

A toast to a job well done

Food Banks
Second Harvest
Food Bank
celebrates newly
completed phase
of construction

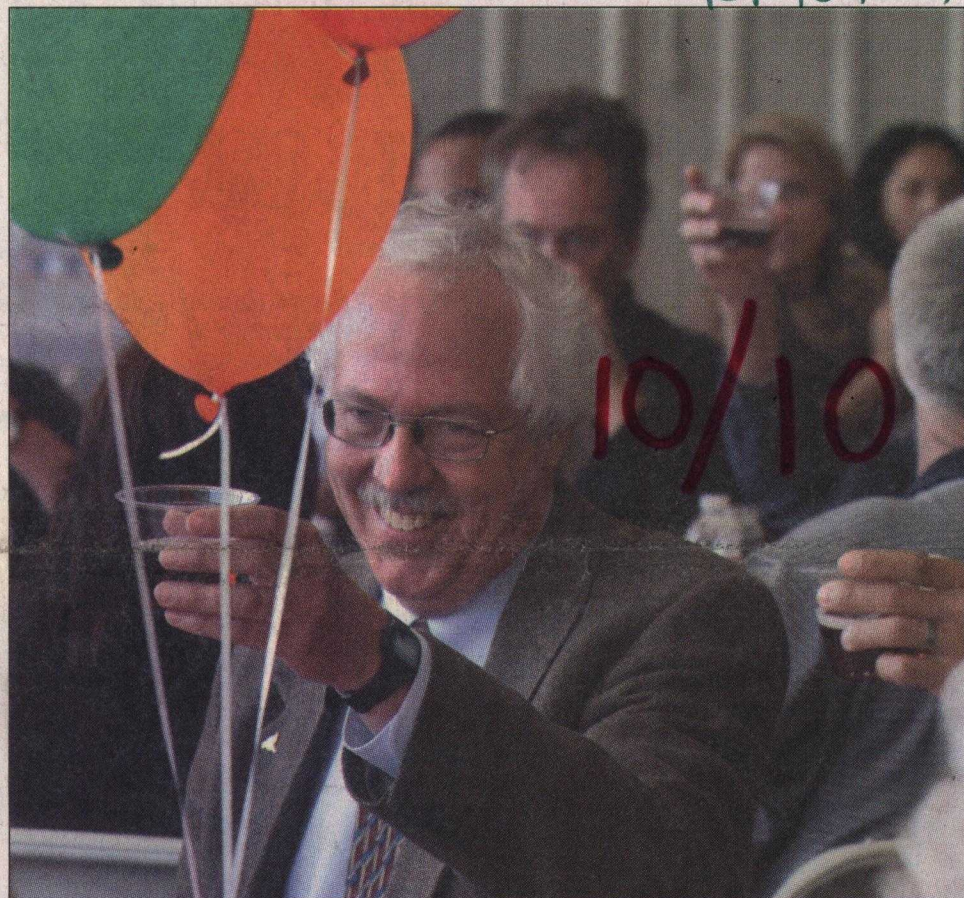
By JON CHOWN

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

Second Harvest Food Bank celebrated the completion of the second phase of a reformative construction process Thursday, showing donors, public officials and the general public a new wing, new offices for staff and other expansions that the nonprofit says will drastically increase its efficiency in feeding the area's hungry people.

The food bank, located on Ohlone Parkway, distributed nearly 7 million pounds of food to more than 59,000 people in 2008, according to its own figures, and the need is growing. Ron Slack, a member of Second Harvest's board of directors, said the community's recognition of that need and generosity made the expansion possible. More than 2,000 people donated between \$50 and \$5,000. Those donations put the finishing touches on a fundraising campaign anchored by a \$500,000 donation from Plantronics. The Richard and Mary Solari Charitable Trust and the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County each put in \$250,000 and about a dozen others chipped in \$100,000 or \$50,000.

"This is an incredible ex-



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

A large gathering of revelers toasts Willy Elliott-McCrea (center), executive director of Second Harvest Food Bank, during a celebration Thursday of the completion of a major expansion of the food bank.

ample of how the community can come together to help those in need," Slack said.

The new construction included the Richard and Mary Solari Education Center, a new wing that houses the Ralph and Joan Lane Volunteer Hospitality Room, the Driscoll's Conference Center and the Betsy Woolpert Nutrition Kitchen. The shiny kitch-

en filled with stainless steel appliances is adjoined to a classroom where classes can be taught on nutrition.

A mezzanine was created inside the existing warehouse structure, and while food is stored above, new offices house the staff below. It is the first time Second Harvest has had its staff all in one place in 20 years. The back end of the

warehouse has been reconfigured to increase access to the 30,000-cubic-foot food produce cooler and the 20,000-cubic-foot drive-in freezer that were built in the first phase of construction.

Bob Corbett, the architect for the project, said not only was it difficult to create

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ABOVE: City and business leaders join key donors and other officials Thursday in cutting the ribbon. BELOW: Visitors explore the new main lobby of the Second Harvest Food Bank.

FOOD BANK

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modern office spaces within the warehouse, "but it had to be done while they maintained their needed operation. That's the big challenge," he said.

Carmelita Carranco manages the hotline outreach center and was at her new desk Thursday with her crew of volunteers.

"It's a lot easier to do our work now," she said. "Each volunteer has their own space. I have my own little space and can observe all that goes on in the office."

Don Cooley, who with his wife, Diane, donated \$50,000, credited Second Harvest Food Bank executive director Willy Elliott-McCrea with the project's success.

"Willy is an outstanding leader," Cooley said. "He's made this happen. He's the spark that inflamed the community to make this happen."

John E. Eiskamp and his wife, Caroline, also donated \$50,000. Caroline said her family first got involved through their children as they participated in food drives at their school. The Eiskamps are one of the larger local growers of blackberries and raspberries.

"Food is a pretty basic need

and in my industry, there are times when my employees are in need," John Eiskamp said.

George Ow, a \$100,000 donor, was impressed with how his money was used as well.

"Willy and Second Harvest do a tremendous job," Ow said. "This is a terrific coming together of the community to provide a facility that will last more than 50 years."

The third phase of the construction project, which will cost \$1.2 million, is slated for 2010. It will include a paved parking lot, receiving docks for trucks, an expanded and relocated packing center and an expanded distribution center.