



Contact:

Diane Baker Hayward
408.921.4611 - Mobile
dbakerhayward@shfb.org

HUNGER IN SILICON VALLEY MORE WIDESPREAD AND DIVERSE THAN PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT

Second Harvest Food Bank's Food Insecurity Study finds
1 in 4 people is at risk for hunger; nearly a quarter are families with children

SAN JOSE, Calif., December 12, 2017 – Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties today announced alarming findings that reveal hunger in Silicon Valley is far more pervasive than previously believed. According to the new data, nearly 27 percent of those living in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties – almost 720,000 people – are food insecure, meaning they are at risk for hunger. Nearly a quarter (22 percent) of those who are food insecure are families with children. In fact, individuals of all ages and backgrounds face hunger in Silicon Valley.

Prior estimates of individuals in food insecure households offered artificially low measures of hunger because those models did not account for the high cost of living in Silicon Valley. Housing costs in particular are so high that a family of four in Santa Clara County earning \$84,750 or less – and in San Mateo County earning a \$105,350¹ or less – is considered low-income by the federal government when determining eligibility for assisted housing programs. Feeding America's "[Map the Meal Gap 2017](#)", which accurately measures hunger on a national scale, measures differences in the cost of food across regions, but does not measure the impact cost of housing can have on a food budget. Partly as a result, that bellwether study estimates that the number of food insecure individuals in the two counties in 2015 was 269,820.

¹ HUD develops income limits based on Median Family Income estimates and Fair Market Rent area definitions for each metropolitan area, parts of some metropolitan areas, and each non-metropolitan county."
<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html>

“We found that more than 1 in 4 Silicon Valley residents is at risk for hunger,” said Leslie Bacho, CEO at Second Harvest. “These results are particularly surprising when you consider that unemployment is at an all-time low. Unfortunately, economic growth in Silicon Valley is creating immense wealth for a minority, while driving the cost of living up for everyone. As the economy propels expenses, like rent, higher, many residents are more at risk for hunger including a significant population of children in our community. We call it the Silicon Valley hunger paradox, and for the first time we’ve been able to measure its magnitude.”

Hunger in Silicon Valley does not fit the stereotypical image – many are working families who cannot stretch their income any further to cover rent increases or unexpected health costs – people who might not necessarily look like they need help. Second Harvest’s Food Insecurity Study indicated that of those who are food insecure, 30 percent said their rent had increased in the past year and 13 percent faced eviction or foreclosure; 26 percent lost their job in the past year; 11 percent had their hours cut; and 19 percent encountered unexpected healthcare costs.

“Underneath the veneer of prosperity in Silicon Valley there are many children, families and seniors who aren’t getting enough to eat. We’re currently providing food to an average of over 257,000 people every month, including nearly 89,000 children and 57,000 seniors. Based on the findings of our Food Insecurity Study, this leaves a gap of about 450,000 Silicon Valley residents who are struggling to put food on the table. We’re taking dramatic steps to connect more people with food and bridge this gap, but this monumental task will require the community to come together and make ending hunger in Silicon Valley a priority,” said Bacho.

To help address the immense need, Second Harvest is in the midst of the largest holiday food and fund drive in the nation, aiming to raise \$16.5 million. The holiday campaign is critical to the Food Bank as it raises half of its operating budget for the entire year. The non-profit must raise \$10 million more dollars during December and early January to meet that goal or face delaying or eliminating programs planned for the new year, including five school pantries, five new distributions, and three wellness pantries, impacting about 2,200 individuals each month. Anyone interested in donating to Second Harvest Food Bank or volunteering to help end hunger in Silicon Valley can visit [SHFB.org](https://www.shfb.org).

About the Food Insecurity Study for Silicon Valley

Through funding provided by an individual donor, the Food Bank worked with Nichols Research to conduct 750 interviews in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. The majority (500) were conducted at 30 food distribution sites and 250 were conducted at places such as discount grocery stores, recycling centers and health clinics. Researchers developed a Food Insecurity Score based on eight indicators such as whether interviewees had missed meals or worry about affording food. Researchers generated a

predictive model of food insecurity by correlating the Food Insecurity Score and demographic data from the survey, which was then mapped using Census data to estimate the level of food insecurity by zip code. Second Harvest can be contacted for more information on the findings and results of its Food Insecurity Study.

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 almost any other food bank in the country, through a network of 300 nonprofit partners at 905 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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