



# NEWS RELEASE

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## NEW STUDY: MORE THAN 74,000 ORANGE COUNTY AREA CHILDREN RECEIVE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE EACH YEAR

*Largest, Most Comprehensive Report Ever Conducted On Emergency Food Distribution Reports 25 Million Americans Seek Help Nationwide, an Increase of 8 Percent Since 2001*

**[Orange—March, 2006]**—In Orange County’s 34 cities, nearly 74,000 children and 20,000 seniors receive emergency food assistance each year from the Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, a member of America’s Second Harvest — The Nation’s Food Bank Network, according to a report released in February called *Hunger in America 2006*. Based on 52,000 face-to-face interviews with people seeking emergency food assistance and more than 30,000 agency surveys in 2005, *Hunger in America 2006* is the largest, most-comprehensive study ever conducted on domestic hunger in Orange County. The study was commissioned by the America’s Second Harvest Network and sponsored by Altria.

“It is tragic that so many people are relying on emergency food assistance in the United States, where we produce enough food to feed every hungry person in the world,” said Joe Schoeningh, Director of Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County.

About 56% of the clients seeking emergency food assistance from the 390 agencies the Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County serves are living below the federal poverty line, and nearly 47% have at least one adult working in their household. Nearly 40 percent of all clients seeking emergency food assistance *nationwide* have at least one adult working.

“Millions of Americans rely every month on the agencies we serve. Millions of others are living less than one paycheck away from hunger,” said Robert Forney, President and CEO of America’s Second Harvest. “When people hit sudden hard times including illness, loss of a job, or disruption in health insurance, they are forced to turn to the America’s Second Harvest Network for help.”

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Many of the clients who participated in face-to-face interviews for *Hunger in America 2006* reported having to make choices between food and everyday necessities. More than 26 percent of the clients served report having to choose between paying for utilities or heating fuel and food; 31 percent had to choose between paying for rent or a mortgage and food; 23 percent report having to choose between paying for medical bills and food.

Volunteers and faith-based organizations are the lifeline of America's emergency food distribution system. Nationally, more than 65 percent of food pantries and 40 percent of soup kitchens rely entirely on volunteers and have no paid staff. Additionally, nearly 75 percent of pantries, 65 percent of soup kitchens, and 45 percent of emergency shelters around the U.S. are run by faith-based agencies affiliated with churches, mosques, synagogues and other religious organizations.

In Orange County, more than 57 percent of food pantries and 50 percent of soup kitchens are completely run by volunteers. Nearly 71 percent of pantries, 59 percent of soup kitchens, and 43 percent of emergency shelters are run by faith-based agencies affiliated with churches, mosques, synagogues and other religious organizations.

The Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County distributes more than 13 million pounds of food to nearly 390 local charitable agencies each year including 36 soup kitchens, 128 food pantries; and 25 emergency shelters.

An America's Second Harvest Network Member food bank or food-rescue organization provides 74 percent of the food distributed by food pantries, 49 percent of the food distributed by soup kitchens and 42 percent of the food distributed by emergency shelters. Ninety-percent of the 52,000 clients interviewed for *Hunger in America 2006* reported that they are satisfied with the quality and quantity of food they receive from the America's Second Harvest Network agency they visit.

For more information on *Hunger in America 2006*, please visit [www.FeedOC.org](http://www.FeedOC.org).

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*Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County*—Hunger is a growing threat among working and unemployed families across the nation. There are 456,000 people at risk of missing meals each month in Orange County alone. The Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County is a certified Affiliate Member of America's Second Harvest National Food Bank network. Based in Orange, the Food Bank provides surplus food to nearly 400 charitable non-profit organizations throughout Orange County. Since the Food Bank was founded more than 22 years ago, it has processed and distributed over 217 million pounds of safe and nutritious surplus food to those who need it most. For more information or other ways to help, please call (714) 771-1343 or visit [www.feedoc.org](http://www.feedoc.org).

*America's Second Harvest -- The Nation's Food Bank Network* is the largest charitable domestic hunger-relief organization in the country with a Network of more than 200 Member food banks and food - rescue programs serving all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The America's Second Harvest Network secures and distributes more than 2 billion pounds of donated food and grocery products annually; and supports approximately 50,000 local charitable agencies operating more than 94,000 programs including food pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, after-school programs, and Kids Cafes. Last year, the America's Second Harvest Network provided food assistance to more than 25 million low-income hungry people in the United States, including nearly 9 million children and 3 million seniors. For more on America's Second Harvest, please visit [www.secondharvest.org](http://www.secondharvest.org).