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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Second Harvest of Silicon Valley Enters Critical Holiday Giving Season With a Funding Deficit**

**Donations are down, but need remains high as many local families struggle to recover from the economic crisis caused by the pandemic**

### **Highlights:**

- Second Harvest's annual fundraising goal has been set at an unprecedented \$81 million this year to help cover the monumental costs of providing food to an average of 450,000 people every month – 80% more people than it served before the pandemic
- Low-wage workers who were already barely making ends meet due to the high cost of living are struggling to recover from the economic crisis caused by the pandemic. Families are also being hit hard at the grocery store with food costs rising 5.3% in the last year.
- Financial donations and volunteers are critically needed to cover the increase in operational expenses and food costs and to sustain the food bank's response to the ongoing levels of high need.
- Individuals, corporations and organizations can help by donating money and by volunteering. For more information, visit [shfb.org](http://shfb.org) or call 1-866-234-3663. Every dollar donated makes an impact - \$50 helps provide enough food for 100 meals.

**SAN JOSE, Calif., November 15, 2021** — As the economic crisis caused by the pandemic continues to impact local families, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley is issuing a call for monetary donations instead of the food donations that many think of this time of year. One of the largest food banks in the nation, Second Harvest is continuing to serve an average of 450,000 people every month – an 80% increase over pre-pandemic levels. At the same time, donations have softened in recent months, leaving the food bank with a funding deficit heading into the holiday giving season, which is a critical time for the food bank. The organization's fundraising goal for the entire year has been set at an unprecedented \$81 million to help meet the increased need.

“We generally raise about half our revenue during the holidays, and this year we are feeling additional pressure as financial donations have slowed,” said Leslie Bacho, CEO of Second Harvest of Silicon Valley. “While the community was incredibly generous as we ramped up our operations to meet this dramatic rise in need, we have seen a softening of monetary donations over time. Many people are experiencing some return to normalcy and may not know just how many families there are that are still in the middle of an economic crisis and will continue to need our help for years to come.”

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Low-wage workers who were already struggling to afford rent and pay for food in one of the most expensive places in the country have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic's impact on the economy. Even before businesses shuttered and people lost their jobs due to COVID-19, one in four people in Silicon Valley was at risk for hunger.

Now these same families are getting hit hard at the grocery store as food costs have risen 5.3% in the last year, according to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Meats, poultry, fish and eggs rose 10.5% in October.

"Other costs like gasoline have also gone up, making it even harder for local families to make ends meet," Bacho said. "Many in our community have exhausted their savings and are facing uncertain times. We know based on what we saw after the Great Recession that it will be a very long time before we see the numbers of people we serve go down in any significant way – if ever. We have to brace ourselves for a long recovery – and that means we have to continue to raise enough money to meet this heightened need."

After shelter-in-place was ordered, Second Harvest quickly ramped up its operations to meet the dramatic increase in the number of people who sought food assistance, many of whom found themselves in need for the very first time. The food bank streamlined its processes, added 15 more trucks to its fleet, opened a fourth warehouse and increased its staff by nearly 40%, among other changes.

"Our budget has nearly doubled to keep up with the dramatic rise in demand, which remains high," Bacho added. "Throughout our emergency response over the last 18 months, we've done whatever it takes to meet the need. Now we have to sustain this effort moving forward if we want to ensure that everyone in our community has access to the nutritious food they need to stay healthy and thrive. You can't even begin to dig yourself out of a financial hole if you are stressed about how you're going to meet your basic needs and put food on the table."

### **Make monetary donations and host virtual food drives instead of donating food**

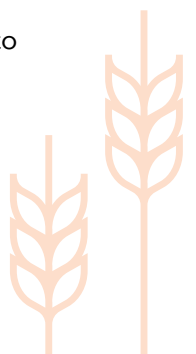
Second Harvest has ended traditional food collection drives with barrels so it can continue to operate in the most efficient and safe way possible. For more details about the food bank's decision, visit Second Harvest's blog <https://www.shfb.org/impact/blog/what-the-pandemic-taught-us-about-providing-quality-food/>

The best way to support Second Harvest is to make a monetary donation, start a virtual food drive to collect funds, or volunteer at a Second Harvest warehouse or food distribution site.

### **Donate funds**

Individuals, corporations and organizations can have a huge impact by making a financial gift. In fact, a \$50 donation helps provide enough food for 100 meals. To support the campaign, visit [shfb.org/donate](https://www.shfb.org/donate) to donate online or call 1-866-234-3663.

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### Host a Virtual Drive

Virtual food drives can be just as fun as traditional food drives without the need to physically collect food. Organizers can set a goal, easily create their own personalized fundraising page with visuals, and ask their friends, family and co-workers to contribute. To learn more or to start a virtual drive, visit [shfb.org/ffd](https://shfb.org/ffd)

### Volunteer

Volunteers are vital to ensuring that nutritious food continues to flow into the community. Last year volunteers contributed 208,000 hours of service the equivalent of 100 full-time employees. There are several ways to volunteer with Second Harvest, including:

- Helping sort and box fresh produce at our Cypress Center in north San Jose.
- Volunteering at one of our outdoor community food distributions, which can be found in nearly every neighborhood in Silicon Valley.
- Becoming a volunteer driver making home deliveries to homebound seniors and adults in Santa Clara or San Mateo counties.

Volunteers must be 14 or older. All open volunteer opportunities can be found at: <https://www.shfb.org/give-help/volunteer/>

### How to get help

Help is available to anyone in need of nutritious food, even if they have never needed it before. Second Harvest connects people to a variety of different food resources, including its own grocery distributions held in partnership with community organizations throughout Santa Clara and San Mateo County. The food bank also provides enrollment support for federally funded food assistance programs like CalFresh. To find out more, call Second Harvest's multilingual Food Connection hotline at 1-800-984-3663, Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. or visit <https://www.shfb.org/get-food/>. Staff speak English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin and Tagalog. Three-way interpretation is available for other languages.

### About Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

Founded in 1974, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley is one of the largest food banks in the nation and a trusted nonprofit leader in ending local hunger. The organization distributes nutritious groceries through a network of more than 300 partners at drive-thru and walk-up sites across Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. Due to the prohibitively expensive cost of living in Silicon Valley and the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Second Harvest is now serving an average of 450,000 people every month, an 80% increase over pre-pandemic levels. Second Harvest also connects people to federal nutrition programs and other food resources, and advocates for anti-hunger policies on the local, state and national levels. To learn more about how Second Harvest is responding to the incredible amount of need in Silicon Valley, visit [shfb.org](https://shfb.org).

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