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## **SECOND HARVEST CONNECTS LOCAL RESIDENTS TO CALFRESH**

**Specially Trained Promotores Help Families Learn About This Critical Service**

**SAN JOSE, Calif., May 18, 2016** – May is CalFresh Awareness Month and Second Harvest Food Bank wants local residents to know they can get help applying for this critical service. Second Harvest has specially trained volunteer Promotores as well as Food Connection staff who work in their neighborhoods helping families and individuals apply for CalFresh (food stamps) and food assistance provided through Second Harvest.

“In this political climate, we want people to know they don’t have to be afraid to apply for CalFresh,” said Anna Dyer, director of Services at Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. “If you are struggling to put food on the table, we can help. Anyone who is eligible should apply for CalFresh. It can help you buy groceries.”

CalFresh is what California calls the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps. California has one of the lowest participation rates in the country. Only about half of those eligible for the program in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties participate. Not only are too many of our neighbors needlessly going hungry, but it also means the local economy loses out on millions of dollars every year.

There are a number of reasons that prevent people from applying for CalFresh. Many simply don’t know it is available. Others are afraid because there are a lot of myths and misconceptions about CalFresh. Here are some facts about CalFresh:

- It is a way to get nutritious food for you and your family.
- It will not harm your immigration status or make an immigrant a “public charge.”
- Your children will not be required to serve in the military because you get it.
- You don’t have to pay back any benefit you are qualified to get.
- You don’t need to have children to get it.
- You don’t have to be fingerprinted to get it.

- It is confidential – no one will know you get it.
- You can have a job and still get it.

“CalFresh benefits can help your family get enough to eat,” said Emily Melahn, LIBRE staff attorney at the Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County. “Receiving food assistance will not affect your immigration status. LIBRE has three assistor sites in San Mateo County to help needy immigrants and non-immigrants in our community apply for CalFresh and other benefits each year. We also offer confidential advice if you have problems with your application.”

Those who qualify for CalFresh are issued a plastic card that can be used at participating grocery stores and farmers’ markets to buy groceries and fresh produce. The card works just like any other debit card.

The application process can be challenging for some people. That’s why Second Harvest helps local residents apply for the benefit. Second Harvest provides comprehensive training to Promotores, community volunteers who want to help their neighbors get nutritious food and eat healthier. In addition to helping people learn about and apply for CalFresh and other food assistance, they help the Food Bank reach community members not easily reached through traditional methods.

Second Harvest’s Food Connection specialists also work out in the community connecting people to food. They are located at community centers, health care facilities, and other locations throughout Santa Clara and San Mateo counties.

In addition, anyone who needs food can call Second Harvest’s Food Connection multilingual hotline at 800-984-3663 to learn about food-assistance programs that can help, including CalFresh.

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