



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BACKPACK PROGRAM EXPANDS TO FEED EXTRA STUDENTS ON WINTER BREAK

ERIE, Pa., December 21 --- For many students, school lunch on Friday is the last meal they will receive until they return to school on Monday morning. These children and their families face additional burdens of hunger when school lunch services become unavailable over an extended holiday break.

To address this problem of child hunger, Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania is expanding its BackPack Program for winter break. Partnering with the 12 City of Erie Public Elementary Schools, Second Harvest offered backpacks to all eligible children of all elementary grade levels to help tide them over the holiday recess. Nearly 2500 students opted to turn in vouchers to receive backpacks, more than doubling the number of children who typically receive food each week. The backpacks students will receive are slightly heavier, filled with additional servings of food for the extended break.

“The District is excited about this partnership with Second Harvest to support our students and their families” said Tim Sabol, Director of Elementary Education for the Erie School District. “We are also thankful to the employees and volunteers who worked so hard to coordinate the distribution of the backpacks to our twelve schools and over 150 classrooms.”

“Census information tells us there are 7,881 children younger than 18 living in poverty in the city of Erie,” said Karen Seggi, executive director of Second Harvest. “In our efforts to enhance feeding programs for children, it only made sense to expand the BackPack Program for winter break to help reach even more students at a very vulnerable time for them and their families.”

Of the 167,700 individuals Second Harvest serves annually, approximately 48,600 are children under the age of 18. The BackPack Program addresses the problem of 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. Backpacks are discreetly distributed to participating children at school on Fridays to help tide them over the weekend. Second Harvest operates 30 of the more than 2,200 BackPack sites throughout the United States. In the 2015-2016 academic year, Second Harvest will distribute weekend backpacks to 2,028 children within eight school districts in five counties of northwest Pennsylvania. In total, Second Harvest anticipates distributing nearly 65,000 backpacks in the 2015-2016 academic year.

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. Last year, Second Harvest distributed nearly 13 million pounds of food to 298 member agencies, and 144 distribution sites for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program for low-income seniors. Second Harvest serves the following 11 counties in northwest Pennsylvania: Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, McKean, Venango and Warren.

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