



NEWS ADVISORY

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Second Harvest Expands Produce Express Program to Food Desert on Erie's Lower West Side

Erie, PA., May 23, 2019 – The Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania is expanding its Produce Express Program to lower west side neighborhoods in the City of Erie. This will not only increase Second Harvest's footprint for distributing fresh produce, but also meet a key strategic goal of targeting food deserts in Erie County and bringing resources to areas that are desperately in need.

This new Produce Express distribution is open to all who meet the income qualifications and reside west of State Street to Cranberry Street within the boundaries of the West Bayfront Parkway to West 10th Street. Event details include:

What: Second Harvest Produce Express Program

When: Thursday, May 23rd at 5:00 p.m.

Where: Erie County Health Department, 606 West 2nd Street, Erie, PA 16507

Those who participate are asked to bring ID and bags or boxes to carry the food home. Individuals in need of food are asked to register for the event at <https://nwpafoodbank.org/lower-west-erie-produce-express/> or by calling Gerry Weiss at 814.459.3663 x 120.

"Food deserts tend to be in low-income areas where there is not access to supermarkets with fresh nutritious foods like vegetables, fruits, and other healthy items" said Karen Seggi, executive director at Second Harvest. "Those who do not have access to healthy foods have an increased risk of developing serious health issues such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer."

According to the Erie County Department of Health, affordable food is a problem for over 22,000 residents living in Erie's 7 food deserts. This Produce Express distribution will deliver a truckload of fresh food for these struggling families. Each truck will carry enough nutritious fruits and vegetables to provide eligible individuals and families with 25-50 pounds of nutritious food, free of charge. By making fresh, healthy produce available to those who normally would not have access to it, Second Harvest is working to encourage the community to eat healthier and make better nutritional choices.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), food deserts are an area where at least 33% of residents live one mile or more from the nearest grocery store or supermarket. In the area that our new Produce Express will serve, 33.11% of households fit this definition. Residents who live in these areas typically have limited access to vehicles or other transportation and must often rely on convenience stores or fast food options which primarily offer highly processed, packaged, high-fat, high-salt, high-sugar foods and drinks. Second Harvest is working to address the need for healthy options in these areas with this Produce Express mobile food distribution.

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About the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania

The mission of the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania is to provide food to those in need within 11 counties of northwest Pennsylvania while creating awareness and educating the community on the realities of hunger. Second Harvest provides food to 412 member agencies and distribution partners throughout the 11 counties of northwest Pennsylvania. These organizations include food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, Produce Express mobile distributions, Military Share – a Produce Express Program, School Pantries, Backpack Programs and Senior Box distribution sites. In the most recent year, Second Harvest has distributed 9.2 million meals to individuals in need.

Second Harvest serves the following 11 counties in northwest Pennsylvania:

Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, McKean, Venango and Warren.