

Food Matters

New Fresh Food Initiatives for a Healthier Community

For most of us, enjoying a juicy apple, ripe banana or crisp salad is not an exceptional event. But for people who are trying to make their grocery dollars stretch as much as possible, fresh fruit and vegetables are a luxury that they just can't afford.

We are faced with more and more evidence that the lack of fresh food in diets contributes to difficult health issues like childhood obesity and increased infant mortality. At Second Harvest North Florida, we have been working hard to find ways to make fresh foods available to the agencies we serve. In recent months, we have partnered in three forward thinking initiatives designed to get fresh food into the homes of people who are most in need.

Schell-Sweet Community Center – Fresh Food for Senior Citizens

Situated on Edward Waters College campus, the Schell-Sweet Community Center is a model of cooperation among nonprofit service providers. The center's director, Ms. Marie Heath, has brought together over a dozen organizations to provide resources and programs on site. "Our original focus was on senior wellness, but now we support people from ages zero to 100," Heath explains.

Heath's most recent collaboration is with Ricky Wallace of the New Town Success Zone committee to distribute food once a month. "Working with Second Harvest makes it possible for us to provide two to three meals to a family for just \$2.60," says Wallace. "Right now we can provide 160 elders and families with food, but the need is so great that we have to limit people to coming every other month."

Serving elder citizens is still the primary focus at the Schell-Sweet Center and helping them get better nutrition is a major goal. "Living on a low, fixed income means that their food supply can get very low by the third or fourth week of the month," Heath says. "I will tell you that the fresh fruit and vegetables we're providing are hot items! You should see the happy faces!"

Shands Hospital – Fresh Food for Expecting Mothers

Participating on the 2008 Infant Mortality Study Committee provided Lawrence DuBow with new insight on the importance of good nutrition for expectant mothers. "We know that the greatest contributor to prematurity, low birth weight of the baby and a higher infant mortality rate is the mother's poor health during pregnancy," he says. DuBow's vision has led Second Harvest North Florida to collaborate with Shands Jacksonville Medical Center on a new initiative called Nutrition for Mothers, Nourishment for Babies at Shands' OB/GYN Clinic.

Every Wednesday, 65-75 expectant mothers can receive a bag of nutritious and fresh food as they leave the clinic after a check-up. The program will initially target new obstetric patients, but the plan is to expand to serve more than 100 expectant mothers seen daily in the clinic.



"There is a critical shortage of full-service grocery stores in the urban core where these women can purchase nutritious foods, primarily fresh fruits and vegetables," said DuBow. "This partnership between Second Harvest and Shands will undoubtedly result in fewer infant deaths due to poor maternal nutrition."

Jacksonville Farmer's Market – Fresh Food for Families

On Saturday, Nov. 14, 2009, Second Harvest North



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Letter from the executive director

The changing face of hunger, nutrition and food banks.

As I have noted recently, I am new to 'food banking' as many refer to it, and I continue to be fascinated by all that I am learning. Prior to working at Second Harvest North Florida, I would have guessed that a center such as ours would have stocked mostly cans and boxes of unsalable goods. I could

picture a lot of tomato paste and lima beans, things not normally flying off of the shelves. Day old bread, maybe, too, but a variety of foods? Not likely. Fresh, clean, new? Never.

Boy, was I ever wrong. That may have been then, but this is now, and now is a whole lot different.

In this issue you will read about programs that really highlight the changing nature of our mission here at Second Harvest. While we do still provide

cans and boxes, better known as 'shelf stable' products, and while these products remain the backbone of our poundage, more and more we are moving towards a place where fresh, nutritious, and calorie conscious are the watchwords. We at Second Harvest are endeavoring to develop partnerships and relationships that allow us to fundamentally alter the food equation. And, what you see today with programs such as these is only the beginning. Not only will we continue to initiate efforts that target specific groups (i.e. children, seniors, young adults, expectant mothers) but we are also searching for new, alternative sources for food.

Our goal is first and foremost to find food to feed those who are hungry. This will always be our clarion call – to assist those who need food. However, when we find research that suggests the infant mortality rate in Jacksonville is inordinately high, we must find a way to answer that call as well. This is how we found ourselves in Shands Jacksonville's OB/GYN Clinic handing out bags of fresh, nutritious food to expectant moms here in Jacksonville. This is a way to *prevent* hunger, before the cycle starts. And that's a long way from dented cans and dusty boxes.

Best regards,



Thomas Manz

Executive Director, Second Harvest North Florida

How you can help

Donate to the 15th Annual Jaguars Food Drive sponsored by Winn-Dixie

Headed to Winn-Dixie to grab a few things? Buy a few extra pantry staples and help those who will otherwise go hungry tonight.



Stocking up on goodies for your Jag's tailgate party? Throw a few extra items in the basket and take them with you to Jacksonville Municipal Stadium on Nov. 8.

Once again this year, Winn-Dixie is stepping up to help those who are in need across north Florida by hosting their 15th annual food drive in conjunction with the Jacksonville Jaguars. This annual food drive directly benefits Second Harvest North Florida and provides critical supplies for hundreds of local pantries and shelters. You'll see donation buckets at all Winn-Dixie stores through Nov. 8 and all around the stadium.

Hold your own food drive!

- **In your office**
- **In your child's school**
- **At your church**
- **In your neighborhood**
- **In your own home**

No idea how to do it? No problem. Call Leah Bezares at 904-353-3663 or send an e-mail to LBezares@WeNourishHope.org and we'll send you great ideas to promote the event. We'll even bring you the collection bins and pick them up at the end! We'll also weigh your collection so you know how many meals you provided to those in need. ■

We Nourish Hope.

