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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Redwood Empire Food Bank reopens kitchen to prepare dinners for local shelter

SANTA ROSA, CA (January 4, 2022) – The Redwood Empire Food Bank has reopened its community kitchen in order to provide 560 meals to residents at Catholic Charities’ Sam Jones Hall (SJH) Homeless Shelter on Finley Avenue in Santa Rosa.

SJH is a space for the community to come together to address the homelessness crisis and provides housing-focused services, meals, and access to healthcare for people in need.

“We are incredibly grateful for our ongoing partnership with the Redwood Empire Food Bank, a primary provider of food to our weekly distributions in Sonoma and Lake Counties. Now, we have an exciting new opportunity to bolster our shelter’s meal program with the food bank’s invaluable expertise even as the pandemic lingers on,” says Catholic Charities Chief Program Officer, Jennielynn Holmes.

“As soon as we found out about this critical opportunity to provide meals, we knew we had to jump in and help,” said Redwood Empire Food Bank Chef, Don Nolan.

The Redwood Empire Food Bank, which pre-pandemic would host volunteers daily to prepare meals for seniors in need, is well-equipped for this task. Chef Nolan immediately went to work getting a small number of volunteers on board and planning out the menus for four days of dinner service.

“It’s nice to be back in the kitchen,” added Nolan, after an almost two-year hiatus caused by health and safety measures related to the pandemic.

With the temporary closing of the Redwood Empire Food Bank kitchen, Nolan’s duties shifted to coordinating the preparation of food boxes with volunteers as the need for food surged to more than double what it was pre-pandemic.

“Volunteers are the lifeline of all of our initiatives. The Kitchen Collective program was a popular one and many of our regular volunteers ask when they’ll be able to come back,” said Marketing Manager, Rachelle Mesheau.

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The Redwood Empire Food Bank is currently working on plans to reopen the kitchen full-time later this year.

If you are interested in helping Catholic Charities or the Redwood Empire Food Bank, both are always in need of donations and volunteers.

Support Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa: srcharities.org

Support the Redwood Empire Food Bank: refb.org

About Catholic Charities:

Inspired by the love and teachings of Christ, Catholic Charities serves and advocates for vulnerable people of all cultures and beliefs, prioritizing those experiencing poverty.

With the goal of eliminating poverty, Catholic Charities provides tools to vulnerable community members that help them find and keep housing, achieve financial stability, or move their immigration journey forward. The agency serves people of all cultures and beliefs, drawing on specialized training and often lived experience to find lasting solutions that help clients meet their goals.

About the Redwood Empire Food Bank:

The Redwood Empire Food Bank is the largest hunger-relief organization serving Northern California. Since 1987, the Redwood Empire Food Bank has provided food and nourishment to those facing hunger—serving more than 100,000 children, families and seniors in Sonoma, Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte Counties. With over 300 direct service distributions, and 150 partnerships with other hunger-relief organizations, all residents facing food insecurity have access to more than 450 weekly and monthly distribution sites across the five counties.