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### COMMUNITY RALLIES TO MEET FOOD RESOURCE NEEDS OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY RESIDENTS AFFECTED BY COVID-19 *SBC FOOD RESCUE LAUNCHES ONLINE COLLABORATION HUB*

**(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.)** -- Organizations across Santa Barbara County are coordinating emergency food assistance programs in response to the impacts of COVID-19. Dozens of groups that include the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, the Central Coast Commission for Senior Citizens, United Way Home For Good Santa Barbara County, Salvation Army, and Community Environmental Council are taking action to combat food insecurity and coordinate resources to help feed a growing number of residents in need.

"Unemployment and rising poverty related to the pandemic are deepening the difficulties faced by people already at risk of hunger, and affecting thousands who are experiencing food insecurity for the first time," said Judith Smith-Meyer, Marketing Communications Manager for the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County ([www.foodbanksbc.org](http://www.foodbanksbc.org)).

"The Foodbank is running 54 certified SAFE Food Net distributions, home deliveries for seniors, and Chef's Kitchen, a pilot program designed to provide prepared meals to seniors, while also helping local restaurants. This is in addition to continuing to meet the food needs of 90% of our regular 300+ nonprofit partners who remain active, including residential programs for recovery, trafficked children and more."

Seniors are particularly at risk of COVID-19 complications. Many are staying home to stay safe while others may already be homebound, making it especially difficult to access nutritious food on a daily basis. The Senior Connection program is a specialized information and referral program for senior citizens and family caregivers. "Normally, our Senior Connection program offers a variety of services and supports, but our feeding services have been expanded to ensure seniors have food and meals to address their health and safety needs," explained Joyce Ellen Lippman of Central Coast Commission for Senior Citizens. For free information and referrals for seniors, please call 800-510-2020 or go to [www.centralcoastseniors.org](http://www.centralcoastseniors.org).

People without homes are also increasingly vulnerable. As restaurants, day centers and meal shares closed, it became necessary to identify additional food resources for our unhoused neighbors. United Way is working with the Salvation Army and multiple partners, including local restaurants, to meet this important need.

To maximize efficiency and reach the most vulnerable in our community, all organizations supporting charitable food donation, delivery, or distribution are encouraged to sign up for the Santa Barbara County Food Rescue informational hub ([www.sbcfoodrescue.org/submission-resources-information-hub/](http://www.sbcfoodrescue.org/submission-resources-information-hub/)), a resource created by Community Environmental Council's Santa Barbara County Food Rescue. "Our network matches donors that have excess, nutritious food with organizations serving food insecure populations," stated Julia Blanton, Santa Barbara County Food Rescue Coordinator.

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“We are still leaning into this work, with over 15,000 pounds of food rescued to go to those in need during the coronavirus, but we also rapidly scaled up coordinating efforts in response to COVID-19 to help identify needs and fill gaps in food distribution efforts across private, public, and nonprofit sectors.” The Santa Barbara Foundation and its funding partners provided support to help this rapid expansion through their COVID-19 Joint Response Effort for Santa Barbara County.

The hub’s collected information is available for other organizations to view and can be filtered to focus on an agency’s area of interest, including matching chefs and caterers looking to create prepared meals with agencies that serve those dealing with increased need due to COVID-19.

Governor Newsom recently debuted the Great Plates Delivered program to support in-home meal delivery for seniors. “While the Governor’s *Great Plates* feeding program is an opportunity to assist underserved seniors throughout the state, various organizations and advocates in Santa Barbara County already answered the call to action and have come together to meet the needs of our community,” said Kelly Hubbard, Director of Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management. “These organizations have deep-rooted partnerships with the communities they serve and know how to quickly and effectively coordinate food resources to meet needs.”

To be connected to food resources, call 211. For senior-specific services, call 800-510-2020.

For more information on ways to donate, volunteer or otherwise support the Santa Barbara County community during COVID-19, please visit the County of Santa Barbara Public Health Department website at <https://publichealthsb.org/volunteering-and-donations/>.

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[County of Santa Barbara: www.CountyofSB.org, Twitter, Facebook](#)

Santa Barbara County Call Center (833) 688-5551

2-1-1 Call Center: Dial 211 from within the county; or (800) 400-1572

Recorded Information Line: (805) 681-4373

Community Wellness Team Information and Referral Line: (805) 364-2750

Behavioral Wellness 24/7 Crisis Line (888) 868-1649