

Second Harvest: More food needed to stave off area hunger this winter

Food Banks
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The area's neediest families did not go hungry this Thanksgiving — thanks to 131.6 tons of food and donations given this season to the Second Harvest Food Bank and its partner agencies.

But between now and the end of the year, the food bank says it will need to collect an additional 328.4 tons of food to insure hungry Central Coast families have enough to eat this winter. That means each of the 1,000 barrels placed at more than 500 area businesses and agencies will need to be filled and emptied six more times by Dec. 30.

“Our motto this year is ‘One more can, one more dollar and one more volunteer hour,’” said Jeffrey Kongsli, food bank development director. “Everyone will have to give a little more than they did last year ... to assure we collect enough food for the 45,000 people we are feeding each month through 120 agencies and programs.”

Second Harvest supplies food to pantries and soup kitchens throughout the area. For every \$10 in cash donated, the food bank is able to distribute \$100 worth of food. Ninety percent of those seeking help are children, seniors, disabled individuals and working families.

Still, thousands of Central Coast residents who might otherwise not need help are facing “food insecurity” this season because of high housing expenses and unemployment, according to a recent UCLA study.

A number of area residents have answered Second Harvest's call for help. Among them, Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts collected 6,347 pounds of food during “Scouting For Food,” a door-to-door effort in Santa Cruz and San Benito counties.

Area letter carriers, sparked by postal worker Sheila Payne at the Santa Cruz Post Office, collected 15 tons of food in one day during the Letter Carriers Food Drive. Meanwhile, Granite Construction is raffling off an electric car donated by Ford Motor Co. through Marty Franich Ford in Watsonville. Wheel Works offered half-price oil changes with a donation of two cans of food.

During the Harvest Food Drive, Santa Cruz and San Benito county schools collected more than 44 tons of food.

For information on donating food or cash to Second Harvest this season, call 722-7110, ext. 214. To volunteer at Second Harvest or one of its member agencies, call 722-7110, ext. 205.

Contact Karen A. Davis at kdavis@santa-cruz.com.

Upcoming Second Harvest events

ONGOING: Can Tree at Capitola Mall: Wooden tree for food donations located in mall through Dec. 13.

Tuesday: Aptos Tree Lighting: Takes place above Aptos Village Park at 4 p.m. Food donations requested.

Dec. 7: Santa Cruz Holiday Parade: Food donation barrels set up along parade route and at announcers' booths.

Dec. 7: Harbor “Fill the Boat” Food Drive: At Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor during the annual Lighted Boat Parade.

Dec. 7: KPIG's Humbug Hoedown: Bring food donations to The Catalyst in Santa Cruz at 8 p.m.

Dec. 7: Scotts Valley Tree Lighting: Food donation barrels located at tree lighting in Walgreen's Shopping Center.

Dec. 9: Broadway Play “Rent”: Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium, 7:30 p.m. A portion of proceeds will benefit the food bank.

Dec. 13: “Fill the Bus” Day: Businesses to fill three Santa Cruz Metro buses with donated food at various sites throughout the county.

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Dec. 14: Community Food Sort: Volunteers help sort tons of food at the food bank, 15 Errington Road in Watsonville, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For information, call 722-7110.

Dec. 14-15: Holiday Movie Day: Children's movie, “The Goonies,” at the Del Mar Theater at 11 a.m. both days. Admission is a bag of nonperishable food.

Dec. 19: Big Rain CD Release and Holiday Celebration: At Kuumbwa Jazz Center, Santa Cruz, 8 p.m. Discount of \$2 per ticket with can of food donation.

Dec. 20: Migrant Camp Holiday Food Delivery: Second Harvest, the Salvation Army and the Christmas Project team up to bring holiday joy to area migrant labor camps.

Dec. 16-20: All company and agency food barrels to be picked up, weighed and credited to each business or organization. Public barrels will remain at libraries, fire stations, Goodwill stores and Coast Commercial Banks until Dec. 30.

Dec. 22: Concert at Moe's Alley: Featuring The Bonepickers and The Good Life Rhythm and Blues Revival, 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Food donations requested.

Dec. 30-Jan 3: All public drop site food barrels to be picked up.