



Willy Elliott-McCrea Announces Retirement

After 43 years of serving the County of Santa Cruz, the past 33 of them as the executive director and CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank in Watsonville, our beloved Willy Elliott-McCrea has announced his retirement.

One of Santa Cruz County's most prominent nonprofit leaders, Willy said he will be retiring in the summer of 2022, just in time to mark the organization's 50th birthday.

Willy served our community as the Food Bank's leader, and in that time has made many significant contributions. In 1989, during the Loma Prieta Earthquake, Second Harvest was ground zero for disaster relief (epicenter was five miles from the warehouse) – scaling services six-fold for the first month and doubled ever after. This was just one of the many natural disasters to strike our community, which also included floods, fires and a global pandemic. Willy was able to use his knowledge and experience to help the residents of Santa Cruz County. Over the years, Willy and his team built an extraordinarily strong reputation and network of partners from every sector of the community to ensure food was available where it was needed. Under his leadership, Second Harvest has consistently ranked in the top two percent of healthiest food banks in America, with over 60% of food distributed being fresh fruits and vegetables. Willy was Founding President of California Association of Food Banks from 1995-98 and shaped the future of California Food Banks.

More recently, Willy led the Food Bank through COVID and devastating fires. His experience led him to reach out to Congressman Panetta as soon as shelter-in-place was ordered, prompting Congress and the Governor to deploy the National Guard across California food banks to ensure continued distribution throughout the state. Since the start of the pandemic, Second Harvest has seen need in the community double. Second Harvest not only worked with the National Guard but also County Emergency Services, Twin Lakes Church, County Fairgrounds, Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, Community Foundation, local school districts and many others to provide the community with fresh, healthy food. The food bank continues distributing 65% more food as Santa Cruz County slowly recovers from the economic devastation of the pandemic and fires.

The Second Harvest Board of Trustees recognizes the unique responsibility and opportunity before them to engage in a comprehensive and thoughtful succession planning process. Second Harvest Food Bank looks forward to attracting a new CEO to build on Willy's legacy.

About Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County



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Founded in 1972, Second Harvest Food Bank was the first food bank in California and the second in the nation. Its mission is working together to end hunger through healthy food, education and leadership. Its network of 150 local agencies and programs feeds 75,000 people in Santa Cruz County every month. Every dollar donated provides four healthy meals. Second Harvest has a four-star rating from Charity Navigator in recognition of its effective stewardship. www.thefoodbank.org