



## **JACKSONVILLE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA TO JOIN ORCHESTRAS FEEDING AMERICA TO BENEFIT DOWNTOWN ECUMENICAL SERVICES COUNCIL**

**Audiences and Community Members invited to drop off food  
March 5 through March 20**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** (Jacksonville, Fla., March 4, 2010) – Music has the power to uplift, encourage and strengthen, and these qualities are most important in times of need. In the midst of harsh economic realities, the [Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra](#) has partnered with the second annual [Orchestras Feeding America](#) food drive America's symphony orchestras. The drive will benefit the [Downtown Ecumenical Services Council](#) (DESC), a Jacksonville emergency services agency which provides assistance to the poor, particularly families with young children, the elderly and the sick or disabled.

Volunteers will collect non-perishable food at Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra concerts from **March 5 through March 20** in the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts. **Food donations can also be dropped off at the Times-Union Center lobby**, located at 300 Water Street, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through March 20.

As a thank you for taking part in such an essential project, donors will receive a **half-price ticket voucher** for any upcoming Jacksonville Symphony concert this season (limit one voucher per household).

Items most needed are **canned meats, vegetables, stew and soup, pasta, rice, peanut butter and fruit juice** (no glass containers). [Click here](#) for information about accepted types of food. (LINK: [http://www.americanorchestras.org/images/stories/food\\_drive\\_2010/most\\_needed.pdf](http://www.americanorchestras.org/images/stories/food_drive_2010/most_needed.pdf) )

"Symphonic music has the power to uplift people, and with the generous participation of our patrons, musicians, staff and volunteers, we can all carry that spirit to uplift those most in need," said Jacksonville Symphony Executive Director Stacy Ridenour. Last year's drive yielded more than 1,500 pounds of food items, thanks to the generosity of Jacksonville Symphony patrons.

The project is organized by the **League of American Orchestras**, which represents the nation's professional, volunteer, and youth orchestras, and Feeding America's network of over 200 food banks and 63,000 agencies. In 2009, 250 orchestras in all 50 states collected more than 200,000 pounds of food.

**(More)**

In 2008, approximately 9.1 million Americans, of which 16.7 million were children, lived in food insecure households, according to the most recent USDA study. Each week, approximately 5.7 million people receive emergency food assistance from an agency served by a Feeding America member. This is a 27 percent increase over numbers reported in *Hunger in America 2006*, which reported that 4.5 million people were served each week.

The **Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra** is one of the premier orchestras in Florida and the Southeast. Founded nearly 60 years ago, its success has been defined as “the standard to which all other Florida orchestras should strive” by the *Palm Beach Post*. Led by Music Director and Principal Conductor Fabio Mechetti, the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra reaches nearly one-quarter million residents annually on the First Coast and in outlying communities. Nearly a third of these residents are children, who benefit from the JSO’s educational programs, as well as the Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestra.

The **Downtown Ecumenical Services Council (DESC)** is located at 215 Ocean Street, Jacksonville, at the First Presbyterian Church. DESC is an emergency services agency, founded in 1981 by downtown congregations. It was established to collectively do "street ministry" by providing emergency service assistance to the poor, particularly families with young children, the elderly, and the sick or disabled. The items most covered are rent, mortgages, utilities, groceries and clothing. DESC also provides direct Financial Aid to meet needs that are of an emergency nature. Financial support for DESC comes from the Annual "Catch Bubba Catfish Tournament". "Bubba" provides a day of fun for the whole family, with fishing, games, prizes and a barbecue. "Fishin' with a Mission" provides DESC with resources to continue to support families in need.

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**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra

Paul Witkowski; [pwitkowski@jaxsymphony.org](mailto:pwitkowski@jaxsymphony.org) (904) 354-3578

Downtown Ecumenical Services Council

Mary Spuhler; [jax\\_desc@bellsouth.net](mailto:jax_desc@bellsouth.net) (904) 358-7955

Sunshine, Sachs & Associates

Julie Cloutier; [cloutier@sunshinesachs.com](mailto:cloutier@sunshinesachs.com); (212) 691-2800

League of American Orchestras

John Bence; [jbence@americanorchestras.org](mailto:jbence@americanorchestras.org) (646) 822 - 4077