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SUMMER FEEDING SITES PROVIDE FREE MEALS TO KIDS

Second Harvest Food Bank Connects Families to Food

SAN JOSE, Calif., June 20, 2016 – Summer is here and that means thousands of kids in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties won't have access to the free and reduced-priced meals they rely on during the school year. Making sure their kids have enough healthy food to eat during the summer can be difficult for families already struggling to put food on the table with the high cost of housing. Second Harvest Food Bank is working to connect families to the nutritious food they need to thrive this summer. There are a number of resources available, including Second Harvest programs and more than 120 federally funded summer feeding sites where kids can get a free meal.

"Kids shouldn't have to spend their summer vacation worrying about where their next meal will come from," said Kathy Jackson, CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. "It's hard to believe that in such a wealthy area, one in three local kids qualifies for free and reduced-priced school meals. That's why Second Harvest is partnering with libraries, day camps, and other organizations to create a network of summer feeding sites where kids can get a free meal and connect families to the nutritious food they need to feed their kids this summer. That could be a bag of groceries from Second Harvest Food Bank or a free meal through the federal Summer Food Service Program."

There are more than 80 sites in [Santa Clara County](#) and nearly 40 sites in [San Mateo County](#) where a free lunch is served to any child who is 18 or younger through the federal Summer Food Service Program. Some of the sites also offer free breakfast and an afternoon snack, as well as free meals for adults who accompany their children.

Second Harvest is working with a number of partners to offer meal sites where parents can eat with their kids, including YMCA, San Mateo County Libraries, San Jose Public Library, City of San Jose, Stanford Pediatric Advocacy Program, Ravenswood School District, and the California Summer Meals Coalition. These sites include selected schools and libraries in Atherton, East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Redwood City, and San Jose. The kids' meals are paid for through the federal Summer Food Service Program and the adult meals are covered by Second Harvest Food

Bank. Some of the sites are serving lunches prepared by Revolution Foods, known for providing healthy, nutritious meals.

“Lunch at the library gives families the opportunity to eat together,” Jackson said. “Kids have a better experience when their parent or adult caregiver can eat with them. There are also enrichment activities at the libraries to help reduce the ‘summer slide’ many kids experience when they don’t have access to learning opportunities during the summer.”

Families can also get groceries and fresh produce from Second Harvest. The Food Bank partners with nearly 330 nonprofit agencies to provide food at more than 700 sites up and down the peninsula, including schools, community centers, pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. Second Harvest Food Connection staff will be at some of the library sites connecting families to additional food resources.

The federal Summer Food Service Program is designed to be an extension of the National School Lunch Program, which provides free and reduced-price lunches during the school year. But the vast majority of kids who benefit from free and reduced-priced school lunches don’t participate in the federal Summer Food Service Program – 81% in Santa Clara County and 78% in San Mateo County, according to the California Food Policy Advocates.

“Too many kids are missing out on summer meals,” Jackson said. “That’s why Second Harvest is collaborating with schools and other organizations to provide more sites where kids can get a free meal during the summer. Hunger can have devastating consequences for kids, so we have to pull every lever to make sure kids have access to nutritious food.”

Studies show that kids who don’t get enough to eat often suffer emotional and physical effects that can hamper their ability to do well in school and succeed later in life. Hunger has been linked with delayed development and learning difficulties.

Families who are struggling to put food on the table can call Second Harvest’s Food Connection multilingual hotline at 800-984-3663 or visit www.shfb.org/getfood to learn about food-assistance programs that can help, including Second Harvest programs, the summer feeding sites, and CalFresh (food stamps).

Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties is the trusted leader dedicated to ending local hunger. Since its inception in 1974, Second Harvest has become one of the largest food banks in the nation, providing food to one quarter of a million people each month. The Food Bank mobilizes individuals, companies and community partners to connect people to the nutritious food they need. More than half the food distributed is fresh produce. In fact, Second Harvest provides more fresh fruits and vegetables than any other food bank in the United States. Second Harvest also plays a leading role in promoting federal nutrition programs and educating families on how to make healthier food choices. Visit www.SHFB.org to get involved.

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