



June 7-11, 2023
Everyone Come Celebrate

35th District Agricultural Association



Donate Food and Get into the Merced County Fair for FREE! MERCOCredit Union Returns as Partner to Help Combat Hunger in Merced County

As the annual Merced County Fair presented by Valley Children's Healthcare returns, so does its annual food drive benefitting the Merced County Food Bank and their effort to combat hunger in the community. This year's "Feed Our Community" Early Food Drive is happening NOW until June 7th at the Atwater and Merced MERCOCredit Union locations. Anyone who goes to either location and donates five cans of food will get a FREE admission ticket good for Opening Day of the 2023 Merced County Fair – Wednesday, June 7th!

"The continued purpose of our food drive is to bring the community together — our participants and partners — to build awareness of food insecurity in our region and give to help one another! Bonus is you can also get a free ticket to Opening Day of the Fair!" said Teresa Burrola, CEO of the Merced County Fair. "The need for food continues to be great in our community so please, head to MERCOCredit Union to donate today! Also, spread the word...together, we can have a great impact on our community and help feed those in the most need."

The Merced County Fair first started holding food drives in partnership with the Merced County Food Bank in 2015. Since then, nearly 27,000 lbs. of food has been collected and distributed out into the community by the Merced County Food Bank. That has helped feed nearly 20,918 people. In 2022, a total of 2,931 lbs. of food was collected to help fight hunger in Merced County.

According to recent census data, 21.9% of County residents and 26.6% of Merced city residents live in poverty. Merced County Food Bank's 2021 report listed Merced County's overall food insecurity rate at 15.5%, higher than the state average of 13.9%. Among the most vulnerable groups that are food insecure are individuals 18 years of age and younger, where the overall food insecurity rate was a staggering 27.3%. This means out of the roughly 80,000 teenagers and children in Merced County, more than 21,870 of them have no reliable access to sufficient food. The COVID-19 pandemic further impacted the food insecurity in the region. In April 2020, the Merced County Food Bank was serving approximately 300 people a day and by September 2020 that number had risen to 1,000–1,200 a day.

"Unfortunately, the need for food assistance in our community continues to grow," said Bill Gibbs, executive director at Merced County Food Bank. "Partnerships and food drives like this one with the Merced County Fair are essential for us to continue to try and feed the growing need. We are grateful for their continued partnership and look forward to a successful food drive effort this year with the support of the community."

About Merced County Food Bank:

The Merced County Food Bank (MCFB) is a private non-profit organization that serves Merced and Mariposa Counties. Its mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of residents affected by hunger through the acquisition, storage and distribution of nutritious food. Through its network of food assistance partners and direct food distributions programs, the MCFB serves nearly 17,000 people per month. MCFB collects food from hundreds of resources, which with the help of 3,300 volunteers annually is then distributed through a network of more than 100 partner agencies. Since 2004, MCFB has distributed more than 53 million pounds of food. For more information visit <https://mmcfb.org>.