



SLO **FOOD BANK**

County Partnership for Hunger Relief

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - MARCH 18, 2021

SLO Food Bank, Wilshire Community Services and Ride-On Transportation Collaborate to Deliver Groceries to Homebound Seniors

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY - A Feeding America grant is making it possible for three local social service organizations to work together to deliver free, weekly groceries to SLO County's most isolated community members.

The SLO Food Bank, Wilshire Community Services, and Ride-On Transportation will collaborate to meet the challenging needs of seniors who struggle to access food because of transportation and financial barriers. This program, which will expand routes countywide this year, will provide weekly grocery deliveries-including shelf-stable foods, fresh produce and proteins--directly to the homes of low income, homebound seniors. Income is one barrier, and another is access. These older adults are typically homebound and isolated, with few transportation options or support systems, especially with safety concerns regarding COVID-19.

"Our goal is to decrease food insecurity while increasing nutrition and health for homebound seniors in our community. We are thrilled with this partnership, which utilizes the strengths of each agency to meet this community need," says Andrea Keisler, Community Programs Director at the SLO Food Bank.

While the SLO Food Bank community is comprised of an extensive network of agency partners and direct distributions, most services require participants to visit a specific pantry, meal site, or food distribution to pick up food. This may be a barrier for those in the community who lack reliable access to transportation or who have mobility issues. The global pandemic and stay-at-home orders have also reinforced the need for a delivery model for our most isolated community members.

Partnering with Wilshire Community Services is a natural fit, as Wilshire currently has the infrastructure to serve older adults in San Luis Obispo County in home, including services like counseling, transportation, mental health support and friendly visits. Wilshire's Jen Kaplan shares, "Throughout the COVID pandemic, we've gotten more calls from older adults that are struggling with food insecurity; this partnership is a great way to make sure seniors are getting their basic food and safety needs met." While the SLO Food Bank operates over 60 neighborhood distributions across the County per month, a plan to add additional routes for home delivery without extra staff or fleet

Let's Feed SLO County. Together.

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assets became daunting. For this reason, partnering with Ride-On Transportation for the logistical leg of this program is a smart choice.

Wilshire Community Services will provide intake and case management, SLO Food Bank will procure, store and pack groceries, and Ride-On Transportation will deliver groceries directly to homes on a weekly basis. By the end of the year, we anticipate that 300 households per week will benefit from this program.

To find out if you or someone you know qualifies for this program, please contact Jennifer Kaplan at Wilshire Community Services jkaplan@wilshirehcs.org or 805-547-7025 ext. 2216.

About the SLO Food Bank: The SLO Food Bank is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, serving all of San Luis Obispo County through its direct food programs and network of agency partners. The SLO Food Bank's mission is to alleviate hunger in San Luis Obispo County and build a healthier community. The SLO Food Bank distributes an average of 4 million pounds of food per year to help our neighbors struggling with hunger. Nearly half of the distributed food is fresh produce, including produce harvested locally by the GleanSLO program. To learn more about the work done by the SLO Food Bank throughout San Luis Obispo County, please visit www.slofoodbank.org.

About Wilshire Community Services: Wilshire Community Services is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization created to meet a series of needs to build a safe and supportive community for the older adult population of San Luis Obispo County. Created by the community, for the community, our team of dedicated clinicians, staff and volunteers provide mental health support, home counseling, transportation, friendly visits and conflict resolution services to individuals navigating the complexities of aging. Wilshire Community Services is an agency of Wilshire Health and Community Services, which includes clinical and social-emotional support services through Wilshire Hospice and Wilshire Home Health.

About Ride-On Transportation: Ride-On Transportation is part of United Cerebral Palsy of San Luis Obispo County. Ride-On's mission is to provide safe and efficient transportation for social service agencies and their members. Ride-On was established in 1993 to provide transportation for people with disabilities, seniors, veterans, agricultural workers, riders with mental challenges and low-income riders. Ride-On operates 102 vans and buses with 48 drivers serving San Luis Obispo County and into the Santa Maria area. Learn more about Ride-On at ride-on.org or call (805) 541-8747.

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