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SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK KICKS OFF THE LARGEST HOLIDAY FOOD AND FUND DRIVE IN THE U.S.

High cost of housing is crushing local families struggling to put food on the table

SAN JOSE, Calif., October 20, 2015 – We've all seen the headlines about the skyrocketing housing costs in Silicon Valley. Imagine what it must be like to get a significant rent increase when you're already struggling just to put food on the table. That's the situation many local families are facing as we head into the holiday season. To help feed hungry families during the holidays and all year long, Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties is kicking off the largest Holiday Food and Fund Drive in the nation.

"It's hard to believe that in this center of innovation and wealth, there is so much hunger," said Kathy Jackson, CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. "We have families who are crammed into tiny apartments just to make ends meet, and even then they still don't earn enough to feed their kids the nutritious food they need to thrive."

The average rent in Silicon Valley tops \$2,500 a month and has risen more than 12% in the last year, which leaves less money for food each month. It takes more than \$82,000 per year for a family of four to pay their bills and put food on the table.

"You combine the high cost of housing with the stagnant wages we've seen for those outside the high tech industry, and it spells disaster for the people we serve," Jackson said. "The family featured on our barrels this year struggles to feed their three kids even though the dad works full-time as a mechanic. All five of them are living in a one-bedroom apartment."

Second Harvest needs to raise \$15 million and 2 million pounds of food during the holiday campaign, which ends in January. The Food Bank raises nearly half its revenues during the holiday season.

"This is a critical campaign for Second Harvest," Jackson said. "The number of people we serve jumped 50 percent after the recession and it remains stubbornly high despite the booming local economy. Second Harvest is providing food to nearly 250,000 people every month. We rely on the generosity of local individuals and companies to ensure that anyone who needs a healthy meal can get one."

Second Harvest Food Bank partners with nearly 330 nonprofit agencies to provide food at more than 700 sites throughout Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, including pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, schools, and community centers, so that everyone has access to the nutritious food they need to thrive right in their own neighborhood. Second Harvest is one of only a few food banks in the nation that does not charge its partners for the food it provides, so it depends on donations. Last year, the Food Bank distributed more than 62 million pounds of food to the community, including more than 33 million pounds of produce. Second Harvest distributes more fresh fruits and vegetables than any other food bank in the United States.

While Second Harvest provides food to nearly a quarter of a million people every month of the year, many people think about hunger during the holidays.

Individuals, corporations, and organizations can help to ensure that anyone who needs a healthy meal can get one by donating to Second Harvest Food Bank or hosting a food and fund drive this holiday season. To support the campaign, visit www.shfb.org or call 866-234-3663. Anyone who needs food should call Second Harvest's multilingual Food Connection hotline at 800-984-3663.

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 nearly 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.