

County Executive Parisi: Extends pandemic partnership linking local growers to food pantries

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Families struggling with basic needs will continue to have access to locally grown foods and produce, under an extended partnership between Dane County and Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin, County Executive Joe Parisi announced today. The county will award Second Harvest an additional \$2 million to keep purchasing and distributing local vegetables, meats, cheeses, and other goods to Dane County food pantries until the end of the year.

The County, Second Harvest, and agricultural partners came together early in the pandemic to create new markets for struggling growers while meeting increased demands for food as more families struggled with the economic pain of the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the first several months, this partnership purchased almost \$1.5 million in meat products, over \$850,000 worth of vegetables and fruit, and around a half million dollars' worth of milk, cheese, and butter – all goods that went straight to Dane County food pantries. An additional \$800,000 was used to buy and distribute non-perishable goods like canned vegetables, soups, and cereals.

“This collaborative exemplifies what I often refer to as ‘the Dane County Way,’” Parisi said. “By marshalling the very best in all of us, we are meeting two real needs – providing much needed nutritious meals for those struggling financially because of this pandemic and helping our local growers and farmers whose ability to market their goods was hurt by Covid-19.”

“This funding plays a vital role in our ability to serve thousands of families who are turning to the emergency food system for the first time as a result of the pandemic,” said Michelle Orge, President & CEO of Second Harvest. “But it’s also

playing an important role in keeping Dane County agriculture suppliers doing what they're good at, which is feeding our community. Together we're keeping our community strong on multiple fronts.”

To date, Dane County has awarded Second Harvest \$6 million in CARES Act funding for this partnership. A resolution authorizing the additional \$2 million, two-month extension will be introduced at tonight's meeting (9/17) of the Dane County Board of Supervisors.