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SECOND HARVEST OPENS 27 NEW SCHOOL PANTRIES

Food Bank launches campaign to ensure kids have access to the healthy foods they need to succeed at school and in life

John and Eileen Donahoe, Reid Hoffman, and Sheryl Sandberg lead effort

SAN JOSE, Calif., March 27, 2018 – Faced with a record number of kids and families in Silicon Valley who need food, Second Harvest Food Bank opened 27 new school pantries last year, part of a coordinated effort to address the rising need. Despite the booming economy, too many families are struggling due to the high cost of living. More than 257,000 people rely on Second Harvest for food every month, including nearly 89,000 kids.

“It’s heartbreaking to think of a child going to school on an empty stomach,” said Leslie Bacho, CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. “But it happens in nearly every neighborhood in Silicon Valley, where 1 in 3 kids is at risk for hunger. Nutritious food is a game-changer because kids need it to grow up strong and healthy, so they can succeed at school and in life.”

Second Harvest recently launched its Stand Up for Kids Campaign with the goal of raising \$7.7 million to ensure that kids get the healthy food they need to thrive.

Schools are a great place to reach families who may be struggling to feed their kids. Second Harvest targets schools in high need areas, where more than 70 percent of students qualify for free or low-cost school meals. The Food Bank is now serving 108 K-12 schools and 10 colleges through its school pantry program, providing free groceries, including fresh produce—more than ever before. Second Harvest also offers nutrition education at these school pantries and connects families to other food programs like CalFresh (food stamps).

“When I found out Second Harvest has a school pantry program, I thought, ‘great, that could really help our students,’” said Valarie Ikemoto, a social worker at Oak Grove High School, where Second Harvest recently opened a school pantry. “I think the perception is that because we’re in South San Jose,

everyone is fine. But there is a lot of need. We have a high number of multiple families living in one home.”

Studies show that kids who don’t get enough to eat often suffer emotional and physical effects that can hurt their ability to do well in school and succeed later in life. Hunger has been linked with delayed development and learning difficulties. Children who struggle with hunger are also at higher risk for health complications as well as [behavioral issues](#), anxiety and mood swings. But studies also show that kids who have access to food-assistance programs score higher on tests, and have better math and reading skills, than kids who don’t.

“Kids need nutritious food to function at school in general, to be able to focus and concentrate,” said Ikemoto, who has seen it firsthand. “Hunger is linked to disciplinary problems. Students get sent to me for behavioral issues, and then when we dissect it, we find out there is a lot more going on, and one of them is access to food. If they can’t concentrate and follow along in class, they are much more likely to act out.”

Fueling the Next Generation of Entrepreneurs

Making sure the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs has access to nutritious food is such a critical issue that local tech leaders are co-chairing the Stand Up for Kids campaign, including John Donahoe, CEO of ServiceNow; Eileen Donahoe, executive director of global digital policy incubator at Stanford’s Center for Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law; Reid Hoffman, co-founder of LinkedIn and partner at Greylock Partners; and Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook and founder of Leanin.org.

“Given the local focus on STEM education, we need to first recognize that nobody can do math well on an empty stomach,” Hoffman said. “Making sure kids can eat is a foundational investment in STEM, and the future of our workforce, as well as humanity. That’s why I’m a committed supporter of Second Harvest, and why I hope other entrepreneurs, technologists and community members will join us in this effort to make Silicon Valley a better place to live and work.”

Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook COO and founder of LeanIn.Org and OptionB.Org, commented, “In Silicon Valley, 1 out of 3 kids is at risk for hunger. I’m proud to support the team at Second Harvest who work to make sure the children in our community get the food they need to thrive.”

Dollars raised during the campaign will be used to purchase, source and distribute the healthy foods kids need, and to explore new and innovative ways to connect more kids and families to food.

In addition to opening new school pantries and distributing more food to local families, Second Harvest is intensifying its effort to leverage public food resources like school meals and other federally funded programs aimed at keeping kids and families fed. Second Harvest is collaborating with schools,

libraries, community organizations, government entities and others so that more families have access to food right in their own neighborhood.

“If kids have access to nutritious food and don’t have to worry about getting enough to eat, then they can get more out of their education and work toward a better future,” John Donahoe said. “That’s why it’s so important to focus on kids.”

Eileen Donahoe agreed, “Every child deserves the chance to succeed, and that starts with nutritious food.”

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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