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SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK ESTABLISHING 'HEALTHY PANTRIES' IN WEST ORANGE COUNTY

Pilot Program Offers Fresh, Nutritious Food to At-Risk, Low-Income Residents

ORLANDO, Fla. – (Nov. 21, 2016) – Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida, in conjunction with the West Orange Health District, is launching a three-year pilot program to provide healthy food for low-income people struggling with diet-related diseases.

At select partner agencies, the Healthy Pantry network will serve district residents in communities such as Ocoee, Dr. Phillips, Windermere, Winter Garden and Oakland. Patients, all referred by their healthcare providers, will receive free, three-month vouchers for fresh, nutritious food to supplement their diet and help them manage their diet-related diseases, such as diabetes. In addition, biometric screenings, personal counseling, community education and other support services will also be available.

“The idea is to proactively nudge people toward eating healthy,” said Dave Krepcho, Second Harvest’s president and CEO. “As our nation struggles to keep up with the unrelenting epidemic of diabetes, obesity, hypertension and heart disease, there’s a growing awareness that hunger as a social determinant of disease can be managed outside the walls of the clinic or hospital.”

Phase 1 of the program, which begins this month, includes hiring a coordinator who will help partner agencies understand how hunger impacts health and so they can effectively help their clients make better nutritional choices. Pantries included in the project will have the opportunity to receive new equipment to store and distribute healthier fresh and frozen food. The first six Healthy Pantries should be online by late 2017 or early 2018, with 10 others to follow.

“The district is pleased to support this healthy food initiative,” said Tracy Swanson, executive director for the West Orange Healthcare District. “In many instances, nutritious food is as important as medicine in maintaining, preventing and treating disease.”

The \$267,154 Healthy Pantry grant from the West Orange Health District is part of an effort to address diabetes and other health-related issues affecting the community.

“Proper nutrition is essential for health and healing,” said Dr. Debra Andree, vice president and chief medical officer for Community Health Centers, Inc in Winter Garden. “Food security affects many of the patients Community Health Centers cares for. This partnership will allow Central Florida residents to better secure nutritious food in a dignified way and will promote improved health-related outcomes.”

According to a report by Hunger in America, nearly 23 percent of food bank clients in Orange County suffer from diabetes, and nearly 54 percent have high blood pressure. Only 2 in 5 have health insurance, and 26 percent have to make the monthly decision between seeking healthcare and buying food. A study by Mari Gallagher Research and Consulting Group found

that, in 2014, the most at-risk areas of Apopka, Oakland, Ocoee and Winter Garden saw 530 people die from diet-related diseases.

About Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida

SHFBCF is a member of Feeding America – the largest charitable domestic hunger-relief organization in the United States. SHFBCF secures and distributes food and grocery products to approximately 550 local nonprofit feeding programs throughout Central Florida. Last year, with the help of food and financial donors, volunteers and a caring, committed community, the food bank distributed 43 million meals to partner programs such as food pantries, soup kitchens, women's shelters, senior centers, day care centers and Kids Cafes. In addition, Second Harvest's 14-week culinary program teaches foodservice-based technical, life and employability skills to economically hard-pressed adults. Our community turns to Second Harvest's partner agencies more than 71,000 times per week. To learn more about SHFBCF, visit www.FeedHopeNow.org.

About West Orange Health District

The WOHD is an independent special healthcare district created by an Act of the 1949 Florida Legislature and is governed by a 16 member Board appointed by the Governor of Florida. From its beginning, the mission of the District has been to enhance health and wellness in the West Orange Healthcare District. This has been achieved through investing significantly in West Orange County. Over \$100 million in grants have been awarded since 2012 for initiatives in the community that align with the District's mission and goal of creating the healthiest community in the nation. For more information about the West Orange Healthcare District please visit <http://www.wohd1949.org> or call the District office at 407.296.1861.

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