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## Local holiday food bank programs begin

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With Halloween over and Thanksgiving fast approaching, the annual holiday food drive season has kicked off for many nonprofits along the Peninsula.

The Second Harvest Food Bank began its holiday drive Oct. 18. The goal is to raise \$13.2 million. Second Harvest has also set a goal to collect 2 million pounds of food during the campaign, which continues through January.

"Now that the recession is in the rearview mirror, many people think the need for food has gone down, but that couldn't be further from the truth," said Kathy Jackson, CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank, in a press release. "The recession pushed many of our neighbors into poverty and we haven't seen the kind of rebound in the job market that is needed to get people back on their feet. So it continues to be very hard times for the people we serve."

San Mateo's St. Vincent de Paul distributes food donations from groups such as Second Harvest Food Bank. Parishes from throughout the community also donate money to purchase food, said Abel Mejia, manager of St. Vincent de Paul's food program.

"That's the way we survive," Mejia said.

St. Vincent de Paul's Homeless Help Center, at 50 N. B St. will be serving Thanksgiving dinner Nov. 27, but will be closed on Thanksgiving. Food donations also come from Chipotle, Starbucks and other local vendors. The organization is not currently in need of volunteers, but those interested can still visit the St. Vincent de Paul website to look into volunteer opportunities, Mejia said.

Burlingame's CALL Primrose runs a yearly Fill-a-Box, Feed-a-Family program for Thanksgiving. One needs to sign up by Nov. 15 to receive instructions including a food packing list. Participants are asked to include a \$20 grocery store gift card in their donation boxes. CALL Primrose serves those been San Bruno and San Carlos.

"One of the best reasons to participate is that it's a good way for families to rally around their own community," said Mary Watt, executive director of CALL Primrose. "And realize there is hunger in our community."

On the high school level, San Mateo High School is conducting its annual holiday food drive Nov. 15-Dec. 2 to benefit Samaritan House in San Mateo and Second Harvest Food Bank. The students' goal this year will be to collect more than 250,000 pounds of food.

To participate in the CALL Primrose program, email [Contact@CALLPrimrose.org](mailto:Contact@CALLPrimrose.org). Canned foods or monetary donations can be brought to 506 N. Delaware St. in San Mateo, weekdays from 7:45 a.m.-3:15 p.m. for the San Mateo High School drive. Donations can also be made through at [shfb.org/donateonline](http://shfb.org/donateonline). St. Vincent de Paul takes monetary donations for food at [svdp-sanmateoco.org/donatemoney.html](http://svdp-sanmateoco.org/donatemoney.html).

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