ALLEVIATING CHILDHOOD HUNGER

BACKPACK PROGRAM

Children comprise nearly 30 percent of the individuals served by Second Harvest each year. To alleviate childhood hunger, Second Harvest launched the BackPack program in January of 2011. This program provides children with nutritious, child-friendly food when other resources, are not available. BackPacks are discreetly distributed to participating children at schools on Fridays and help provide the proper nutrition necessary for overall growth, physical and cognitive development.

The program has grown exponentially in the last seven years. In 2011 several hundred BackPacks were provided for 40 students throughout the spring semester. BackPacks are now distributed at 31 sites across six counties and nine school districts in northwest Pennsylvania. In the most recent academic year, Second Harvest served more than 2,250 students per week and delivered more than 70,000 BackPacks.

INTRODUCING SCHOOL PANTRIES

Thoughts of school are typically associated with textbooks, pencils, rulers or tests. But for the 50,000 children that rely on the free and reduced lunch program in our 11-county service area, going to school becomes their best opportunity to eat because school breakfast or lunch may be the only meals they consistently receive. These children and their families may not have the nutritious food they need for healthy living.

The Second Harvest School Pantry Program was launched in 2017 to provide a resource for those families facing a need for food. The Second Harvest School Pantry Program’s goal is to provide nutritious food to children and their families in convenient, familiar and safe locations. School Pantries are located across our area including sites in Warren, Venango and Erie county. Each site has a set distribution schedule and offers ongoing food assistance services. Each school operates with slight variations that allow the site to match their available resources to the community’s need. Our most recent site at Edison Elementary School was funded by a grant from the Erie Community Foundation.

To find out more about the Second Harvest’s childhood hunger programs, please contact Cindy Plymyer at (814) 459-3663 x 103 or email her at cplymyer@nwpafoodbank.org.
As the executive director of the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania, it’s an honor and a privilege to serve our mission. I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the work we have accomplished together to build stronger communities.

The numbers are sometimes difficult to comprehend. Last year, our network of 453 agencies provided more than 12 million pounds of food to 167,700 people. These statistics become much more tangible when you get to know the challenges individuals face. Our staff meets children who go to school hungry and have trouble focusing; seniors who struggle to stretch their fixed incomes; individuals who don’t know where their next meal is coming from; veterans and active military families who have served our country and now need help for themselves; and hardworking adults who reach out to us because their minimum-wage job makes it a challenge to access healthy food.

We continue to expand our approach to strengthen our impact on the people we serve. While the majority of food we distribute is delivered through food pantries and soup kitchens, Second Harvest continues to grow our programs including the BackPack Program, Produce Express mobile distributions, School Pantry Program, Military Share – a Produce Express Program, Fill a Glass with Hope Milk Distribution Program and more.

On behalf of our board of directors and staff at Second Harvest, thank you. Thank you for your continued support of our mission.

Karen S. Seggi
Executive Director

Client Insight

Cheryl and her husband live in Warren with their three children. The family has used their local food pantry on and off when they found themselves in need of food assistance. Cheryl’s husband was laid off from work and then fell ill with blood clots. The medical procedure he needed became an extra expense for the family. To make up for her husband’s lack of income, Cheryl worked as much overtime as she could, just to make ends meet. With the help of Second Harvest’s member food pantry in Warren, The Church of the Nativity Food Pantry, this family was able to keep food on the table until Cheryl’s husband could return to work.

Cheryl’s story disproves a common misconception that individuals utilizing food pantries are generally homeless and unemployed. Because of the unforeseen circumstances of illness, disability and underemployment, this family’s ability to purchase needed groceries was diminished temporarily. The good news is that individuals and families can receive help at local food pantries and other Second Harvest member agencies while working to improve their situations.
Gratitude

We are grateful for our many partnerships with businesses, groups and organizations throughout our 11-county service area. Not only do we depend on your role as community leaders to gain continued support of our programs, but by organizing a fundraiser or food collection, you play an essential role in our mission to alleviate hunger.

During the holiday months of November and December, more than 65,000 pounds of food and over $100,000 was donated to Second Harvest through community fundraisers and food drives held throughout our service area. Collectively, those fundraisers and food drives will enable us to distribute over 550,000 meals.

If you have already planned and conducted projects for Second Harvest in the past, we thank you for your efforts and we ask for your continued support throughout 2018. If you haven’t hosted a project for Second Harvest yet, please consider doing so! If you would like help coordinating a food drive or fundraiser, please contact Tori at tpursell@nwpafoodbank.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Walmart’s Fight Hunger Spark Change
April 16 - May 14, 2018

Fight Hunger, Spark Change is a nationwide initiative encouraging the public to join the fight against hunger. Local Walmart’s in our service area will offer three easy ways to take action against hunger and help families in need through social media, online and in-store participation.

National Association of Letter Carrier’s Food Drive
May 12, 2018

Letter carriers throughout northwest PA join the Second Harvest Food Bank to Stamp Out Hunger! Communities are asked to donate nonperishable food in a sturdy bag and leave by their mailbox early in the morning. Local letter carriers and volunteers will be collecting donations from homes throughout the day.

Warren Gives
May 23, 2018

This special Warren County online fundraising event involves sixteen hours of online giving. Match dollars are distributed proportionally among organizations based on the donations they receive. The more you give, the more match dollars go to Second Harvest! For more information you can visit warregives.org.

Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community
June 2, 2018

The Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community will take place at Presque Isle State Park. Walkers register online as individuals or as a team to support Second Harvest’s mission to provide food for our hungry neighbors. It’s a great way to get exercise while spending time with family and friends. For more information you can visit www.walkforahealthycommunity.org or email tpursell@nwpafoodbank.org.
HOW IT WORKS

FOOD DONORS
- Feeding America
- Wholesalers
- Farmers
- Food Drives
- Manufacturers
- Retailers

SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK

MEMBER AGENCIES
- Food Pantries
- Soup Kitchens
- Shelters
- Produce Express
- Senior Boxes
- BackPack Program

PROVIDING PRODUCE

PRODUCE EXPRESS
Second Harvest and our partner agencies are working to encourage the community to eat healthier and make better nutritional choices. We are doing this by making fresh, healthy produce available to those who normally would not have access to it.

Second Harvest’s Produce Express program delivers a truckload of fresh food for up to 200 struggling families in need where traditional food pantries are not available. Produce Express trucks may also include other grocery items and non-food essentials. The program is free of charge to the clients and paid for through donations and corporate sponsorships.

For more information on the Produce Express program, please visit nwpafoodbank.org.

SQUASH HUNGER
Farmers and backyard gardeners are encouraged to grow and donate extra produce to Second Harvest each season. Don’t have a green thumb? All fresh produce will be accepted whether it’s from your garden or your grocery cart. Please join in this community effort and share the fruits of your labor with a hungry family who can’t afford fresh produce. All varieties of fruits and vegetables will be accepted. For more information on produce donations, please call Mariana at 814-459-3663 x 109.

Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania
1507 Grimm Drive
Erie, PA 16501
Phone: (814) 459-3663

97 cents of every dollar that is donated to Second Harvest is used directly to help feed those in need.

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