



## Food Rescue Network Links Those With Excess Food to Those in Need

By Julia Blanton for Community Environmental Council | August 11, 2018 | 6:21 a.m.

The Community Environmental Council (CEC) has launched Santa Barbara County Food Rescue, a collaborative food recovery network that builds relationships in the county between donors who have excess food and charitable organizations.

The latest of CEC's efforts to build a more climate-resilient Central Coast, SBC Food Rescue helps alleviate local food insecurity while keeping good food out of the landfill.

"When food is sent to the landfill, it decomposes and produces methane — a greenhouse gas that is 21 times more potent than carbon dioxide," said Sigrid Wright, CEO/executive director of CEC.

Noting that about 40 percent of food produced in the U.S. is never eaten and nearly 50 percent of low-income households in Santa Barbara County deal with issues of food insecurity, Wright said, "It is unconscionable that we are throwing away good, healthy food."

SBC Food Rescue addresses these concerns by redirecting excess, nutritious food from places like restaurants, hotels and supermarkets to charitable organizations serving food insecure populations.

The program seeks to fill in the gaps of current infrastructure, targeting food the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County and similar organizations cannot capture.

This ensures the natural resources used to produce that food are not wasted, more people have access to food, and less methane is produced in the landfill.

The first pilot partnership, between Chumash Casino and Buellton Senior Center, has been steadily sending some 500 pounds of food per month to seniors.

Another partnership recently formed between Pure Joy Catering and Sarah House, a home that provides end-of-life care for low-income individuals, with about 78 pounds of food donated in the first month.

"Pick up was easy, food was delicious and the folks around the table were happy knowing this came from a well-known catering company," said Paloma Espino, Sarah House manager.

"For the staff, it was wonderful to have the extra time to do the many things that keep us busy in this home and not have to spend a lot of time in the kitchen since we knew our dinner was taken care of," she said.

Ongoing donor relationships are at the heart of SBC Food Rescue, but the network can also support one-time donations, as Devin Scott of Planned Parenthood said:

"We hosted a meeting of our statewide affiliates in July. We ended up having food left over from the lunch catered by Lucky Penny. I remembered that Susan Case (of Social Venture Partners) had talked to my wife (a chef at Savoir Fare Catering) about this new program for donating leftover food, so I gave a call. A short time later Sarah House was driving away with a car full of food."

SBC Food Rescue, which operates with support from private, public and nonprofit sectors, emerged out of a series of community roundtables held by CEC over the past three years, including work tied to the Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan.

These discussions had a spin-off effect of opening up conversations and potential partnerships between long-established organizations.

Local governments, including the city of Santa Barbara and Santa Barbara County, encourage SBC Food Rescue efforts. In particular, the Public Health Department's Division of Environmental Health Services (EHS) is an advocate.

Kendra Wise, EHS supervising environmental health specialist, sees the program as a "triple win: we feed our hungry neighbors, we lessen the burden on our landfills, and we help reduce the production of gases that contribute to global climate change."

"Donating wholesome food for distribution by charitable organizations is legal and California state law has protections in place for businesses who donate," Wise said.

"EHS encourages businesses to donate wholesome foods to charitable organizations, and we are happy to work with both donor and receiving organizations to make sure that the donation process is safe and efficient," she said.

Social Venture Partners Santa Barbara — comprised of donors looking to realize greater impact with their giving — supported the network's launch with funding and community connections.

Former Deckers COO Zohar Ziv, who is among prominent community figures engaged in Social Venture Partners, said, "We are very excited to be partnering with CEC on a food recovery program that helps our hungry neighbors and reduces needless waste.

"In particular, we look forward to expanding this project to include more donors and recipient agencies throughout Santa Barbara County."

SBC Food Rescue is working to build its membership and create a vibrant county network. Donor organizations can include restaurants, hotels, caterers, supermarkets, or other facilities that prepare large amounts of food on a regular basis.

Donors who have excess food, charitable organizations that feed hungry people, and groups that transport food are all encouraged to sign up at [SBCFoodRescue.org](http://SBCFoodRescue.org) (<http://SBCFoodRescue.org>).

For questions, visit the website or contact Food Rescue Program Coordinator Julia Blanton at [sbcfoodrescue@cecmail.org](mailto:sbcfoodrescue@cecmail.org).

— *Julia Blanton for Community Environmental Council.*

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