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S COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

NEWS RELEASE

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LOCAL AGENCIES JOIN FORCES TO SUPPORT SECOND HARVEST, REDUCE FOOD INSECURITY DURING SHUTDOWN

In an extraordinary show of regional collaboration, local governments and community partners across Santa Cruz County are joining forces to keep food on the table and address increasing food insecurity for residents affected by the federal government shutdown.

The County of Santa Cruz, the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, the City of Watsonville, the City of Santa Cruz, and Community Foundation Santa Cruz County have pledged more than \$1 million to support Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County's emergency food distribution efforts, pending formal approval by their respective governing bodies.

Local leaders are also encouraging businesses, service organizations, and philanthropic partners throughout Santa Cruz County to join this collaborative effort. Second Harvest Food Bank is working to source and distribute millions of pounds of food to meet emergency needs, and every contribution — large or small — makes a measurable difference. Local partners are invited to donate funds to help ensure that no family in our community goes without food during the federal shutdown.

The combined contributions include:

- County of Santa Cruz – \$500,000
- Santa Cruz County Office of Education – \$250,000
- City of Watsonville – \$100,000
- City of Santa Cruz – \$100,000
- Community Foundation Santa Cruz County – \$100,000

These funds will help Second Harvest respond to a surge in need caused by the suspension of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/CalFresh) benefits during the federal shutdown. Approximately 33,000 local residents depend on SNAP, representing roughly \$6.5 million in monthly food spending that has been interrupted.

“This unified regional response shows what our community can accomplish together,” Santa Cruz County Board Chair Felipe Hernandez said. “I’d like to thank CEO Nicole

Coburn for organizing this effort. We are working side by side to ensure that no family in Santa Cruz County goes hungry during this crisis.”

“We know students can’t learn on an empty stomach,” County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Faris Sabbah said. “With families at risk of losing nutrition support during the federal shutdown, we must step forward to strengthen school-based food distribution and meet the growing needs across our community.”

“In Watsonville, we’ve seen firsthand how families are struggling to stretch their budgets,” Watsonville Mayor Maria Orozco said. “Approving this contribution would reflect our shared commitment to supporting the community when it needs us most.”

“The City of Santa Cruz is proud to stand with our regional partners,” said Santa Cruz Mayor Fred Keeley said. “Food insecurity affects every part of the county, and it takes all of us to ensure our neighbors are cared for.”

“Since spring, when the USDA trucks headed to food banks were turned around, the outpouring of support from the Community Foundation’s donors has reflected the true spirit of generosity that powers our county,” said Susan True, CEO of Community Foundation Santa Cruz County. “Along with county and city partners, we can continue to provide food for thousands of families during this uncertain time.”

Second Harvest estimates it needs approximately \$1 million per month to meet the increased demand for food assistance as the shutdown continues. The coordinated local response will help bridge that gap while the region awaits the restoration of federal aid.

“The collective response by our local governments and philanthropic partners is a demonstration of our local commitment to ensuring no one in our county goes hungry,” Second Harvest CEO Erica Padilla-Chavez said. “Only by working together can we weather this challenging time. We should all feel proud of our county’s response to this unprecedented situation.”

While there have been court actions toward delivery of food support for 43 million Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program enrollees nationwide – 1 out of every 8 Americans – it remains unclear when benefits would become available, what percentage of regular benefits would be available, whether beneficiaries would be made whole once the shutdown ends and how long those benefits would be available should the shutdown persist into December and beyond.

How Residents Can Help

Community members can make tax-deductible donations directly to Second Harvest Food Bank at www.thefoodbank.org or volunteer to help with food distribution.

For information on where to find emergency food resources, visit:

- www.santacruzcountyca.gov/Sanctuary
- www.santacruzcountyca.gov/Santuario