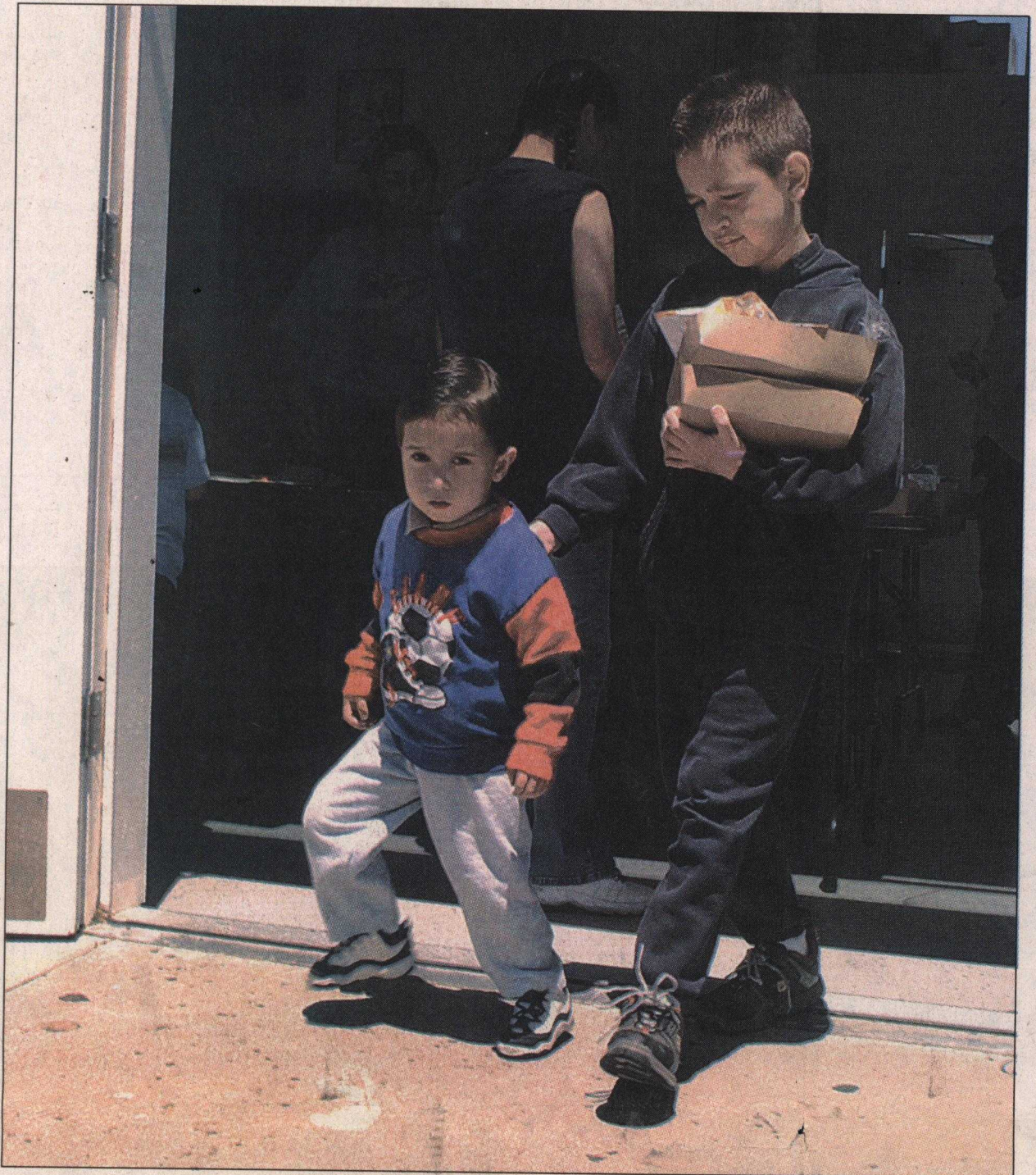


# Feeding the need



Nick Lovejoy/Sentinel photos

Ernesto Garcia, 8, leads his 3-year-old brother Andres while carrying an arm full of food from the Neary Lagoon Community Center in Santa Cruz on Wednesday.

## Second Harvest, other groups feeding kids over summer

Food Banks

By **ROBYN MOORMEISTER**  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Smiling and rubbing his full belly, 11-year-old Jose Chavez says he's never hungry.

Joined by his cousin Rodolfo Chaves, 8, Chavez is wolfing down a free lunch at the Neary Lagoon Housing Cooperative in Santa Cruz. The pair suck on orange slices, leaving peels in their wake.

The meal is part of the Summer Lunch program, a collaboration between Second Harvest Food Bank, Community Bridges and the Pajaro Valley Unified School District—and one of 120 programs feeding the hungry in Santa Cruz County.

Summer vacation can be a hungry time for kids who rely on school lunches for food, but Second Harvest is trying to ensure children eat even when school bells aren't ringing.



7-17-03  
Anthony Hernandez enjoys a refreshing orange at the Neary Lagoon Community Center in Santa Cruz.

The Neary Lagoon co-op community center was crawling with active, hungry kids on a recent weekday. They arrived at noon—some with their parents, other with siblings and friends

on buses from day camp—to munch on their share of 60 meals laid out by volunteers: peanut butter and jelly

See **LUNCH** on **BACK PAGE**

# Lunch

Continued from Page A1

sandwiches, half-pints of low-fat milk, oranges, fruit juice and potato chips.

"It's pretty good," Sandro Garcia, 12, said between big, sloppy bites of his sweet sandwich.

He thinks it's "pretty cool" he and his little brother Ernesto, 8 — who was enjoying his second bag of chips — can always get a meal here while their parents are at work.

Second Harvest, which serves Santa Cruz and San Benito counties, is holding its summer food drive through Aug. 2. The effort is designed to restock emergency food supplies during the critical summer months when children, who enjoy meals regularly available during the school year, risk going hungry.

Summer food drive collections will contribute to several programs like Summer Lunch, which provides more than 1,300 free lunches per weekday to children throughout Santa Cruz County at 49 different sites.

Hunger knows no season, according to Jeffrey Kongsli, Second Harvest Food Bank's director of development. The food bank serves more than more than 40,000 people a month — almost 19,000 of them are children, he said.

Through 120 agencies and programs, bank operators try to feed everyone in need, but donations often wane during the summer months in comparison to contributions during the winter holiday season — a time when collective thoughts turn toward charity and good will.

"People just tend to give more during the holidays," Kongsli said.

According to a study by California Food Policy Advocates, Santa Cruz County did the best job of 58 counties in the state feeding eligible kids last summer, reaching 43 percent of children who need free meals to stay well-nourished.



Nick Lovejoy/Sentinel

Carla Garcia, 4, receives lunch Friday at the the Neary Lagoon Community Center.

Albert Moldonado, Community Bridges' nutrition coordinator, attributes the success to a spirit of collaboration between nonprofits like Community Bridges and Second Harvest.

Kongsli said even though a higher rate of needy kids are eating regular meals in Santa Cruz County during the summer months, there is always more to be done.

"We can't meet every need," Kongsli said, "but we do the best we can."

Many people miss out because they don't understand all the resources available to them or they're simply too proud to seek assistance.

"There are still people who fall

through the cracks," he said. "Some just don't enjoy asking for help."

Foods needed in the drive are canned meats, tuna, soups, canned fruits and vegetables, cereal, peanut butter, rice, beans, pasta and other non-perishables.

Through Aug. 2, food can be dropped off at the following locations:

- Safeway stores throughout Santa Cruz County.

- Smith Barney investment firms in Capitola and Scotts Valley.

- ReMax realty at the Santa Cruz Harbor.

- Santa Cruz Properties in Santa Cruz.

- Century 21 Showcase Realtors in

Scotts Valley.

- Tri-City Mortgage in Watsonville.

- Jackson and Mann Coldwell Banker in Aptos.

- Long Acre Real Estate in Rio del Mar.

- Santa Cruz Mortgage in Aptos.

- Wells Fargo Bank in Aptos.

Credit card donations can be made by calling the Harvest Food Bank at 722-7110, or mail checks to the Harvest Food Bank, P.O. Box 990, Watsonville, CA 95077-0990.

Contact Robyn Moormeister at [rmoormeister@santa-cruz.com](mailto:rmoormeister@santa-cruz.com).