



Media contacts:

Elizabeth Cooper, 612-963-6791, ecooper@2harvest.org
Briana Gruenewald, 612-255-1108, briana@bellmontpartners.com

Second Harvest Heartland Doubles Down on Support for Minnesota Seniors During COVID-19 Pandemic and Senior Hunger Awareness Month

Increased safety for food delivery and extra support to quell coronavirus stress, uncertainty

SAINT PAUL, Minn. (April 7, 2020) — Along with being among the most vulnerable for COVID-19-related complications, one in 12 Minnesota seniors experiences food insecurity on any given day. This month, Senior Hunger Awareness Month, [Second Harvest Heartland](#) is doing more than ever to ensure Minnesota residents who are 60-years and older safely receive the nutritious, shelf-stable food they need to weather the pandemic and beyond.

Food insecurity among seniors is a continued challenge locally and nationally. Seniors – especially those who are retired and living on a fixed income – are finding it increasingly difficult to afford food. In Minnesota, seniors make up 9% of food shelf visits. Second Harvest Heartland and its partners work to reduce the gaps in nutrition services for older Americans by connecting them to programs like the Nutrition Assistance Program for Seniors (NAPS) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

NAPS currently helps serve shelf-stable foods, like canned fruits; vegetables; cheese; canned meat; peanut butter; rice and pasta, to more than 240 food distribution locations across the state each month – including at Second Harvest Heartland’s Maplewood facility, where the meals are distributed via drive-thru.

With the COVID-19 pandemic adding additional stress and uncertainty to an already vulnerable population, Second Harvest Heartland is continually in close communication with the Minnesota Department of Health and has received permission to change some of its procedures to ensure social distancing and reducing gatherings at the distribution sites. The food bank and its partners are taking extra steps to ensure the health and safety of seniors accessing the hunger-relief system, including encouraging all NAPS program participants to stay in their vehicle while they receive their boxes, changing the recertification process to reduce face-to-face interactions and helping newcomers apply.

“Seniors, just like children, are especially vulnerable to the negative impacts of poor nutrition and many of them are of course concerned about the current coronavirus outbreak,” says Leah Baack, senior programs supervisor at Second Harvest Heartland. “During this especially challenging time, we are doing everything we can to ensure every senior in our community knows about the services we provide so empty plates are not an added stressor.”

Anyone who is or knows a Minnesota senior struggling to afford food is encouraged to contact Leah Baack at lbaack@2harvest.org. Now, more than ever, it’s important to uncover senior hunger and increase participation in the hunger relief program.

About Second Harvest Heartland

Second Harvest Heartland is one of the nation’s largest, most efficient and most innovative hunger relief organizations. Second Harvest Heartland provides an average of 75 percent of all food distributed by its food shelf partners, and in 2019, provided more than 97 million meals to nearly 1,000 food shelves, pantries and other partner programs serving 59 counties in Minnesota and western Wisconsin. Second Harvest Heartland leads through innovation, finding efficient, effective solutions to connect the full resources of our community with our hungry neighbors. For more information, visit 2harvest.org or call 651.484.5117.

###