



October 5, 2022

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact: Michelle Corson, 661-868-0288

Waste Hunger Not Food Works to Rescue Wholesome Food and Feed the Hungry Countywide

Every day 116,000 people in Kern County don't know where their next meal is coming from, and one in five children go to bed hungry every night. Ironically, thirty percent of all food produced in America is wasted and ends up in trashcans, and ultimately, in landfills.

Kern County also has some of the highest rates of obesity and mortality due to chronic health conditions in the state. In fact, 78% of Kern County adults are either overweight or obese and more Kern County residents die from diabetes than anywhere else in California. Because of these startling statistics, in early 2022, we issued a Call to Action to our residents, pleading "Let's Get Healthy, Kern!"

Kern County Public Health launched Waste Hunger Not Food (WHNF) in 2018 and oversees the transport of donated surplus food primarily from schools to distribution sites where the food is made available to residents in need. *"Our Waste Hunger Not Food program is another free resource available to our community to help address obesity and chronic disease in Kern County," says Brynn Carrigan, Director of Public Health. "We developed this program to help our neighbors who are hungry by rescuing and delivering healthy, fresh and wholesome food to churches and non-profit organizations."*

The Bakersfield City School District helped to pilot the program with just five schools participating and have expanded to 29 schools currently! *"Our fight against hunger seems like a long road ahead with no end in sight," says Eric Sabella, Nutrition Services Director with Bakersfield City School District. "Instead of questioning if we can see the end, we must ask ourselves if we can see what is right in front of us. The answer is most likely yes, so start with that first step. Waste Hunger, Not Food is that first step and I am extremely proud to be a part of such a great cause."*

Edison, Fairfax, Greenfield and Kern High School Districts are also donating food. There are a total of 45 school sites donating food in Bakersfield.

WHNF continues to grow and expand to outlying areas including Taft, Wasco and Ridgecrest as we strive to ensure our residents countywide have access to healthy and wholesome food. *"What I like about the WHNF program is how much of a difference we are making here in Taft," says Randy Rico, Director of Nutrition Services at Taft School District. "It's great to see school meals going back to the community, instead of in the trash. The students really want to help and they feel like they're giving back to their community and making a difference."*

Refrigerated vans are deployed daily to rescue food around Bakersfield. Drivers are participants in The Open Door Network's Job Development Program. They themselves have experienced hunger, oftentimes homelessness, and now are given an opportunity to be employed and part of a community-wide effort to feed the hungry. Drivers deliver donated food to community churches and non-profit organizations, who then distribute this food into the hands of those in need. The donations are healthy products like milk, juice, fruit, vegetables and other wholesome foods.

“Genesis 1:26 states that all men were made in the image of God and John 12:8 says you will always have the poor amongst you. Those poor could be our family, friends, strangers, seen or unseen, sleeping on the streets or those somewhere barely existing in a home. We can’t waste perfectly good food by discarding it. We serve all who will come and be blessed physically by gathering this nutritious food. We extend an invitation to nourish their spirit as well with The Word of God on Sunday. Whether they come worship with us or not; we continue to serve in this food ministry under the mindset of doing all things as to the glory of God as we assist our fellow man.”

-Angela Bostick, Cain Memorial A.M.E. Church

Waste Hunger Not Food has rescued more than 1,992,000 pounds of food since the program launch in 2018. Learn more by visiting www.wastehungerkerncounty.com.

###