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Second Harvest Launches Five School Food Pantries to Help Feed Students in Erie

Erie, PA., March 13, 2019 – Children represent the most vulnerable population that is served by the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania. According to Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap study, of the 40,410 food insecure individuals in Erie County, 12,320 are children under the age of 18. In order to more effectively provide food to these local students in need, Second Harvest recently launched five school food pantries in Erie at the following locations:

- Erie High School
- Collegiate Academy
- Wilson Middle School
- East High School
- Emerson Gridley

The five pantries represent a significant expansion of the program, as Second Harvest now operates 12 school pantries throughout northwest Pennsylvania. Programs exist within the school districts of Oil City, Warren, and Erie, with a 13th site preparing to open in DuBois in April. These pantries will distribute food to more than 400 students each month with the opportunity for expansion.

“No child should be worrying about where their next meal is coming from,” said Karen Seggi, executive director of Second Harvest. “Second Harvest is proud of the partnerships that have been formed to help provide school-aged children with something to eat when their tables are often bare.”

Media is invited to an opportunity to review the Second Harvest School Pantry Program:

- **Where:** Erie High School – Library, 3325 Cherry St, Erie, PA 16508
- **When:** Friday, March 15th, 2:45 P.M.
- **What:** Food distribution to High School students will begin at 2:45 P.M.
- **Who:** Interviews will be available from Second Harvest representatives, financial donors and school personnel involved with the program

Second Harvest received financial support from a Dietz & Watson and Giant Eagle donation to fund the opening of the Erie School Pantry Program. “We love supporting organizations that work closely with our retail partners like Giant Eagle does with Second Harvest Food Bank,” said Lauren Eni, VP Brand Strategy and 4th generation member of the Dietz & Watson family ownership. “With our Families Helping Families Program, this is just one way we can give back a little to the communities that make up many loyal Dietz & Watson customers.”

“Food is at the center of everything we do at Giant Eagle, and we take seriously our responsibility to aid Second Harvest’s ongoing push to eliminate hunger throughout our community,” said Giant Eagle spokesperson Dan Donovan. “We are thrilled that our collaborative efforts with Dietz & Watson will contribute to the great work being done by the Second Harvest School Pantry at Erie High School.”

Second Harvest provided food to 27 students at the inaugural distribution at Erie High on March 1st and 37 students are registered to receive food at the second distribution this Friday. The Second Harvest School Pantry at Erie High School will continue to provide registered students with food on a bi-weekly basis for now, but the goal is to provide food weekly. Qualifying students choose about 7 to 8 items that they want or need. In addition to food, they are offered personal care items such as body soap, shampoo, tooth brush, and deodorant.

The Second Harvest School Pantry Program addresses child hunger by providing children in poverty with nutritious, child-friendly food necessary for overall growth, physical and cognitive development and satisfactory performance in school. Using school facilities to provide nutritious groceries for children and their families is a convenient and cost-effective solution to child hunger and an important way to reach families who might not know about or frequent their local food pantry.

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About 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. Last year, Second Harvest distributed 9.2 million meals to 412 member agencies and distribution partners. Second Harvest serves the following 11 counties in northwest Pennsylvania: Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, McKean, Venango and Warren. For more information, visit www.nwpafoodbank.org.