



News **From**
Second Harvest

SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK *Of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties*

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Hunger Touches 46,000 People in Santa Cruz County

New Report Finds National Resources to Reduce Hunger Go Unused

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA), a statewide anti-hunger organization, released *Touched by Hunger: A County-by-County Report on Hunger and Food Insecurity in California* today.

Based on a survey of low-income adults conducted by UCLA, the report shows an estimated 14,000 county residents have been identified as hungry or food insecure. This survey, however, did not capture the struggles of the other 32,000 household members living with these adults.

“The hunger of one adult almost always indicates a problem for the rest of the household. National research shows that when one adult is affected, most if not all other adults are hungry or food insecure” says Ken Hecht, Executive Director of California Food Policy Advocates. “Children are a little different. Generally, hungry parents try to protect their kids from hunger – but they are not always successful.”

Locally, the Second Harvest Food Bank is in its annual Holiday Food Drive with a goal of collecting a million pounds of food and cash equivalent. “The need had grown so much in recent years that food banks are struggling to keep up,” noted Education and Outreach Director Lee Mercer, “federal nutrition programs like food stamps, school meals and WIC, must be strengthened to play their part in our nation’s safety net against hunger”.

Federal nutrition programs do exist to address hunger, but the report finds they are severely underutilized. For example, in Santa Cruz County, 13,802 children are eligible for a free or reduced-price breakfast, yet 10,802 aren’t getting breakfast at school. If these kids ate breakfast at school it could bring as much as \$2,054,368 in federal money into the county to fight hunger. Full participation in the Food Stamp Program could bring the county as much as \$5,115,932.

The report calls for local and state action to maximize the use of federal resources to address hunger. “Governor Schwarzenegger and the legislature can enlist federal nutrition resources in the fight to end hunger. One important step would be to require all schools in California to serve breakfast. This would

not only bring resources into schools, but as the research indicates, would improve academic performance, as well,” says Hecht.

To help with the Holiday Food Drive or learn more about how federal programs help in the battle against hunger, contact the Second Harvest Food Bank at 722-7110.

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Copies of the report can be found at <http://www.cfpa.net/press>

For more information on California Food Policy Advocates’ study *Touched by Hunger: A County-by-County Report on Hunger and Food Insecurity in California* contact:

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