Celebrating National Nutrition Month!

March is National Nutrition Month, an annual awareness campaign that encourages us to learn about nutrition, develop healthy eating habits and discover the fun of being physically active. At Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, we strive to provide everyone in Orange County with the nutrition they need to grow and excel in life.

Eating nutritious food is at the heart of the human experience. Our ancestors had the ingenuity to take up agriculture and put our species on the road to growth and success. But not everyone has access to food, even those who need it most. Nearly three in four children receiving CalFresh are 12 years of age or younger. Data shows that there is a relationship between a family’s food security and the assurance of a healthy life. Households with food insecurity are more likely to experience reduced diet quality, anxiety about their food supply, increased use of emergency food sources, other coping behaviors and hunger. (Source: *Conditions of Children in Orange County 26th Ed.*)

So let’s take some time to appreciate the food we have and to find ways to help those in need. Together, we can tackle food inequality and make a happier, healthier world.

HELP OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED HERE IN ORANGE COUNTY. PLEASE GIVE TODAY.
To donate, call 949.653.2900 or visit feedoc.org

"By helping everyone to have consistent access to healthy food, we could lift thousands, and by doing so we prepare our entire community for success in school, work and life. Improved health and educational outcomes have a direct link to economic mobility as young people have more opportunity to choose college, career or technical education, and those already in the workforce grow on their path to increase productivity and stability."

—DAREEN ABDARBOU KHATIB*
Our Expanded Cold Storage is Here!

Last spring, here at Second Harvest we completely revamped our focus to proactively purchase fresh nutrition for those in need, ensuring a steady pipeline of protein, dairy, eggs, fruits and vegetables to over 300 partner and program sites. As a next step, we recently expanded our cold storage by 6,200 square feet, bringing it to a total of 14,550 square feet, and also added two cold docks that establish a “cold chain” at our distribution center in Irvine.

As part of our promise to support our distribution network in its ability to provide fresh and nutritious food to the community, we’ve helped to ensure that it has the capacity to receive this fresh nutrition and store it until it is distributed. For example, we have equipped the Vietnamese American Cancer Foundation in Fountain Valley with a 2-door commercial refrigerator. This means that food arriving at the food bank will stay in a temperature-controlled environment between 37-38°F that maintains optimal conditions to ensure freshness throughout its entire journey into the hands of those in need.

Second Harvest is dedicated to continually improving our networks. Aside from increasing our food supply and cold storage facilities, we’re actively working to expand our transport and logistics efficiency. We’re grateful for the support we’ve received from the community and our growing list of partners and affiliates. With your help, we can end hunger in Orange County and create a healthier world for all of us.
You are a big part of how long your food can last, as well as how nutritious and delicious it stays over time. Follow these simple food safety tips to maximize the benefits and enjoyment of food:

1. CLEAN  Frequently wash hands as well as surfaces that come in contact with food. Do not use the same platter or utensils that touched raw food to serve it once cooked.

2. SEPARATE  To avoid cross-contamination, keep raw meat, poultry and seafood separate when handling or storing.

3. COOK  Ensure your food is fully cooked before eating. One of the best ways to accomplish this is by using a food thermometer to confirm reaching the minimum internal temperature.

4. CHILL  Keep your refrigerator at 40°F or below. Once food is brought home, it should immediately go into the fridge. Bring food out to cook and refrigerate leftovers as quickly as possible after eating.

For more details, visit foodsafety.gov
Outdoor Therapy

Our volunteers keep us going and growing! We are pleased to welcome both familiar and new faces at our Distribution Center and Harvest Solutions Farm on an ongoing basis to help us provide fresh, nutritious food to Orange County residents in need.

While our volunteers choose to dedicate their time for various reasons, the experience they glean from working outdoors alongside members of their community are all a part of what keeps them coming back.

“Our volunteers emphasize that the time they spend with us is very tranquil and therapeutic; for some it’s almost a spiritual place.” —Hannah Standerfer, Farm/Volunteer Coordinator for Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County

“For many, it’s an exciting opportunity to take in the outdoors and do something physical and active—it gives a lot of people a break from their desk jobs and a chance to switch things up all while giving back to their community.”

Please visit feedoc.org/volunteer for more information.
Growing Food for the Future

Great news: Our 45-acre Harvest Solutions Farm (HSF) in Irvine is making massive contributions to our food supply, having provided more than 500,000 pounds of produce in just over 17 weeks of operation. We’re currently growing cabbage, broccolini, broccoli, and celery, and the next harvest season is coming up in May.

This impressive feat wouldn’t be possible without the approximately 100 volunteers who help make it happen—we are honored to have so many interested in furthering Second Harvest’s mission. They are vital to the successful harvest and delivery of produce to our partners and our pantries.

“It’s a wonderful, active opportunity. You get to be outside in the sunshine and you get to meet all sorts of different people. I’m excited about contributing to making something that is going to go into somebody’s hands.” —Andi Rosenberger, HSF Volunteer

Most of our vegetables are produced in a 70-day growth and harvest cycle. Currently, we’ve got watermelons and peppers lined up for harvest this summer. The farm volunteers plant an acre a week and harvest an acre a week, all to keep a steady flow of food to the people who need it most. The fresh produce that the farm brings in is distributed throughout Orange County. We’re eternally grateful to our supporters and volunteers and we look forward to serving the community for years to come.

WANT A UNIQUE WAY TO GIVE?
Donate to or Volunteer at the Harvest Solutions Farm! Call 949.653.2900 or visit feedoc.org

“The first time I volunteered on the farm was on my birthday in September 2021. I ended up coming back a few months later and, to my surprise, that day we were harvesting the same plot that I had helped plant back in September. To see the vegetables of my labor and know that each one was going to someone who otherwise wouldn’t have access to this kind of quality nutrition was viscerally gratifying. I love getting to know the other groups that come out and have developed quite a few friendships along the way.

—DAVE DONALDSON, HSF VOLUNTEER
ROASTED GARLIC LEMON BROCCOLI
Serves 6

INGREDIENTS
2 heads broccoli, separated into florets
2 tsp extra-virgin olive oil
1 tsp sea salt
½ tsp ground black pepper
1 clove garlic, minced
½ tsp lemon juice

DIRECTIONS
1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C).
2. In a large bowl, toss broccoli florets with the extra virgin olive oil, sea salt, pepper and garlic. Spread the broccoli out in an even layer on a baking sheet.
3. Bake in the preheated oven until florets are tender enough to pierce the stems with a fork, 15 to 20 minutes. Remove and transfer to a serving platter. Squeeze lemon juice liberally over the broccoli before serving for a refreshing, tangy finish.

https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/144346/roasted-garlic-lemon-broccoli/#nutrition

ASIAN BEEF, BROCCOLI, AND CABBAGE STIR-FRY
Serves 4

INGREDIENTS
1 Tbsp olive oil
½ lb. ground beef
½ head cabbage, finely chopped
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 c broccoli, cooked, finely chopped
¼ c tamari sauce (use less if using soy sauce; low-sodium soy sauce is recommended)
½ tsp ginger
1 Tbsp sesame oil
¾ c water
1 Tbsp cornstarch

DIRECTIONS
1. Heat olive oil in a large skillet on medium heat. Add ground beef and cook until cooked through. Drain any fat or liquid.
2. To the same skillet, add chopped cabbage and garlic. Cook until cabbage is tender and reduces in volume. Stir in cooked (or blanched) broccoli.
3. Add tamari sauce, ginger, and sesame oil and stir to combine—on medium heat.
4. In a small bowl, combine ¼ cup water with 1 tablespoon cornstarch—and mix it in the bowl until smooth. Add the corn starch water to the skillet, mix with cabbage and cook on medium heat until heated through and sauce somewhat thickens, constantly stirring.
5. Season with salt if necessary.


CREAMY CABBAGE AND BROCCOLI SLAW
Serves 8

INGREDIENTS
1/2 sweet onion, such as Vidalia, grated (about 1/2 cup)
1/2 c mayonnaise (Greek yogurt can be used as a healthier substitute)
2 Tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
Salt
Freshly ground black pepper
3/4 lb. Savoy cabbage, cored and thinly sliced
1/2 lb. broccoli crowns, trimmed and chopped
1 carrot, grated

DIRECTIONS
1. Stir together the grated onion, mayonnaise (or Greek yogurt) and lemon juice in a small bowl. Season to taste with salt and plenty of black pepper, constantly stirring.
2. Combine the cabbage, broccoli and carrot in a large bowl and pour over the dressing. Toss gently until evenly coated. Let the slaw sit for at least 30 minutes. Before serving, taste and adjust the seasonings.

Recent News

s

Federal Money Saved Economy as Pandemic Exposed Weak Safety System

by John K. Molner, March 2023

The recent news that the United States will receive $2 trillion in stimulus money from the American Rescue Plan Act is welcome news for many Americans. This policy is designed to help the country recover from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the stimulus is not without its critics. Some argue that it is too large and will only add to the national debt. Others believe that it is not enough and that more needs to be done to help those who have been hurt by the pandemic.

One of the most significant impacts of the pandemic has been on the economy. Many businesses have been forced to close, and unemployment rates have soared. The stimulus is intended to provide a boost to the economy and help get things back on track.

While the stimulus is a positive step, there are concerns that it may not be enough to address the long-term challenges facing the country. With the pandemic still ongoing, it is clear that more needs to be done to support those who have been hit the hardest.

The stimulus is also facing criticism from some who believe that it is being used to bail out corporations instead of helping the middle class. This is a concern that the government needs to address in order to ensure that the stimulus is being used effectively.

In conclusion, the American Rescue Plan Act is a much-needed stimulus for the economy. However, there are concerns that it may not be enough to address the long-term challenges facing the country. It is important that the government takes a comprehensive approach to recovery and ensures that the stimulus is being used effectively to support those who have been hit the hardest.
Cold is key when goal is fresh food for people

By Lou Penoi

The Second Harvest Food Bank wanted to increase the amount of fresh produce it was distributing in the county, even starting to grow its own fruits and vegetables on a 16-acre farm.

But the next step was having enough cooling space to accommodate the added volume of produce, along with other perishables such as milk and butter, that it would be making available to Orange County’s underprivileged residents.

Second Harvest’s newly unveiled 8,000-square-foot cold storage room and two cold sheds will serve the purpose, aiding in the nonprofit’s mission to provide nutrition for nearly 500,000 residents who are struggling with food insecurity.

When trucks pull in, “They are pulling into a continuous cold chain,” Second Harvest CEO Claudia Keller said of the food bank’s ability now to preserve the freshness of its supplies. “The temperature doesn’t drop when those doors open, and that is why it is state of the art.”

With the addition of the cold storage room and cold sheds, Second Harvest now has 14,500-square feet of cold storage space in its Irvine warehouse, up from 8,350 square feet.

“We are expecting about 50,000 pounds of produce every week,” Keller said. “We didn’t have the capacity to be able to do that in a way that delivered optimum freshness, but now we do.”

Since planting began last summer, its farm harvests have been bountiful, yielding about 160,000 pounds of produce per month.

Second Harvest also is making sure its partners on the receiving end have adequate refrigeration space to store the fresh food.

“A big part of our work is making sure our network is able to absorb the produce, and eggs and milk, that we were putting out,” Keller said. “So, we are going systematically through the network and assessing their storage needs.”

Claudia Keller, CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank, Orange County, stands in the cold storage area that has 14,500 square feet of space.
Recent News

Los Angeles Times

Omicron wave leaves U.S. food banks scrambling for volunteers

By SETH WENSLAUF | ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Food banks across the country are experiencing a critical shortage of volunteers as the Omicron variant frightens people away from their usual shifts, and companies and schools that regularly supply large groups of volunteers are canceling their participation over omicron fears.

The pandemic has hit in many cases has been a serious increase in spending by the food banks at a time when they are already struggling with higher food costs due to inflation and supply chain issues.

“Food banks rely on volunteers. That’s how we keep the costs low,” said Shirley Scheidler, CEO of the Food Bank of North Alabama. “The work still gets done but at a much higher expense.”

The extent of the problem was highlighted this past week during the national holiday for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, when many food banks have traditionally organized massive volunteer drives as part of a day of service.

Michael Allen, director of community engagement for the Alameda County Community Food Bank in Oakland, called it “without fail, our biggest volunteer event of the year.”

But many food banks chose to cancel their plans this year or continued with radically lower numbers than pre-pandemic years.

Allen said his food bank’s King Day event drew 73 people spread out over two shifts, when previous years had drawn more than 1000 people with all volunteer slots booked up before New Year’s Day. The food bank did not attempt an event last year.

In Tallahassee, Fla., plans for a volunteer-driven event on the holiday were abruptly canceled when all the volunteers dropped out. Scheidler said volunteers have been hit hard because they can’t bank on their mobile food pantry distributions because they simply do not have enough volunteer-packed food boxes to hand out.

The shortage of volunteers is not universal.

Michael Morley of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank in Louisiana said his volunteer numbers have remained strong and his MLK Day event proceeded normally with two shifts of more than 30 people.

But several food banks have reported a similar dynamic: minimal volunteers for most of 2021, then a surge last fall through November and December before falling off a cliff in January.

Volunteers generally use volunteers to sort through donations and to pack ready-made boxes of food for distribution. It is common practice to arrange for local companies or schools to send over large groups of volunteers, but that has left the system vulnerable to those institutions pulling out at once.

At the Second Harvest of the Big Bend food bank in Tallahassee, the volunteer numbers have remained solid through the Omicron surge. But CEO Monique Van Pelt said she was forced to cancel her MLK Day plans because the volunteers all came from a single corporate partner that “didn’t think it was safe for them to gather as a group in such tight quarters.”

Jamie Simeone had planned for 54 volunteers from three corporate groups at the Second Harvest food bank in Elizabethtown, Ky. But two groups canceled and the third sent less than half its promised number.

“We did manage to pick up some last minute individuals for a total of 12 volunteers for the day,” said Simeone, the executive director. She added that a long-term contingency of eight assigned Kentucky National Guardsmen frequently help fill the volunteer gaps.

Even outdoor volunteer work, with seemingly less exposure risk than warehouse work, has suffered.

In Irvine, the Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County has launched an ambitious farm project on 45 acres of land provided by University of California. So far, 22 acres have been planted with cabbage and broccoli, and it’s harvest time. The plan was conceived with the intention of using up to 200 volunteers per week, organized in groups from corporate partners such as Walt Disney. But most of the partnering organizations have suspended their volunteer drives amid the Omicron surge.

“When you’re aummer because it’s a great outdoor experience,” said Claudine Keller, the food bank’s CEO. “We’re crossing our fingers that this is a short-term thing. We know many of the volunteers are choosing the at the bit to get out there.”

The sudden absence of volunteer labor forces most food banks into more expensive choices. When the farm runs short of volunteers, paid laborers are employed.

At the Capital Area Food Bank in Washington, D.C., CEO Rada Matthes has had to order truckloads of packaged meals to distribute because there aren’t enough volunteers to pack.

“When it’s packaged, that tends to increase the price significantly,” Matthes said.

A truckload of produce on pallets costs about $6,000, but a truckload of ready-to-distribute ready-to-cook meals can cost $25,000 to $30,000, she said.

In addition to the financial costs, some executives point out a more subtle effect.

“Volunteerism is short more than just getting the boxes packed,” said Scheidler, from the Alaba food bank. “It builds a greater sense of community. It’s a sign of a healthy community at large.”

Vince Hall, government relations officer for Second Harvest, which coordinates the work of more than 200 food banks, said the volunteer numbers are partially a reflection of long-term emotional fatigue and burnout. As the nation endures a second pandemic winter and the Omicron variant continues to push the progress people expected from the vaccine, longtime volunteers are wearing down.

“These people who are really part of the bedrock of our volunteer workforce, they’ve been doing this since March of 2020,” Hall said. “It takes an emotional toll on people.”
Recent News

Inflation has more Americans counting on food banks to cat

As the cost of nearly everything surges, more Americans are turning to food banks to eat. And as hunger-relief organizations face long lines of people in need, the nonprofit groups are having to pay more for food to supplement donations.

From hurricane-ravaged Louisiana to the son-tropical zones of California, low-wage workers in nearly four decades to slaming-proof everything into an exception.

Some are able to eat more expensive, and food is no exception.

Inflation increases burden on a food budget, "said Business owner, CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, said, "It's a difficult time for everyone."

For a family, the most expensive part of your budget, the part you can cut back on, is food," said inflating.

Families squeezed by higher housing and fuel costs have less — or in some cases nothing — to spend at the grocery store, where prices are 10% higher than they were a year ago, according to the latest inflation data.

"People who have gotten out of the line are now coming back in," said Business owner, president and CEO of the Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce, which serves in the purple area to inflation. Raising gas prices make getting to jobs more of an financial burden, especially for the working poor, he noted. "It's affecting their ability to put food on the table," he said inflating.

Inflation reduces the purchasing power of everyone, but it is harder on the poor and middle class, who spend a bigger share of their income on food and other necessities, a reality being scored by the GAP (gap) of non-middle-class families.

Rapid prices losses are a cause for concern, said Business owner, a market analyst who works for a company that tracks household spending, noting an annual report.

The Capital Area Food Bank in Washington, D.C., said it can't quantify how much increased demand is due to inflation, "We're seeing a much larger number of people reporting not enough food to make it through the week, " said Business owner, president and CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, said in a recent report.

In Louisiana, Business owner is still watching for the pandemic's impact in the impact's trajectory, which disrupted the role of a manufacturer, he said Business owner, president and CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, said in a recent report.

The area is largely served by farms and community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, which typically donate too little or too much to community food banks, groups that are too dependent on people to provide them with food, according to Business owner, president and CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, said in a recent report.

Food pantries were already facing greater need due to COVID-19, and Business owner said the number of volunteers has declined from the peak of the pandemic. "We're seeing a lot more people visiting the food pantry," he said.

Before the pandemic hit in March 2020, the Laguna pantry had 18 food pantries, none of which regularly distributed food to families. The pantry saw a sharp increase in food distribution in 2020, reaching up to 100% more people per week, according to Business owner, president and CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, said in a recent report.

In 2018, the Laguna pantry had 21,000 food pantries, none of which regularly distributed food to families. The pantry saw a sharp increase in food distribution in 2020, reaching up to 100% more people per week, according to Business owner, president and CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, said in a recent report.

The pantry is now serving more people than ever before, with the number of people served surpassing 1,500 in 2019 and 2,000 in 2020, Business owner said.

"COVID-19 put many more people into our local towns, many who never had a food bank before," Business owner said. "As we move back, there's a mix of people still in precarious situations, and we're seeing a lot of people rely on food banks for the first time."

"We're seeing an increase in food pantries, and the need for food banks is growing," Business owner said. "We're seeing a lot more people coming in, and we're seeing a lot more people in need."

"We're seeing a lot more people coming in, and we're seeing a lot more people in need," Business owner said.
Recent News


Claudia Bonilla Keller
CEO at Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County; planning commissioner in Placentia

BONA FIDES: Her two years at the county’s largest food bank—first as chief mission officer and as CEO since January—started right as COVID-19 arrived to drive unprecedented need among the county’s most vulnerable residents. Second Harvest’s pantry network continues to feed more than 400,000 people monthly. Keller is the daughter of immigrants to Los Angeles who worked hard to provide a life of what she calls modest but relatively privileged means. A self-described “health, education, and social justice advocate,” she moved to 2009 from a successful career in the retail clothing industry to nonprofits. At Second Harvest, the main mission is addressing food insecurity, the daily uncertainty of a next meal. Keller also aims to ensure that what people eat is nutritious, whether they’re sipping the last piece of fresh eggs or helping plant the next broccoli at a farm in Irvine.

IN HER WORDS: “I guess I’ve refined my worldview. I always believed that food is a human right, but now I believe food is a necessity for human advancement, however one defines advancement. To me, that can change the course of an individual, that can change the course of a community.”

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