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Second Harvest Food Bank fight food insecurity in Livingston County

Hunger and food insecurity are horrible realities to many people across America. In the United States, about 49,078,000 people are food insecure and there are about 1,030,030 people with food insecurity in Missouri, according to Feeding America (feedingamerica.org). In Livingston County specifically, 15.8 percent of people (about 2,380 people) suffer from food insecurity and don't know where their next meal will come from, according to Feeding America. Second Harvest Community Food Bank in Saint Joseph, Missouri has made it their mission to fight hunger and food insecurity in northwest Missouri and north east Kansas. Second Harvest has a large impact in Livingston County by providing food for North Missouri Center for Youth and Families, the Baptist Church in Utica, the Grand River Multi-Purpose Center, LIFE Center Food Pantry, Livingston County Food Pantry and Backpack Buddies. "We have access to the products and food that support their mission," Chad Higdon, Executive Director of Second Harvest, said. Higdon said Second Harvest serves 19 counties in north west Missouri and north east Kansas. In that 19 county area, Second Harvest has about 100 partner agencies. These agencies include various food pantries, churches, child care centers, senior centers, domestic abuse centers and many more. According to the Second Harvest website, out of all the people their food bank serves, nearly 30 percent of them are children under the age of 18. "Many of our neighbors are faced with tough choices, with more than half forced to choose between paying for health care and paying for groceries in the past year. Each week Second Harvest serves more than 15,000 individuals, and last year Second Harvest distributed more than 5.9 million pounds of food," the Second Harvest website read. Each week, Second Harvest connects with individuals who are battling with hunger and nutrition. According to the website, many parents of young children who reach out to Second Harvest for help are working, but are unable to provide enough nutritious food to meet their growing children's needs. Some have come to the end of cash reserves after an unexpected job loss; others have faced unplanned circumstances at home, such as chronic illness or the loss of a spouse. Many individuals that Second Harvest helps serve live week-to-week, skipping meals or rationing them to a level where nutrition suffers and the relentless stress of food insecurity takes a critical toll. Organizations in Livingston County are teaming up with Second Harvest in a mission to one day achieve a hunger-free community. Second Harvest distributes on average 250,000 to 999,000 pounds of food to Livingston County per year, according to Higdon. Daniel Savage with the North Missouri Center for Youth and Families receives food from Second Harvest two to three times a month all year long. Throughout the school year, NMCYF serves after school snacks to the students that partake in the NMCYF after school program. During the summer, as part of Second Harvest's "No Hunger Summer" program, any child (whether they are a part of NMCYF's summer program or not) can come into the center for food (supplied by Second Harvest) no questions asked. Savage said he goes through Second Harvest for food because they don't have the manpower at the center to do all the extra paperwork and planning it would take to get the food they do. "They just send us menus and we place our orders and they deliver it," Savage said. The Grand River Multi-Purpose Center (the senior activity center) also utilizes Second Harvest's services. According to Building Administrator, Cindy Ireland, they usually make a monthly order. Though the center only gets a small part of their food from Second Harvest, it's still a very useful resource for them, according to Ireland. Things like toilet paper, kleenexes, boxed meals, flour, sugar, big cans of vegetables and other canned goods are ordered from Second Harvest. Ireland said the majority of what they order from Second Harvest comes in handy for "emergency meals," which are meals that are delivered when the center is closed because of something like bad weather. When the center is closed and is not able to host the regular lunch or do regular deliveries for seniors, these boxed meals and canned goods can be sent to those that need them. Second Harvest has an onsite food pantry that's open every week day, provides application assistance for families to enroll in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), has an onsite garden, provides complete nutrition drinks to low-income residents undergoing medical treatment, provides lunches for children while out of school through the No Hunger Summer program, serves over 3,000 children in 50 different schools through supplying food for the Backpack Buddies program, provides emergency pantries for schools, serves at-risk children evening meals or snacks at various locations through the Kate's Cafe program and gives senior boxes to people over the age of 60.



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Second Harvest Food Bank assists Livingston County organizations in their missions by supplying food and other materials. The Grand River Multi-Purpose Center is one of those organizations that receives supplies from Second Harvest. The center uses Second Harvest to succeed in their mission of providing affordable, nutritious meals to the senior citizens in the community.

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