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HUNGER ACTION SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPACT OF HUNGER ON EDUCATION, HEALTH, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

New research shows progress with collaborative hunger relief efforts, and uncovers new indicators of the need in Silicon Valley

SAN JOSE and SANTA CLARA, Calif., March 14, 2017 – As the center of technology and innovation, Silicon Valley has been a source of immense wealth for some, but with one of the highest costs of housing in the nation, it has come at a price for many low to moderate-wage earners living here who forgo regular meals so they can pay their bills. Studies have shown that both the adults and children foregoing meals experience more health problems, and have difficulty focusing and being productive at work and school—ultimately leading to lower academic achievement and compromised job opportunities that dim their chances of becoming self sufficient or advancing into Silicon Valley’s knowledge based workforce. The link between hunger and other key social issues affecting our community is well documented and requires new levels of collaboration to address the problems.

That was the premise of today’s Hunger Action Summit, an annual forum designed to spark conversation and inspire collaboration to end local hunger. Organized by Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties and Santa Clara University, the summit is sponsored by Santa Clara University’s Food and Agribusiness Institute, part of the Leavey School of Business and held at the university’s Locatelli Center.

This year’s summit brought together civic leaders, policy makers and hunger advocates to examine the impact of local hunger on other key issues like education, health, housing and economic development to further explore the scope and depth of hunger locally and beyond.

“I think it’s clear that until we solve the hunger problem in Silicon Valley, we won’t be able to get much traction on these other key policy issues like housing, health and education,” said Cindy McCown, vice president of community engagement and policy for Second Harvest Food Bank. “Food is foundational. That’s why it’s imperative that hunger has a seat at the table when we discuss these complex policy issues.”

Summit speakers addressed the importance of prioritizing food security and reaching across the housing, education, health and economic development sectors to tackle these complex issues that are

all intrinsically linked to hunger. Highlighting new sources of food for hungry populations, students from Santa Clara University's Food and Agribusiness Institute presented findings from their No Produce Left Behind project that examined the potential of vegetable and fruit crops left behind during harvesting in the Central Valley to help with hunger relief efforts. Policy experts discussed the potential implications to hunger relief following recent changes at the federal government level and the renewed importance of preserving and strengthening private and public food assistance programs for vulnerable residents.

Keynote speaker Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, director of The Hamilton Project and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution shared her research on the long-run impacts of early life experiences including the impacts of receiving federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) benefits during childhood. SNAP participation not only reduces overall food insecurity rates, but it also is among the most effective policies for reducing child poverty and preventing the lasting consequences of childhood hunger on both adult health and adult economic outcomes.

Hunger Index Shows Meal Gap Despite Progress in Food Assistance Efforts

Access to federally-funded food assistance programs like SNAP (CalFresh in California) is just one of the areas measured by Santa Clara University's Hunger Index. Released during the summit every year, the Index measures the gap between the need for food in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties and the ability of individuals to get food either on their own or with the help of federal food-assistance programs such as CalFresh and local non-profit organizations like Second Harvest. The number of unmet meals is known as the meal gap.

While this year's Index showed a significant increase in food assistance in both counties since 2014, there were still more than 137 million unmet meals for vulnerable households. The increase in food assistance primarily came from Second Harvest Food Bank, and two federally funded food assistance programs: the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) which provides nutritious meals to low-income children when school is not in session.

For the purposes of the Hunger Index, a household earning less than \$50,000 annually is considered low-income. It takes more than \$82,000 per year for a family of four to pay its bills and put food on the table in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties (Insight Center for Community Economic Development).

"The efforts of the various food assistance organizations including Second Harvest and other federally funded food assistance programs have all had a positive impact on collectively addressing the hunger problem in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties," said S. Andrew Starbird, executive director of the My Own Business Institute at Santa Clara University and co-creator of the Hunger Index. "Even with this progress, there are still many more people out there in our community who need help and we have more work to do."

New Data Provides More Insight Into the Reasons for Unmet Need

Despite the progress in providing more food assistance to vulnerable households, efforts to feed local families are not keeping pace with the need for food in Silicon Valley. Second Harvest serves more than a quarter of a million people every month and that number has been on the rise since the Great

Recession. It's called the Silicon Valley Hunger Paradox: as the economy grows, so does the number of people who are struggling to make ends meet.

Second Harvest released results from a new survey that provided insight into the extent of hunger in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties as well as a deeper perspective on why people who qualify for food assistance are not receiving it. More than 50 percent of people surveyed said they make regular sacrifices to buy food and more than 30 percent said their next meal is a constant worry.

There are a number of barriers that prevent some people from either receiving or seeking food assistance even if it is free. Lack of transportation, conflicting schedules due to work or childcare, and even cultural issues where people are embarrassed to ask for help are reasons vulnerable residents may not get help from the Food Bank or other assistance programs. Second Harvest's survey indicated that more than 50 percent of people who need assistance, but are not receiving it are embarrassed to be seen going to a food bank.

The partnerships explored at the Summit point to the opportunities to break down those barriers and end hunger in Silicon Valley. "One of the more frustrating aspects of hunger here is that it's not a result of a food shortage. There is plenty of food for everyone," said McCown. "The more we can eliminate these barriers to access, the more successful we will be at addressing hunger and solving some of the other social issues we face here in Silicon Valley. There is a roll for everyone to play—we can't do it alone."

About Santa Clara University

Santa Clara University, a comprehensive Jesuit, Catholic university located 40 miles south of San Francisco in California's Silicon Valley, offers its more than 8,800 students rigorous undergraduate curricula in arts and sciences, business, theology, and engineering, plus master's and law degrees and engineering Ph.D.s. Distinguished nationally by one of the highest graduation rates among all U.S. master's universities, California's oldest operating higher-education institution demonstrates faith-inspired values of ethics and social justice. For more information, see www.scu.edu.

About Second Harvest Food Bank

Based in Silicon Valley, Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties is one of the largest food banks in the nation. Currently providing food to more than one quarter of a million people every month, Second Harvest is a trusted community-based organization that was founded in 1974. Despite the immense wealth in Silicon Valley, and partly due to the high cost of living, hunger and malnutrition are pervasive. The Food Bank distributes nutritious food, including more fresh produce than any other food bank in the country, through a network of more than 320 nonprofit partners at more than 850 sites. Second Harvest is pursuing innovative efforts to increase access to food resources as it seeks to feed an additional 100,000 hungry people each month. To reach more people, it connects those in need to federal nutrition programs and other food resources. To learn more about how Second Harvest is building a hunger-free community, visit SHFB.org.

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