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## AIO's 4th Annual *FILL THE STRAND* Event

### *Food in every seat. Help for every family.*

Rockland, Maine (December 7, 2023) – On Monday, January 15, 2024 AIO Food and Energy Assistance will host its fourth *Fill The Strand* food and funds drive to benefit AIO's Food Assistance, Energy Assistance, Weekend Meal, and Diaper Assistance Programs. This event challenges the community to fill every seat in the historic theater with bags of food and funds for AIO's programs. AIO has raised over \$85,000 in the first three *Fill the Strand* events. The goal for the fourth event is to raise \$30,000.

"*Fill The Strand* has become AIO's signature event of the year, providing food and money at the most critical time" says AIO Executive Director Joe Ryan. "Powered by **Allen Insurance and Financial** and hosted by **The Strand**, this event is a powerful testament of a community that cares for one another. As many families face greater challenges making ends meet, AIO continues to keep pace with the need for food and energy assistance. In the past year, we have provided over 975,000 pounds of food through more than 10,000 visits to our pantry market. That is a 40% increase over last year's record-setting number of visits! *Fill The Strand* is vital to keeping food available for those who need it."

Monetary donations are welcome – and in fact your dollar goes further since AIO can purchase food through partners at a competitive price. Individuals can fill one theater seat with a bag of food or sponsor a bag at \$25. Your \$25 monetary donation can buy up to \$100 worth of food. Those interested in sponsoring a bag through a financial donation can make it online at [www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand](http://www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand).

Non-perishable food with a current expiration date is appreciated (no glass please). AIO would be grateful for donations of the most needed items including: ready rice pouches, macaroni and

cheese and pasta; cereal and oatmeal; pop-top canned foods and Chef Boyardee meals; single serving lunch items; kid-friendly snacks; 100% juice boxes; shelf stable milk; snacks (granola bars, peanut butter crackers, 6-pack raisins). Whether a monetary gift or food donation - your support will help the people in our community who need it the most.

Food collection sites have been established at area businesses, including Allen Insurance & Financial offices (Rockland and Camden), The Strand Theater, First National Bank (Rockland branches), Main Street Market (Rockland) and AIO Food and Energy Assistance (Rockland). On **January 15th** volunteers will be at the Strand Theatre between 9:00-2:00pm to receive food and funds donations. Drive-up and drop-off service will be available or come in the Strand Theatre to deliver your food and funds donations.

AIO is proud to partner with two business leaders who are instrumental in making the ***Fill The Strand*** event possible— The Strand Theater who hosts the event and Allen Insurance & Financial who helps power the event, through their financial support as well as team of employees who volunteer during the day of the event in greeting donors, collecting and organizing donations. .

AIO is grateful to the generous support of its sponsors. Leadership level sponsors include First National Bank and First National Wealth Management, Maine Sport and Rockland Plaza. Partner level sponsors include Gartley & Dorsky, The Inn at Ocean's Edge, 250 Main Hotel, Lyman Morse and North Haven Inn & Market. Champion level sponsor is Journey's End Marina. Business level sponsors include Hundred Acres, Plants Unlimited, and Jess's Market. A list of all sponsors can be found at [www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand](http://www.aiofoodpantry.org/strand).

"Supporting an organization like AIO is a part of our company's commitment to community well-being," said Michael Pierce, president of Allen Insurance and Financial. "Lending people-power to the ***Fill The Strand*** event fosters a sense of shared responsibility among our employee-owners and enriches lives beyond the workplace."

"We look forward to hosting this terrific event each winter! "***Fill The Strand***" brings our community together in a fun and exciting way as we do the important work of supporting Midcoast families in need. It's a thrill to watch those seats fill up, and the Strand is proud to be the place where the action happens," shares Jana Herbener, Communications Relations Manager at the Strand Theater.

For more information about the event and how you can participate please contact event coordinator Leila Murphy, [murphy.leila@gmail.com](mailto:murphy.leila@gmail.com).

### ***About AIO Food and Energy Assistance***

AIO has provided nutritious food and heating assistance to Knox County families. Funding and access to AIO's programs are more critical than ever as food insecurity in Knox County is projected to continue to increase. Knox County currently has the 4th highest food insecurity rate in the state. Child food insecurity is estimated at 28%. During the past year, AIO has supported 5,896 households, 15,672 individuals, and distributed 12,325 weekend meals packages for elementary school students throughout Knox County. AIO's Energy Assistance Program helps households with heating assistance or electrical disconnection prevention – which is critical as

winter begins. Last winter AIO distributed 691 energy assistance vouchers, totaling \$208,000 in support. AIO provides a direct path for donors to assist our community by putting your donation to work immediately.

Photos by Tara Rice Photo:

1. Volunteers at Fill the Strand
2. Food Donation at Fill the Strand



