

# Share Your Harvest

**W**e all know someone who could use a little help with their groceries these days. The fact is, times are tough, and they're tough everywhere. Too many people are struggling to make ends meet on a limited budget. For many of our friends and neighbors, difficult times are forcing hard decisions never before faced: Pay the rent or the utility bills? Fix the car or buy groceries?

Will there be anything left over to buy a few holiday presents?

This month, with Thanksgiving nearly upon us, we pause to consider what really matters in our lives. We give thanks. We share. And there should



always be plenty of food. For hunters, especially deer hunters, this season has become more meaningful than ever.

Hunting has become more of what hunting has always been—a significant source of fresh meat.

Throughout the years, the Department of Natural Resources has always encouraged hunters to share the rewards of their success. For some, sharing traditionally meant dropping off a package of smoked venison sausage



to the landowner who provided us a place to hunt. Or maybe we shared some jerky or those coveted tenderloins and backstraps. For others, sharing meant donating all or part of their deer to the **Illinois Sportsmen Against Hunger** program. Established in 1994, ISAH links hunters statewide with local, participating meat

processors who can process donated venison for distribution to food banks throughout Illinois.

Hunters responded with incredible generosity. Since 1994, Illinois sportsmen have donated roughly 800,000 pounds of venison to feed their hungry neighbors. That's enough venison to create more than 3 million healthy, protein-rich meals.



Tough times bring out the best in us. In fact, last year Illinois hunters set a record for the most venison ever donated to feed the hungry: Nearly 118,000 pounds were distributed to Illinois food banks thanks to the generosity of hunters throughout Illinois. But there's even more. Those official numbers don't include the tons of venison donated directly to individuals by hunters who took it upon themselves to stop by someone's home and offer some support. Successful hunters often process the deer themselves, just as hunters have done for ages, and when they're finished they reflexively think of someone

who could use a gift of venison. It's what hunters do.

It's what we all do. We take care of our neighbors, especially during rough times.

This tradition of sharing the hunter's harvest

reveals a compassion not often attributed to hunters. Yet hunters everywhere know this tradition is part of their responsibility. And these days, there is no responsibility more important to the successful hunter.

For more information about the ISAH program, including a list of participating Illinois meat processors, visit [www.dnr.illinois.gov/Pages/SportsmenAgainstHunger.aspx](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/Pages/SportsmenAgainstHunger.aspx).

Also, to learn more about the new **Target Hunger Now!** program that provides meals of both venison and Asian carp to Illinois families, visit [www.dnr.illinois.gov/Pages/TargetHungerNow.aspx](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/Pages/TargetHungerNow.aspx).

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