



News Release

CONTACT: Jared Webley
Public Policy and Communications Manager
Office: (509) 477-2479
Cell: (509) 960-1082
jcwebley@spokanecounty.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Spokane County Provides Update on Results of CARES Funding Allocated to Food Insecurity Needs

To view the March 9, 2021 Spokane County CARES Act Food Insecurity Presentation to the Board of Spokane County Commissioners, Click [Here](#).

SPOKANE COUNTY, March 10, 2021 – During the Summer of 2020, the Spokane County Board of County Commissioners allocated a total of \$10,115,531 from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to address food purchase, packaging materials, equipment, fuel and third-party freight to transport donated food, and cost of drivers for additional food deliveries to pantries.

Contracts to administer the efforts to provide food to the community were approved with Second Harvest, Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington, Women and Children's Free Restaurant, Inland Northwest Farmers Market Association, and Special Mobility Services.

From June of 2020 to January of 2021, over 6,250,000 pounds of food was distributed by or for over 100 community partner organizations throughout Spokane County, representing over a 60% increase in total food distribution from 2nd Harvest Food Bank to the County from 2019 – 2020. Efforts were made to maximize the impact locally by using over \$600,000 to purchase meals and food from local restaurants and farms. Inland Northwest Farmers Market Association, supporting an average of 22 local farms every week, facilitated the distribution of 9,000 food boxes, representing 227,000 pounds of farm fresh, local produce, eggs, dairy and protein to county residents in a 9 week period.

Efforts such as the work being done by Women and Children's Free Restaurant to increase their services to the community ten-fold from 2019 to 2020, serving over 1,000,000 meals, will be critical to continue fulfilling the future need. Recent data from Feeding America shows Spokane County's food insecure rates increased in 2020 for the general public from 13% to 17.3% and for children from 19.5% to 27.9%. A large percentage of the growth is from those seeking assistance for the first time. Due to job loss, 2 in 5 women seeking food assistance are first time clients, according to Lisa Diffley, Executive Director of Women and Children's Free Restaurant.

As needs increased, barriers to access became apparent. Delivery and drive through models of service were enhanced to better serve those unable to visit traditional distribution sites. Special Mobility Services utilized the "One Click-One Call" pilot program to reach over 6700 individuals requesting delivery, using the opportunity to connect recipients to additional community services. **(Continued)**

Spokane County CARES Act for Food Insecurity (Continued)

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Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington, with CARES Act funds partially funding the program and through their partnership with Greater Spokane County Meals on Wheels Spokane, has provided over 57,000 meals to seniors in rural areas of the county with vouchers to purchase meals at local restaurants.

Chair of the Spokane County Board of Commissioners, Josh Kerns stated, “Unfortunately, the Pandemic led to a dramatic increase in food insecurity. The funding we allocated to these partners to provide food assistance was a very good use of CARES dollars. We are lucky to have organizations like these in our community who look out for those in need and offer a helping hand.”

Jason Clark, President and CEO of Second Harvest. Stated, “As the food bank for food banks, our core work is to procure and provide food to our partners, including food pantries, meal sites and schools. The County’s investment in providing food for our friends and neighbors in Spokane County has been incredible. We were able to buy more than 200 truckloads, an estimated 6 million pounds, of nourishing food. We're truly grateful.”

John Beck, Business Administration Director for Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington, shared, “We are thankful to Greater Spokane County Meals on Wheels for utilizing their Spokane County CARES funding to expand the Diner’s Choice program. Seniors, those especially hard hit by the pandemic, needed nutritious meals delivered to their doorstep. The meals were purchased at nearby restaurants in an effort to further support our struggling local businesses and is still serving seniors and restaurants in rural portions of Spokane County.”

About Spokane County

Spokane County government serves over half a million citizens and 13 municipal jurisdictions, making it the fourth-largest county in the State of Washington. For more information, visit www.spokanecounty.org, like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).