



Visitors touring the new Second Harvest warehouse are dwarfed by the towers of stored provisions Friday.

DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Second Harvest celebrates expanded headquarters

Food Banks

Completed building project increases nonprofit's capacity to feed the hungry

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Executive Director Willy Elliot-McCrae, center, walks through the new Second Harvest Food Bank warehouse during an open house Friday.

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WATSONVILLE — By 2015, Second Harvest Food Bank leaders expect to distribute 10 million pounds of food to the region's hungry each year, half or more in fresh fruits and vegetables.

They'll be ready thanks to an expansion at the nonprofit organization's headquarters on Ohlone Parkway.

Second Harvest leaders, staff and supporters celebrated the completion of the \$5 million project with a dedication ceremony Friday.

Already, the effort is paying off. Since the project, which was done in phases, started five years ago, annual food distribution has increased

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from 4.3 million pounds to 7.3 million pounds, and the number of people assisted each month has grown from 45,000 to 54,000.

Willy Elliot-McCrae, chief executive officer, recalled the days when the food bank struggled without loading docks or the new rack system that keeps pallets of

food off the floor and organized for easy access. Back then, he said it was about "guts and determination."

"Now it's about just being able to do more with less," Elliott-McCrae said. "It's about having the right tools."

But don't look for Second Harvest to set the dial on cruise control. Elliott-McCrae is looking to launch new projects to get clients more involved and promote healthy nutrition.

Second Harvest, the oldest food bank in California, was founded in 1972 as

children's breakfast program. It utes food directly, and through more than 100 food pantries, shelters and programs aimed at seniors, children and people in rehabilitation.

The project, funded through foundation grants and community donations, also provided new office space for staff members once housed in trailers, a nutrition education center, composting bins, solar-powered coolers that quadrupled the nonprofit's capacity to accept donations of fresh produce.