

Second Harvest bucks national trends

Food Banks
REGISTER-PAJARONIAN STAFF REPORT

Responding to media stories on a shortage of food for the hungry, Central Coast residents showered Second Harvest Food Bank with an unprecedented flurry of donations after Christmas Day, putting the annual Holiday Food Drive over the top.

In all, more than 920,000 pounds of food or cash equivalent was donated by organizations and individuals in Santa Cruz and San Benito counties. This record-setting community giving to the food bank is in sharp contrast with a national trend in decreased giving to nonprofit organizations. Final numbers will be announced at a Holiday Food Drive Awards Reception at the Museum of Art and History at the McPherson Center on Feb. 5 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

"This is just incredible," noted Second Harvest Development Director Jeffrey Kongsli. "While a majority of nonprofit organizations have seen donations dwindle, this community has once again shown its spirit and has proved that when the going gets tough, the tough keep giving."

Local companies added to already generous donations after the holidays. Granite Construction employees continued to give after the holidays, adding another \$3,000 and an electric car, donated by Marty Franich and Ford Motor Co. Agrilink and Cisco Systems came in with last minute pledges. ASML (formerly Silicon Valley Group) in Scotts Valley and Lightsurf jumped in with matches to employee donations. And 57 new participants in San Benito County delivered a

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much needed boost of 11,000 pounds of food and cash equivalent.

With a 19 percent increase in the demand for food through 120 agencies and programs served by Second Harvest due to unemployment and high housing costs on the Central Coast, the Holiday Food Drive donations will help thousands of families make it through the winter. Much of the food collected has been distributed to food pantries at churches and other agencies throughout the area.

The Second Harvest Food Bank network serves over 45,000 people a month, more than half of them children. To learn more about helping feed your hungry neighbors by donating cash, food or by volunteering at the Second Harvest Food Bank, call 722-7110.