



Immediate Release

Foodbank of Santa Barbara County

CONTACT:

Kerry Main Aller
Community Relations Manager
937-3422 x106
450-3293 mobile
kaller@foodbanksbc.org

Foodbank Celebrates National AG Day and the Ag Community's Generosity with Secretary A.G. Kawamura from the California Department of Food and Agriculture

Santa Maria, CA - The Foodbank of Santa Barbara County is holding its 4th Annual Agricultural Appreciation BBQ, on National AG Day, Friday, March 20, 2009, with special guest speaker A.G. Kawamura, Secretary of California Department of Food and Agriculture.

Last year alone the Foodbank distributed 8 million pounds of food, including 2 million pounds of produce of which 900,000 was donated by the farmers of Santa Barbara County. This spring, the Foodbank is also celebrating the third anniversary of our *Produce Initiative*. The Foodbank launched the initiative to accept and distribute millions of additional pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to those who need it most. In only two years, the Foodbank has more than doubled the amount of fresh produce that we distribute annually.

“We are very grateful for Secretary Kawamura’s visit to help us celebrate the wonderful generosity of our farmers and ranchers,” says Executive Director Erik Talkin. “He understands food banking and the vital role the agricultural community plays in the amount of produce we can distribute. This year, it is more important than ever with the struggling economy.”

Secretary Kawamura is widely known for his passion for education and for his commitment to the issues of hunger and nutrition. As president of Orange County Harvest, a non-profit promoting agricultural partnerships with organizations combating hunger, he arranged for thousands of volunteers to harvest and glean over a million pounds of produce for area food banks. His nationally recognized urban projects, such as the 7-acre Common Ground project in San Juan Capistrano and 4-acre Incredible Edible Park in Irvine, are agricultural paradigms linking nutritional education and interaction with local schools and food banks.

Governor Schwarzenegger appointed A.G. Kawamura as secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture in November 2003. Secretary Kawamura is a produce grower and shipper from Orange County, where his family grows strawberries, green beans and other specialty crops.

Volunteering their generous donation of time to help at the event is the California Women for Agriculture!

Who: Foodbank of Santa Barbara County
A. G. Kawamura, Secretary of California Department of Food and Agriculture
Sue Sigler, Executive Director of Californian Association for Food Banks

What: 4th Annual Ag Appreciation BBQ
National Ag Day

When: Friday March 20, 2009
11:30am to 1:00 pm

Where: 490 W. Foster Rd.
Santa Maria, CA 93455

Why: To celebrate and thank the agricultural industry for their generous support of the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County!

The Foodbank, celebrating 26 years of moving people from hunger to harvest, provides a vital link between the multi-faceted food industry and people in need of food. With warehouses in Santa Barbara and Santa Maria the Foodbank serves over 220 social service organizations and churches. More than 43 percent of those served are youths under the age of 18. In 2008, the Foodbank distributed nearly 8 million pounds of food of which more than 2 million pounds was fresh produce to more than 125,000 people in need throughout Santa Barbara County. The Foodbank is committed to making fresh fruits and vegetables available to those in need as the best means of combating poverty-related health issues like diabetes and chronic overweight.

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