



Media Contact: Rachelle Mesheau
Marketing and Public Relations Manager
(707) 523-7900 x 113 | rmesheau@refb.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Redwood Empire Food Bank is Calling on the Community for Help

Santa Rosa, CA – May 11, 2020 – As the largest hunger-relief organization serving north coastal California, the Redwood Empire Food Bank is in dire need of food, funds, and volunteers. The daily increase in the number of unemployed in our community is skyrocketing, and with fire season looming, the need for food will continue to increase at an exceptional rate.

“Over the past couple of months, our community has endured unprecedented challenges. The threat of COVID-19, and the Shelter in Place orders that blanket our state, have changed our lives in unimaginable ways. Yet the crisis we are facing is not just a public health one – **it is a food crisis**. And much like the disease itself, this food crisis knows no boundaries.” said Redwood Empire Food Bank CEO, David Goodman.

Even in the best of times, food banks and food pantries are a bright spot in this community for our neighbors struggling to make ends meet. Now more than ever, the food being provided by the Redwood Empire Food Bank is a lifeline. In recent weeks, many of the Redwood Empire Food Bank’s partners have been forced to close their doors or limit their services, driving even more people to their doorstep. “Since the start of this crisis, participation at our distribution sites has increased by up to 200%. Over the coming weeks and months, the number of people we serve in an average year will double, from 82,000 to 164,000,” said Goodman.

As an essential service provider, the Redwood Empire Food Bank has been on the frontlines of this crisis from the very beginning. In the face of an extremely fluid situation, they have adapted and revamped operations to meet the drastically increased need. Activating their emergency response program, Station 3990, has allowed more flexibility in the assistance provided, establishing temporary distributions whenever and wherever needed in addition to their regular services. Despite school closures, the Redwood Empire Food Bank continues to provide food to children and their families at more than 20 school sites. Thousands of new, more robust food boxes (each with enough food for 16 meals) are being safely packed every day with the help of the National Guard and a host of dedicated community volunteers.

“Each day, we are providing the equivalent of more than 80,000 meals to our neighbors in need – nearly 50% more than at this same time last year,” said Redwood Empire Food Bank’s Marketing and PR Manager, Rachelle Mesheau.

“As we always have, the Redwood Empire Food Bank stands ready to see our neighbors through the end of this crisis. **But we need the help of our community**. Every dollar, every minute, and every food donation makes a difference.”

3990 Brickway Blvd | Santa Rosa | CA | 95403 Phone: 707.523.7900 Fax: 707.523.7901 www.refb.org

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What can you do to help?

- **Donate money.** When you donate to the Redwood Empire Food Bank, your money helps purchase food, pay staff, fuel trucks and keep the lights on – distributing food to those in need.
- **Donate food.** Food donations help keep warehouse shelves stocked with non-perishable staple groceries for distribution through Redwood Empire Food Bank programs and partner organizations.
 - The most needed items include Tuna and Canned Meat, Peanut Butter, Canned Soups, Stews, and Chili, Rice and Dry Beans, Cereal, Canned Fruits and Vegetables, High Protein Granola Bars, Trail Mix or Nut.
- **Donate time.** Throughout the year, the Redwood Empire Food Bank relies on 8,500 volunteers. With the shelter in place order, many volunteers are having to stay home and they're working hard to keep up with demand.
 - Most distribution sites have been turned into drive-thrus to accommodate safe social distancing practices. Volunteers are packing food boxes for participants to grab and go.
 - Dedicated community volunteers, [Team Rubicon](#), and the National Guard are packing food boxes at the Redwood Empire Food Bank's Sonoma County Day School outpost. Together, they are kitting approximately **5,000 food boxes a day**.

“The sheer number of people falling into our safety net requires that it be broadened, fortified and maintained,” said Goodman. “With our community’s generous support, we can ensure that nobody experiences hunger.”

Donations can be made through the Redwood Empire Food Bank’s website at refb.org. Anyone seeking food assistance can call the Redwood Empire Food Bank Food Connections Office at (707) 523-7903 or visit getfood.refb.org.

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About Redwood Empire Food Bank

The Redwood Empire Food Bank is the largest hunger-relief organization serving north coastal California from Sonoma County to the Oregon border. Since 1987, the Redwood Empire Food Bank has provided food and nourishment to those facing hunger—currently serving 82,000 children, families and seniors in Sonoma, Mendocino, Humboldt, Del Norte and Lake County. The Redwood Empire Food Bank collaborates with local and regional partners to obtain and distribute the equivalent of more than 40,000 meals every day. Through more than 200 of our own direct service distributions and partnerships with 170 other hunger-relief organizations, we form a network of over 450 weekly and monthly distribution sites serving all residents facing food insecurity.

Visit www.refb.org or call (707) 523-7900 to learn more.

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