

Community Raises Over 4.5 Million Meals

Second Harvest Reveals Holiday Food & Fund Drive Results

WATSONVILLE — At a breakfast at Seaclyff Inn, Aptos, on Friday, February 3, Second Harvest Food Bank revealed the results of its annual Holiday Food & Fund Drive to the civic, business, and elected leaders in attendance that helped organize the drive. In all, the community raised 4,513,399 meals, surpassing the goal of 4.5 million meals.

The ambitious 2016 goal was 500,000 meals higher than the prior year, and was reached in large part due to the leadership of the drive's two co-chairs, Dr. Nanette Mickiewicz, President and CEO of Dominican Hospital and Jess Brown, Executive Director of the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau.

As in prior years, Second Harvest announced the achievement visually, this year with a series of panels held by members of the audience that stretched 15 feet across the front of the room. A thermometer full of plates of dinners, instead of mercury, showed the community surpassing both the prior year's total of 4,166,490 and this drive's goal of 4,500,000 meals.

The healthy meals raised by schools, businesses, cities, neighborhood groups, and others in the annual drive will help over 55,000 county residents each month through Second Harvest's network of 200 agencies and programs.

"Our staff, physicians, and volunteers really stepped up this year, and together we set yet another hospital record for donations," Dr. Mickiewicz remarked. "This support is part of Dominican's longstanding partnership with Second Harvest to keep our community healthy."

"This year, as part of the Holiday



Food & Fund Drive," added Farm Bureau Executive Director Jess Brown, "Nan [Mickiewicz] and I took two 'road trips' and visited various businesses, organizations, and agencies to see how they were approaching the task of raising food and funds. We were blown away with the creative ideas groups are using to inspire participation. We live in a very caring community. People want to help others."

"We felt it was important to 'up' our goal

with this drive," Elliott-McCrea explained. "Four and a half million meals sounds like a lot of food, and it is, but one in five residents of Santa Cruz County face hunger. The high cost of living here really stretches the resources of our working poor. People are forced to make hard choices between necessities like medicine, housing, and food. So we challenged the community to help more people in need, and they came through."

"Businesses, neighborhoods, schools,

churches and other organizations all worked so hard through the Holiday Food & Fund Drive to raise food for people in need," Elliott-McCrea added. "It's thrilling to come together to celebrate what our community was able to accomplish this year. The food raised will help feed families, veterans, children, and seniors all year long. Everyone should have access to healthy food."

Dignity Health Dominican Hospital has been caring for the Santa Cruz County community for 75 years. To learn more visit: dignityhealth.org/dominican.

Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau is the largest agricultural organization in the county and provides a voice for those involved in farming. 2017 marks its 100th Anniversary. To learn more visit: <http://www.sccfb.com> ■

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Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz County was founded in 1972. Its mission is to end hunger and malnutrition by educating and involving the community. Its network of 200 local agencies and programs feeds 55,000 people in Santa Cruz County every month. For every dollar donated, it provides four healthy meals. "Together we fight hunger all year long." To learn more visit: www.thefoodbank.org

