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**SAMARITAN HOUSE AND SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK  
OPEN THE FIRST KNOWN FOOD PHARMACY IN CALIFORNIA  
LOW-INCOME DIABETES PATIENTS CAN NOW FILL PRESCRIPTIONS  
FOR HEALTHY FOOD AT THE REDWOOD CITY FREE CLINIC**

**REDWOOD CITY, Calif., January 27, 2016** – Today Samaritan House and Second Harvest Food Bank, with support from the Sequoia Healthcare District, officially opened a Food Pharmacy where low-income patients with diabetes can “fill” prescriptions for free nutritious food. The Food Pharmacy is thought to be the first of its kind in California, conveniently located at the Samaritan House Redwood City Free Clinic so patients can fill their prescriptions onsite. Second Harvest will keep the Food Pharmacy stocked with fresh produce and other healthy foods. The Sequoia Healthcare District has provided partial funding.

“Diabetes, as well as other diet-related illnesses, runs rampant in low-income communities,” said Dr. Jason Wong, Samaritan House Medical Director of Health Care Services. “For people struggling to make ends meet, cheap filling foods are often their only choice, but these are ‘empty’ unhealthy calories, not good nutrition. Thanks to this transformational partnership, clinic physicians are now able to get patients and their families the real food they need, supply tips on how to prepare the food, and monitor the results.”

Bart Charlow, CEO of Samaritan House, added, “Food is good medicine, especially for our clients, whose regular diets are limited by the cash in their pockets. We love the partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank and Sequoia Healthcare District. This is a win for the community!”

Patients with diabetes are referred to the Food Pharmacy program by their clinic physician, who provides them with a prescription for food that can be filled at the Food Pharmacy twice a month, whenever they need it most. Currently, the program is a one-year pilot that will include 100 patients, who will be monitored and evaluated by the clinic to determine how well the program helped them keep their diabetes under control.

When they fill their prescriptions, patients with diabetes receive a core bag of food that includes low-salt/low-sugar canned foods and complex carbohydrates like beans, brown rice, and quinoa. They can choose from an assortment of other healthy foods like fresh produce, chicken, eggs, yogurt, peanut butter, and canned tuna and salmon. The supplemental food is intended to be a three to four-day supply for the entire family.

The Food Pharmacy program also includes nutrition education. Second Harvest provides cooking demonstrations once a month as well as nutrition education materials, including recipe tip cards that the Food Bank developed to help people eat healthy with the food they receive.

“We want to address the diet-fueled health disparities we see that are caused by a lack of access to nutritious food,” said Kathy Jackson, CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. “We know from the 2014 Hunger in America study that one-third of our client households include a member with diabetes. Healthy food is often too expensive and out of reach. That’s why Second Harvest is so focused on nutrition and the connection between hunger and health. We are working to ensure that everyone has access to the nutritious foods they need to thrive.”

Samaritan House, Second Harvest, and the Sequoia Healthcare District are long-time partners who began talking about opening the Food Pharmacy early last year at Second Harvest’s groundbreaking Hunger Action Summit titled “Food as Medicine: The Intersection of Hunger and Health.”

The partners have worked collaboratively over the last year to set up the Food Pharmacy at the Redwood City Free Clinic. Dr. Wong worked with the Boston Medical Center to model the Food Pharmacy after the preventive food pantry located there. Second Harvest purchased equipment, including a freezer, refrigerator, shelving, a stepladder and two carts for the Food Pharmacy and is buying special foods that are appropriate for people with diabetes.

“Our support of the Food Pharmacy with these two outstanding partners is the next step in our efforts to address real health problems in creative and innovative ways,” said Lee Michelson, CEO of the Sequoia Healthcare District. “We are confident that the Food Pharmacy will be a big success and will be a valuable resource for those struggling with diabetes and other health issues.”

Sequoia Healthcare District has been the lead sponsor of the Samaritan House Redwood City Free Clinic since its inception nearly 15 years ago. The District recognizes the importance of all residents having a medical home to receive ongoing proper medical and dental treatment and to limit unnecessary and expensive emergency room visits.

The District’s support of the clinic is now more than \$700,000 per year and surpasses \$10 million. Through this support, thousands of low-income residents have received outstanding care through a generous group of volunteer physicians, dentists, nurses and support staff.

Sequoia Healthcare District has also been a supporter of Second Harvest since 2007 and has provided nearly \$700,000 in funding over the years to help feed the most vulnerable residents of our District. The District recognizes that it is extremely difficult to be healthy while hungry and that food security is indeed a health issue.

#### **About Samaritan House**

Since 1974, Samaritan House has become San Mateo County's leading non-profit that brings a new level of hope, dignity, and empowerment to people living in poverty as we fulfill immediate needs and guide people toward self-reliance. Recognized as a role model in the community, we are Second Harvest's largest food distribution partner in the county. Other free services we offer include shelter; free medical and dental clinics; clothes for children; personalized case management and much more. The entire community benefits from our steadfast mission to mobilize all available resources and work hand in hand to break the cycle of poverty. [www.samaritanhousesanmateo.org](http://www.samaritanhousesanmateo.org)

#### **About Second Harvest Food Bank**

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](http://www.SHFB.org) to get involved.

#### **About the Sequoia Healthcare District**

The Sequoia Healthcare District is a publically funded special district serving the health needs of the residents of central and southern San Mateo County. [www.sequoiahealthcaredistrict.com](http://www.sequoiahealthcaredistrict.com)

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