

AMERICA'S SECOND HARVEST

AMERICA'S Second Harvest is the nation's largest domestic hunger relief organization. Through a network of over 200 food banks and food-rescue programs, we provide emergency food assistance to more than 23 million hungry Americans each year, eight million of whom are children.

Last year, America's Second Harvest distributed 1.7 billion pounds of food to needy Americans, serving all 50 states and Puerto Rico. Our goal is to end hunger in America.

The History of America's Second Harvest

The food bank concept began in the late 1960s in Phoenix, Arizona. John Van Hengel, a retired businessman, volunteered at a local soup kitchen. He solicited donations of food products that might otherwise go to waste, and soon was generating more food than the soup kitchen could handle. He decided to set up a warehouse where he could store the donated products and distribute them to charities feeding needy people in Phoenix. The first food bank was then established.

In the early 1970s, several other food banks started in various cities as people learned of the food bank concept and copied it in their communities. In 1976, the federal government gave Van Hengel's food bank a grant to assist in developing food banks throughout the nation. The impetus for growth had been increased by the passage of the 1976 Tax Reform Act, which made it more financially advantageous for companies to donate their products.

By 1979, this federally funded development effort had expanded to include solicitation of food donations and was incorporated formally as America's Second Harvest. America's Second Harvest soon became the clearinghouse for large donations from national corporations. The organization developed food bank standards for storage capacity, quality control and management.

By 1982, federal funding was discontinued. America's Second Harvest increased its pursuit of alternative sources of financial support. In 1984, the America's Second Harvest national office was moved to Chicago, Illinois. The organization continued to grow in terms of the number of [food banks](#) and the volume of donated food. The concept and the practice of food banking had been accepted by both the food industry and local social service providers feeding hungry Americans.

With many major cities having food banks by the mid 1980's, network expansion slowed and America's Second Harvest's focus shifted to improving existing programs. Professionalism and



efficiency of food bank operations improved dramatically, resulting in a much greater amount of product being distributed by the network.

In 1999, the name of the organization was officially changed to America's Second Harvest with a new focused goal on ending hunger in America. In March of 2000, America's Second Harvest merged efforts with Foodchain - producing the most comprehensive and efficient charitable food distribution organization in the country.

Today, America's Second Harvest is the nation's largest charitable hunger-relief organization addressing the problem of domestic hunger by distributing one billion pounds of donated food and grocery products annually. With a national network of over 200 [affiliated food banks and food-rescue programs](#) throughout all 50 states and Puerto Rico, America's Second Harvest serves approximately 50,000 local charitable hunger-relief agencies, including food pantries, soup kitchens, women's shelters, and [Kids Cafes](#) . America's Second Harvest provides emergency food assistance to more than 23 million hungry Americans, including eight million children and four million seniors, each year.

WHO IS HUNGRY IN AMERICA?

Despite a thriving economy in recent years and reports of welfare reform success stories, 23.3 million Americans sought emergency food assistance from America's Second Harvest in 2001. The USDA recently reported that during the period 1996-1998, some 10 million U.S. households did not have access to enough food to meet their basic needs.

For many Americans, wages have simply not risen enough in the last years to cover the increased cost of living, and food has become an unaffordable luxury. Of those people seeking emergency food relief, more than one-third (36%) had to choose between buying food or paying for housing. Although the prevalence of hunger varies regionally, America's Second Harvest has found through its national [Hunger Study](#) that a great number of the [people we serve](#) are seniors and a greater number still are under the age of 18. These findings reflect the diversity of who is hungry in America today.

Childhood Hunger

As a nation, we have a special responsibility to vulnerable populations, including children. Children are in special need of proper nutrition to help them avoid the consequences undernutrition can have on their economic security as adults.

In November of 2001, America's Second Harvest released its third and most comprehensive study of hunger in the United States: *Hunger in America 2001* . The following are some key findings of the study regarding children our country:



- Over 9 million children are the recipients of food from either a pantry, kitchen or shelter within the network of America's Second Harvest.
- Among all members of client households, 9.1% of pantry recipients are ages 0 to 5; 7.7% are shelter clients.
- 75.7% of all client households with children under the age of 18 are food insecure; an estimated 2.6 million households.
- Among all members of client households, 18.4% of kitchen clients stated that their child/children had skipped meals within the last 12 months because there wasn't enough money for food.
- 22.2% of shelter clients indicated that their child/children was/were hungry at least once during the previous 12 months but couldn't afford more food.

26.3% of all client households stated that their child/children were sometimes or often not eating enough during the previous 12 months because they just couldn't afford enough food; an estimated 0.9 million households.

- Among all client households with at least one child under the age of 18, 63.2% utilize the school lunch program and 49.9% the school breakfast program.
- 52.5% of all client households with at least one child age 0 to 5 are enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC); an increase from 31% in 1997.
- 61.9% of agencies run feeding programs that target children only: Kids Cafes, youth after-school programs, child day care programs, and summer camps for low-income clients.
- 46.2% of pantry programs indicated there are "many more children in the summer," while 68.2% of kitchen programs indicated an increase during the same time of year.

Be A Volunteer

- Help tutor children who come to the local [Kids Cafe](#) for a hot meal.



- Help repackage donated food for use at food pantries and emergency shelters.
- Bring youth groups to the food bank to help sort salvaged food. This can be a great way to teach kids about how their own volunteer work can strengthen their community.
- Work with businesses in the community to encourage them to donate to the food bank. As a customer your efforts are particularly meaningful and persuasive.
- Help prepare and serve food at a local community feeding center or [Kids Cafe](#) .
- Help transport food to charitable agencies and the hungry people who use their services.
- Share your skills with people coming to feeding centers. In the hours between school and dinner, teach a child how to use a computer or how to do CPR.

