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SUMMER FEEDING SITES PROVIDE FREE MEALS TO KIDS

Second Harvest Food Bank leads efforts in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties to connect more kids to free nutritious meals during summer vacation

Highlights:

- There are more than 120 sites in [Santa Clara](#) and [San Mateo](#) counties where any child who is 18 or younger can get a free lunch. Some sites also offer free breakfast and an afternoon snack as well as low cost meals to adult caregivers.
- For help finding a meal site or other food resources this summer, text “food” or “comida” to 877-877, or visit www.shfb.org/getfood.
- 4 out of 5 Silicon Valley kids who are eligible for summer meal programs don’t participate, putting them at risk for the consequences of hunger

SAN JOSE, Calif., July 8, 2019 – Summer vacation is in full swing and that means thousands of kids in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties won’t have access to the free and reduced-priced meals they rely on during the school year. For families already struggling to put food on their tables with the high cost of housing, making sure their kids have enough healthy food to eat during the summer months can be especially difficult. Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties is leading efforts in both counties to reach families where they work and live and connect them with the nutritious food they need to thrive this summer. There are a number of resources available, including Second Harvest programs and more than 120 [federally funded](#) summer feeding sites where kids can get a free meal. Select sites also have low-cost or no-cost meals available to parents and caregivers.

While [summer meal sites](#) are available in both counties, they are dramatically underutilized compared to the [National School Lunch Program](#). In Silicon Valley, 4 out of 5 kids who are eligible for summer meal programs don’t participate, putting them at risk for the consequences of hunger, including physical and emotional health effects as well as the possibility for “summer slide,” where they lose ground academically. There are a number of reasons families don’t access free summer meals for kids, including a lack of awareness that the feeding sites exist, lack of easy access to sites serving meals and time constraints related to work and other commitments for parents and family members.

“There is enough nutritious food for everyone, but the challenge has been getting it into the hands of the people who need it,” said Leslie Bacho, CEO of Second Harvest. “Hunger can have devastating consequences for kids, so we focus on increasing both the awareness of and the accessibility to free

summer meals. Working collaboratively with our community partners, we've made good progress toward increasing participation, but we also know there is more to do."

In 2016, Second Harvest brought together high-need school districts, libraries, youth groups, social services agencies and other organizations throughout both counties to form the [Child Nutrition Coalition](#)* in order to collectively strengthen the summer meals network and share best practices in providing school meals. The Coalition's outreach efforts have been successful. Last year, more than 640,000 summer meals were served to Silicon Valley kids and over 1,000 meals more per site were distributed in 2018 compared to 2017. This year, the Coalition plans to serve even more meals to children.

Community leaders helping to reach more kids in their neighborhoods

Community leaders have also partnered with Second Harvest on summer meals outreach efforts. San Jose City Councilmember Sylvia Arenas has been instrumental in opening more summer meal sites in the city's District 8 area. In 2018, she worked with community partners to reactivate a park that had fallen into disuse because of safety concerns and was able to waive use fees, allowing a local school district to provide free summer meals to youth under 18, which will continue again this year. The Councilperson also helped secure permission to serve meals for kids this summer at Meadow Fair Park, which is located in a high need area of San Jose. Lunches will be provided by a mobile meal van operated by East Side Union High School District.

In Mountain View, Joe Simitian, president of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors proposed funding for a new food truck that will bring meals to children and their families in the Mountain View Whisman School District during the summer and throughout the school year. The food truck, which is the result of a partnership between Santa Clara County, the Mountain View Whisman School District, and Second Harvest Food Bank, will make it easier to take nutritious fresh food out into the neighborhoods and parks where people are gathering.

Tracy Weatherby, vice president of strategy and advocacy at Second Harvest explained that collaboration is critical to addressing food insecurity. "We truly value our relationships with our city, county, and school district partners and their commitment to ensuring kids have nutritious meals all year around. Working together, we are able to help fill the summer meal gap."

Food Assistance and free or low-cost meals for seniors and adult caregivers

Also in Santa Clara County, Supervisor Susan Ellenberg advocated for Second Harvest to receive funding to provide adult caregiver meals at libraries and parks serving summer meals. While kids 18 and under have access to free meals during the summer, parents and adult caretakers who bring them to the meal sites do not. Second Harvest has been collaborating with libraries and targeted partner sites in both counties to fund adult meals so that parents and caregivers can eat with their kids. "We know that kids are more likely to participate in summer meals programs if their parent or adult caretaker can eat with them," said Bacho. "Eating meals together as a family can facilitate healthy eating habits in kids and is critical for the health of the entire family." With the additional funding from the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, Second Harvest expects to expand beyond the 9,000 adult caregiver meals provided last year.

Families needing ongoing assistance can also get groceries and fresh produce from Second Harvest all year around. In addition to its own food distributions, the Food Bank partners with 309 nonprofit

agencies to provide food at 985 sites up and down the peninsula, including schools, community centers, pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. Second Harvest also has staff available to help the public access federally funded food assistance programs like CalFresh. For more information or to get help, visit SHFB.org or call 1-800-984-3663. Staff speaks English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin and Tagalog. Three-way interpretation is available for other languages.

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 an average of 260,000 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 309 nonprofit partners at 985 sites. Second Harvest is pursuing innovative efforts to increase access to food resources as it seeks to feed more hungry people each month. To reach more people, it advocates for anti-hunger policies and 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.

*** Children's Nutrition Coalition Participants:** Alum Rock Union Elementary School District • Boys & Girls Club of Silicon Valley • Cabrillo Unified School District • CalWorks • Cathedral of Faith • Children's Discovery Museum • Dairy Council of California • EAH Housing • East Side Union High School District • Franklin McKinley School District • Gardner WIC • Gilroy Unified School District • Indian Health Center of SCV • Jefferson Elementary School District • La Honda Pescadero School District • Milpitas Unified School District • Morgan Hill Unified School District • Mountain View Whisman School District • Mt. Pleasant Elementary School District • Oak Grove School District • Pediatric Healthy Lifestyle Center • Peninsula Family Service • Ravenswood School District • Redwood City Library • Redwood City School District • Sacred Heart Community Service • Samaritan House of San Mateo • San Jose Parks, Recreation & Neighborhood Services • San José Public Library • San Jose State University • San Jose Unified School District • San Mateo County Libraries • Santa Clara County Library District • Santa Clara County Office of Education • Santa Clara County Public Health • Santa Clara County Social Services Agency • SC WIC Program • South San Francisco Unified School District • Stanford School of Medicine, Pediatrics • Sunnyvale School District • YMCA of Silicon Valley • Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties

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