphony hope that local music lovers get the message and contribute what they can to the local version of "Orchestras Feeding America." For more information, call the Food Bank at 805-238-4664 or the San Luis Obispo Symphony at 805-543-3533.

--###--

About the Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County: The Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County opened in 1989. Today, the organization is the only countywide source of large quantity donated and low-cost food for low-income families, seniors, children, veterans and the disabled. Through direct programs like the BackPack Program for school children and the Senior Brown Bag Program, and in partnership with over 150 SLO County agencies, the Food Bank will provide about four million pounds of food for the tables of more than 10% of the county's residents in 2009.

Since 1961, the San Luis Obispo Symphony has been an artistic, economic, educational and community-centered force on the Central Coast. Now in its 48th season, the Symphony presents a nine-month season of concerts including a classical masterworks series in San Luis Obispo, a

chamber music series in more intimate venues around the county, a seaside Pops concert in Avila Beach and a series of Children's Concerts at the Performing Arts Center. San Luis Obispo Symphony Music Education reaches more than 14,000 county schoolchildren every year with a variety of programs and has now merged with the San Luis Obispo Youth Symphony to provide a continuum of performance, outreach and experience activities for all ages.

Food Bank contributions will be accepted in the lobby at the following concerts and events:

San Luis Obispo Youth Symphony

Spring Concert

Sunday, March 1, 2009 – 3 pm

Clark Center, 487 Fair Oaks Ave., Arroyo Grande

San Luis Obispo Symphony

FREE No Ties Allowed Dress Rehearsal

Saturday, March 7, 2009 – 1 pm

Christopher Cohan Center, 1 Grand Ave., San Luis Obispo

San Luis Obispo Symphony

Evening Concert

Saturday, March 7, 2009 – 8 pm

Christopher Cohan Center, 1 Grand Ave., San Luis Obispo

P.O. Box 2070, Paso Robles, CA 93447 · Phone: 805-238-4664 · FAX: 805-238-6956

www.slofoodbank.org