

# Food bank recognized with national award

✓ *Food Banks*  
By KIMBERLY WHITE

kwhite@santacruzsentinel.com

SANTA CRUZ — Liezel Groyon watched as her 4-year-old son, Marlon Groyon Jr., played with a jump rope outside of the Artspace Tannery Lofts in Santa Cruz Friday afternoon, not far from a truck filled with bags of fruits, vegetables and other food items.

Groyon, who lives at the Tannery with her husband, son and 14-year-old daughter, was among those who received the bags as part of Second Harvest Food Bank's Food For Children program.

Last month, Second Harvest was among the 25 organizations that received the Congressional Hunger Center's Victory Against Hunger Award, which also came with a \$1,000 check.

"It's wonderful," Groyon said. "It does really help a lot of people here because sometimes they're short on rent and it provides food for some of us."

As families approached the truck to receive bags of food, Rep. Sam Farr, D-Carmel — who nominated Second Harvest for the award last fall — spoke about the organization's tireless efforts to promote healthy lifestyles starting at a young age.

"We want it to get out that if you want to learn how to do this effectively, no matter where you are, how big you are," Farr said, "you better come to Santa Cruz County, which has a great attitude about addressing social and economic needs."

Standing behind him were two tables covered with an assortment of fruit and vegetable trays, a basket containing toothbrushes and toothpaste, and recipe cards for mushroom and brown rice soup.

What makes Food For Children so innovative is that staff not only distribute food, but also emphasize the importance of nutrition and regular exercise through a combination of activities such as games, food tastings and cooking demonstrations.

Teresa Moran, the organization's nutrition programs manager, said those activities rotate among its 49 sites in Watsonville, Santa Cruz and unincorporated areas such as Aptos and Soquel.

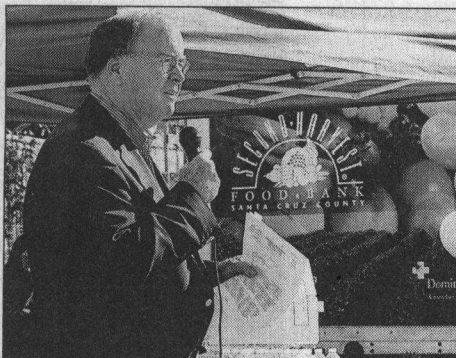


DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Second Harvest Food Bank's Willy Elliot-McCrea greets Rep. Sam Farr who presented the organization with a national award Friday at the Artspace Tannery Lofts, where Second Harvest distributes healthy food to kids.

**Rep. Sam Farr presents Second Harvest Food Bank with one of only 25 Victory Against Hunger national awards Friday for its food program for kids.**

DAN COYRO/  
SENTINEL



In 2009, Farr introduced the School Fruit and Vegetable Act, which would have required that salad bars be installed in every school in America. David Beltran, Farr's press secretary, said that bill didn't pass on its own, but most of its elements were included in the Healthy, Hungry-Free Kids Act, which passed in December and increases the number of students eligible for school meal programs and improves the food quality.

In previous years, Farr said after the presentation, schools weren't interested in installing salad bars because students weren't interested in them. Now, however, more children are eating fresh produce partly because salads are now a staple on many fast-food menus.

"In essence, what you're trying to do is raise a new generation with nutritional values that will manifest themselves in consumer

demand," he said. "When there's a consumer demand, industry will go for it."

However, he acknowledged during the speech that lean times are coming as local and state governments continue their belt-tightening.

"We have a new attitude in Washington that we're not going to increase any revenue, so there's not going to be any more money around, so we're going to have to live off budget allocations from several years ago," he said. "So funding is will be flat and yet the need is still out there."

That need, he added, is met by organizations such as Second Harvest. For example, the Food for Children program distributes the equivalent of 100,000 meals to more than 8,600 children each month, according to Willy Elliott-McCrea, the organization's CEO.

"The war on hunger has essentially been won," he said after the event. "The current war is on malnutrition."

## FOOD FOR CHILDREN

**WHAT:** Program operated by Second Harvest Food Bank that provides healthy food for children and their families, teaches parents how to prepare nutritious meals, and encourages healthy lifestyles through exercise and activity.

**AWARD:** Was one of 25 organizations that received the Congressional Hunger Center's Victory Against Hunger Award

**HOW MUCH:** Each year, Second Harvest distributes 1.1 million pounds of fresh produce and 550,000 pounds of basic staples.

**WHERE:** In 2011, Second Harvest expects to support 9,000 children each month at sites in Watsonville, Santa Cruz, Aptos, Soquel, Freedom, Ben Lomond, Scotts Valley and Felton.

**INFORMATION:** For food-distribution hours and sites, call the community food hot line at 722-7110.

Source: Second Harvest Food Bank

To find out when Second Harvest will be serving food at its 49 sites, call the community food hot line at 722-7110.