**Media Contact:**Ranggin Hedayat

Reveille, Inc.

949.394.1454

ranggin@reveilleinc.com

**SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK OF ORANGE COUNTY KICKS OFF
FREE SUMMER FOOD PROGRAM TO SERVE CHILDREN IMPACTED BY COVID-19**

*Program to Aid At-risk Children Throughout Orange County with Nutritious Food Who Would Otherwise Rely on*

*Free and Reduced Meals During the School Year*

**IRVINE, Calif. (June 30, 2020)** – After being forced to close after-school food programs during the COVID-19 pandemic, Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County will kick off its Summer Food Service Program on June 1st at 47 sites throughout the county. Free meals will be provided to ALL children, without eligibility documentation, who are 18 years of age and younger. The program will allow children at risk of hunger to have access to nutritious lunches and snacks during summer break and while schools are shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To find the nearest open site, call 211 or text 898211 for hours of distribution.

For 49% of public school children who rely on free and reduced lunch programs during the school year, summer can be a difficult time for many reasons—including the lack of food—especially during this unprecedented time of school shutdowns. Of Orange County’s children who receive free or reduced lunch during the school year, only 11% of them accessed free meals during the summer of 2019.

Second Harvest will offer healthy morning and afternoon snacks and lunches including chicken wraps, fruit, milk, and turkey sandwiches, among other foods. The program is intended for children from families that struggle financially, especially in the midst of a health and economic crisis, with distributions at sites that are near schools with at least 50% or more of students who receive a free or reduced lunch. This program helps bridge the meal gap for those who rely on free and reduced meals during the school year.

Childhood hunger and food insecurities can have long-term negative impacts on a child’s cognitive development, ultimately impairing their productivity and economic potential into adulthood. Providing reliable access to nutrition for at-risk children is Second Harvest’s primary focus this summer and throughout the year.

“Since the onset of pandemic-related school and business closures, Second Harvest has continued to meet a growing need for food throughout the county,” said Harald Herrmann, CEO of Second Harvest. “COVID-19-related job loss resulted in an estimated unemployment range of 12 to 16% in Orange County. Restarting our Summer Food Service Program will provide families who are suffering financial setbacks a means to feed their children this summer.”

In April, Second Harvest served 569,256 people, which is more than double the number of people served in February. Also, in April, the Food Bank provided 4,043,741 million pounds of food to all 34 OC cities through its Partner Network, Pop-Up Drive Thru Food Distribution and Food Box delivery program.

**About Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County**Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County is a leader in the fight to end hunger in our community. We provide food to over 300 organizations in our extensive Partner Network, serving the working poor, seniors on fixed incomes, children and their families, those with disabilities, veterans, and the homeless at over 400 locations throughout Orange County. Last year, Second Harvest provided a record 29 million pounds of food to those in need of food assistance. This year the Food Bank is on pace to provide more than 37.4 million pounds of food, with more than 90 cents of every dollar we spend going toward programs to feed the hungry. Second Harvest is a member of Feeding America, a national hunger relief organization. For more information and to get involved, visit FeedOC.org.

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Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County Summer Food Site List - Summer 2020

