

Dane County, Second Harvest: Extend emergency food pandemic response program to July, 2021

Posted on Wednesday, Dec 23, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Today, County Executive Joe Parisi announced Dane County will ink a \$5 million agreement with Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin to continue a program the County launched during the Covid-19 pandemic that links local growers with food pantries. The initial \$8 million in funding for this effort was set to expire at the end of the year but under a contract extension agreed to this week, that work will continue until July 31, 2021. The extension means Dane County food pantries will be able to take care of more families struggling to put food on the table over the harsh winter months ahead.

“The combination of this pandemic and a Wisconsin winter is daunting but thanks to our partnership with Second Harvest and Dane County’s growers, we are going to meet this challenge the way we have addressed other hardships brought about by this pandemic – bringing people together with practical solutions,” County Executive Joe Parisi said. “This partnership not only keeps locally raised produce, meats, cheese, and milk on the shelves of our food pantries it helps our local growers who like others are struggling economically due to Covid-19,” Parisi added.

Under the new agreement, Dane County will provide Second Harvest \$1 million per month in January, February, and March followed by \$500,000 monthly in April, May, June, and July. The program first launched in April of 2020 has helped create new markets for local agricultural producers while ensuring shelves at Dane County food pantries remained stocked with healthy, nutritious meals. To date, the county has allocated \$8 million to Second Harvest for this pandemic response initiative. Now in its ninth month of operation, more than 4,000 hours of service have been logged to help ensure those experiencing hardships during the COVID-19 pandemic do not go

hungry.

“The initial funds provided through the Dane County Executive’s office has been one of the critical reasons why Second Harvest has been able to provide millions more meals to those facing hunger in Dane County since the pandemic began,” said Michelle Orge, President and CEO of Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin. “This funding extension could not have come at a better time. Unfortunately, for our neighbors struggling to put food on their table, their struggles will continue for many months to come; this new round of funding is a key part of our overall strategy to meet that long-term need. We are incredibly grateful for the ongoing support from both the public and private sectors as we work to feed those in our community who are most vulnerable.”

As part of this partnership, County CARES Funds through November have been used to acquire the following foods:

- \$1,233,872 for cooler items, such as bread, butter, cheese, eggs, milk, and yogurt
- \$1,628,067 for dry items, like canned vegetables and tuna
- \$1,783,405 for frozen items, such as pork roasts, spare ribs, and pork chops
- \$1,671,135 for produce items, like apples, brussels sprouts, root vegetables, carrots, potatoes, and onions

In November alone, \$902,000 was spent on ordered food for the program. \$378,000—or 203,000 pounds—of produce was ordered, with \$212,000 sourced from Dane County farms. The distribution of produce was completed through a combination of direct drops to Dane County agencies and volunteers packing 9,420 boxes at Second Harvest’s Stoughton facility. In addition to the produce boxes, 9,440 cooler boxes were packed, as well as 5,718 dry boxes.

Through this effort, Dane County has been able to link Second Harvest with Dane County Dairy and Pork Producers, Dane County Farmers’ Market, and Fairshare CSA Coalition so more products can be bought directly, benefiting local farmers and growers regardless of whether they are pork producers, milk cows, or grow fresh produce. This partnership has brought producers and consumers together to improve sales for farmers and resupplied dwindling cupboards of area food banks during the pandemic.

This agreement between Dane County and Second Harvest will be reviewed by the Dane County Board after the holidays and is expected to be approved in the coming weeks.