



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania in Need of Volunteers**

**Erie, Pa., March 20, 2020** – The Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania continues to ramp up its COVID-19 (Coronavirus) response efforts to provide food to the most vulnerable in the area. Volunteers are a crucial part of these operations, and Second Harvest is seeking more individuals to contribute their time.

Second Harvest has cancelled a number volunteer shifts since March 16<sup>th</sup> and operated the department at minimum capacity, placing several hunger relief projects on hold. Staff has instead focused their efforts on critically reviewing organizational processes to ensure volunteer, staff and client safety. Second Harvest now faces the challenge of catching up on previously paused projects while also addressing the best approach for the COVID-19 crisis.

“We need help,” says Karen S. Seggi, CEO of Second Harvest. “Every day we continue to provide food to local food pantries, soup kitchens, Backpack Programs, Produce Expresses, and other organizations. At the same time, we are anticipating that more individuals are going to need more food in the upcoming weeks as families face new unforeseen problems. We are in desperate need of volunteers to help us address these challenges.”

Second Harvest’s operational response to COVID-19 has led to substantial changes within the volunteer department. There will now be a larger number of volunteer shifts that host a smaller number of volunteers to ensure social distancing. Hand sanitizer has been placed at multiple locations throughout the building and staff has increased the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting, especially around high-traffic areas (e.g. volunteer lounge, bathrooms, break room).

It is anticipated that hundreds of volunteers will be needed to fill more than XXXX slots opened over the course of the next 6 weeks. Volunteer shifts are available:

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Night
Monday	9 a.m. – 12 p.m.	1 – 4 p.m.	
Tuesday	9 a.m. – 12 p.m.	1 – 4 p.m.	
Wednesday	9 a.m. – 12 p.m.	1 – 4 p.m.	5:30 – 8 p.m.
Thursday	9 a.m. – 12 p.m.	1 – 4 p.m.	5:30 – 8 p.m.
Friday	9 a.m. – 12 p.m.	1 – 4 p.m.	
Saturday	9 a.m. – 12 p.m.	1 – 4 p.m.	

Volunteer shifts will be limited to 10-12 individuals per project, and participants will be working primarily on building boxes of food that will go out to seniors and others in need of food within northwest Pennsylvania. There is a chance that other projects may arise – such as packing BackPacks of food for children or produce for a mobile food distribution – but emphasis will be placed on emergency food boxes for those in need.

We encourage individuals to operate within their own comfort level, and if a person is willing and interested in volunteering, many opportunities currently exist. Second Harvest seeks healthy, able-bodied individuals to assist in these volunteer projects. Following CDC guidelines, if you are over the age of 60, Second Harvest asks you to take extra considerations before enrolling to volunteer. Families are welcome to volunteer with children over the age of 10. While groups are welcome, Second Harvest requires contact information from each individual volunteering. If you are sick or not feeling well, Second Harvest asks you to stay home.

If you are interested in assisting Second Harvest by volunteering during this critical time, please visit <https://nwpafoodbank.org/get-involved/donate-time/become-a-volunteer/> to view available shifts and schedule for a session. Please contact Andrea Velez at [avelez@nwpafoodbank.org](mailto:avelez@nwpafoodbank.org) should you have specific questions.

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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. Last year, Second Harvest distributed 9.6 million meals through an anti-hunger network of 399 partner organizations. Second Harvest serves the following 11 counties in northwest Pennsylvania: Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, McKean, Venango and Warren.