

Santa Cruz County food banks launch \$1M campaign to combat funding cuts

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Reporter



WATSONVILLE, Calif. — It’s lunch hour at the Pajaro Valley Loaves & Fishes food pantry and kitchen in Watsonville, and more than 100 people in need have come here seeking a healthy meal.

“This oftentimes is the only meal they can count on Monday through Friday, yeah, it’s heartbreaking and they’ve become our friends,” said Joan Bosworth, a volunteer and board member of Loaves & Fishes.

And now food pantries and food banks are looking to their community friends and partners to help fill the void as millions in federal funding to combat food insecurity is being cut or put on hold.

“We have learned how to think on our feet, change menus quickly to make sure that everybody gets the protein and fruit and vegetables that they need, but the food just isn’t here,” said Bosworth.

And that raises a lot of uncertainty for food bank clients like Wanda Spencer who also volunteers at the Second Harvest Food Bank in Watsonville.

“Then how am I, how are families, single mothers, single parents, how are they going to feed their children? How are the elderly going to be able to get the nourishment? We have to have nourishment,” said Spencer.

On Monday, leaders of the Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz County held a news conference to kick off its “Operation Bridge the Gap” campaign; an effort to raise more than \$1 million in community support.

The money will be used to secure food for more than a hundred county-wide non-profits that help feed more than 60,000 people a month around Santa Cruz County.

“I’m not hearing there’s going to be an increase in this or an increase in that program, it’s the opposite everything has the term cut or reduction in front of it, and so we are sensing that we’re going to be in for some turbulent time and we want to be prepared to ensure that individuals who need the pastas and the pasta sauce and the rice and the cheese and the milk that we’re able to provide for them,” said Erica Padilla-Chavez, CEO for Second Harvest food bank.

“We have to come together as a community we got to try to help each other at this time,” added Spencer.

Food bank leaders like to point out that every dollar the food bank receives, can turn into three meals.

If you’d like to learn more about how you can support the Second Harvest food bank log onto TheFood-Bank.org

[Link to original story.](#)