



Partner Agencies Come Together for Food Security on Marin Food Day

October 24 reinstated as Marin Food Day with Food Security & Food Justice programs year-round

SAN RAFAEL, Calif., October 21, 2021— Bringing together over 150 countries in October, the United Nations honors World Food Day to bring awareness to food insecurity, hunger, and poverty. The international holiday also reminds people that while some have the resources they need; many others are still without sufficient food and nutrients each day.

Did you know that Marin has its own Food Day? Marin Food Day is October 24th, and it first took place in 2015 as an effort by the Marin Food Policy Council and the Marin County Board of Supervisors to raise awareness and gather support for increased food security. Racial and economic inequities, which were exacerbated by COVID-19, continue to drive food insecurity in the county. Even before the pandemic, hunger and malnourishment were realities for too many due to the high cost of living here.

“We are grateful to our partners for bringing attention and support to our efforts to end food insecurity in our communities,” said Tanis Crosby, Executive Director of the San Francisco-Marín Food Bank. “Since the pandemic began, we have seen nearly twice as many families turn to us. The need persists as we know many of our participants have yet to recover – there is no vaccine for hunger.”

Additionally, based on the USDA’s Food Access Research Atlas, many Marin families live in food deserts—low-income census tracts where a significant share of residents are more than one mile from a supermarket due to systemic inequities. These families are left with few options aside from highly processed foods available at convenience stores, and lack access to fresh produce that is widely available in more well-resourced neighborhoods.

“The Marin County HEAL Collaborative is working to promote greater food equity through community-driven solutions that support a local food economy.” Says Ryan Thayer, Nutrition Wellness Program

Manager in Marin County Department of Health and Human Services, “Covid-19 and racial inequities have heightened vulnerabilities within our global food supply and have shown the need to cultivate local and resilient food systems. We need to strengthen our community food system by centering the leadership within communities of color and supporting their right for self-determination.”

Inequitable food access in Marin County is most prevalent within communities of color in Marin City, the Canal, Novato, and West Marin's coastal communities due to longstanding systemic racism.

“The Agricultural Institute of Marin works year-round to facilitate local access to healthy foods that are nutritious, culturally-relevant, and grown within the region,” said Andy Naja-Riese, Agricultural Institute of Marin’s CEO. “On Marin Food Day and every day, we celebrate the tireless work of local farmers—especially producers of color, women, immigrants, LGBTQ+ folks, and military veterans—who feed our communities in ways that are environmentally-beneficial and socially just.”

It may be shocking to some to learn that even in Marin, one of the nation's wealthiest counties, about 1 out of every 5 residents (and 1 out of every 3 seniors) is food insecure. Some people actually face a difficult choice between paying rent, putting food on the table, or filling their car’s gas tank during the month. But across the county, people are working to ensure that everyone has access to healthy food. No one should ever go hungry.

Community Action Marin, along with key partners in the county’s food support system, including the County of Marin Healthy Eating Active Living initiative, Agricultural Institute of Marin, Marin Food Policy Council, and SF-Marin Food Bank, are ready for an end to food insecurity.

“Community Action Marin’s efforts in support of healthy, good food for all go beyond this one day,” notes Community Action Marin CEO, Chandra Alexandre. “The agency’s Food Justice team supports well-being across generations through its programs including emergency food boxes, and fresh, organic meals in our Head Start and high-quality preschools for over 550 children, in addition to community food distribution that includes produce from our Production Farm.”

Community Action Marin’s early childhood educators also teach children about healthy eating and support the agency’s learnings gardens and production farms filled with nutritious, healthy food. The agency’s Central Kitchen offers space and training for those seeking a food industry career or food entrepreneurship.

To increase awareness of the often-invisible food insecurity issues within the county, Community Action Marin is championing an awareness campaign to lift up culture and connection around food on Thanksgiving, with awareness of the challenges the holiday surfaces for Native Americans and First Nations peoples.

#FiveMinutesforFood recognizes the opportunity as a natural follow-up campaign to Marin Food Day that invites all Marin County residents to reflect on the meaning and importance of healthy, nutritious, and good food for all that centers equity and justice. We are seeking to inspire people to get involved by supporting efforts to increase access to food and food justice for all in our shared community.

ABOUT COMMUNITY ACTION MARIN: Community Action Marin is the largest nonprofit social services provider in the county, working for over 50 years to alleviate the causes and consequences of poverty. The agency fosters self-sufficiency and serves over 20,000 individuals annually across program sites and

through mobile outreach to ensure the unhoused are safe and connected. The agency's service areas include Children & Family Services, Safety Net, Economic Opportunity & Workforce Development, Mental Health, Food Justice, and Equity Initiatives. Learn more: www.camarin.org/food-justice and be on the lookout for a video about food in Marin in early November, complete with discussion guide for the holidays. www.camarin.org

ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO-MARIN FOOD BANK: San Francisco-Marín Food Bank's mission is to end hunger in San Francisco and Marin. Before the pandemic, one in five neighbors was at risk of hunger. We address hunger head-on – from our pantry network and home-delivered groceries to CalFresh enrollment, and we work in many ways to nourish and serve neighbors in need. Every week, over 50,000 households count on us for food assistance. Nearly 60 percent of what we distribute is fresh fruits and vegetables. Learn more at <https://www.sfmfoodbank.org/>.

ABOUT THE MARIN COUNTY HEAL COLLABORATIVE: The Marin County HEAL Collaborative is a multi-sector initiative working to promote greater food equity within Marin County. Our approach is to support communities by co-creating solutions that promote community empowerment through community food systems. Currently, the Collaborative is prioritizing the needs of residents living in the Canal, Marin City and West Marin through the formation of Community Action Teams. The HEAL Collaborative is provided back-bone support by the Nutrition & Wellness Program and welcomes community participation. Learn more: www.marinheal.org

ABOUT THE AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE OF MARIN: The Agricultural Institute of Marin (AIM) is an educational 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization headquartered in San Rafael, California. AIM's mission is to educate, inspire, and connect communities, responsible farmers, and producers as part of a healthy, earth-friendly, equitable local and regional food system. AIM serves 380+ farmers, food purveyors, and artisans from 43 California counties who participate in AIM's nine Certified Farmers Markets in the cities of Hayward, Newark, Oakland, Point Reyes, San Rafael, and San Francisco. AIM provides education and training programs, operates a farm audit program, runs a mobile market for older adults and underserved communities, curates a multi-farm produce box program, and implements food access and policy initiatives to create a healthier, equitable food system across the San Francisco Bay Area. Learn more: www.agriculturalinstitute.org

ABOUT THE MARIN FOOD POLICY COUNCIL: The Marin Food Policy Council was founded to address issues connected to food production, access, distribution, and nutritional health and brings together local food system stakeholders in a roundtable format that allows for information exchange, resource identification, and prioritization of needs. Together, the Council examines the health, sustainability, and quality of life of Marin residents through the lens of community food security and develops targeted policies and practical solutions based on a systems approach to solving food access issues. Learn more at <https://ucanr.edu/sites/MarinFoodPolicyCouncil/>.

###

Contact: Margot Segal, Director of Marketing, Community Action Marin - msegal@camarin.org

Editor's note: Additional high-resolution images, graphics available on request.