

Northern district Eat Smart Idaho creates community partnerships for hunger relief

AT A GLANCE

Family and consumer sciences Extension educator organizes hunger relief for Kootenai County families in need with strong partnerships with Second Harvest and the Coeur d'Alene School District.

The Situation

In Kootenai County, the need for emergency food assistance continues to grow as more families are concerned about food insecurity. Second Harvest plays a vital role in addressing this need through its Mobile Market program, which delivers healthy food directly to families in their local communities. Mobile markets travel throughout the Inland Northwest, providing groceries at no cost to children, seniors and families who are struggling to access enough food. These efforts have been especially important given the increasing number of families seeking emergency food in Kootenai County with the uncertainty of the food stamp dollar.

Our Response

Eat Smart Idaho, with its strong partnership with the Coeur d'Alene School District and Venture High School, collaborated with Second Harvest to bring the Mobile Market program to Venture's central and accessible location in 2025. Venture High School hosted three mobile markets during the year — one in March, one in July and one in August — helping meet the urgent need for nutritious food in the Coeur d'Alene community.



FCS Extension educator organizes the volunteer base for Second Harvest Mobile Markets at Venture High School soccer team.

These mobile markets provided an opportunity not only to distribute food but also to engage local high school youth and sports teams in meaningful community service. The Extension educator in Kootenai County worked with student volunteers to assist with event operations, loading food into families' vehicles and greeting participants. The drive-through model ensured families remained safely in their vehicles while receiving their groceries.

In addition to the food provided, Eat Smart Idaho distributed simple, healthy recipes to each family, promoting the preparation of nutritious meals using the foods received. The collaboration between Second Harvest, Eat Smart Idaho and Venture High School

showcased the power of community partnerships to address hunger through both access and education.

Program Outcomes

The impact of these efforts was significant.

- 774 families received healthy groceries through the three 2025 Mobile Market events.
- 38,109 meals were distributed to individuals and families facing hunger.
- 95 volunteers contributed their time, totaling 2,893 volunteer hours of service.

The partnership brought together students, educators, and community members with a shared goal of ensuring families in Kootenai County have access to nutritious food. The Second Harvest Mobile Market continues to be a unique and impactful way to bring food and nutrition education directly to high-need communities.

The Future

Looking ahead, Venture High School will serve as the only North Idaho site for Second Harvest's Tom's Turkey Drive Nov. 19, a highly anticipated annual event providing Thanksgiving meal ingredients to families in need. In 2025, 250 families will receive all the fixings for a traditional holiday meal — an especially meaningful effort given the recent reduction of SNAP benefits at the federal level.

Eat Smart Idaho will continue partnering with local high school youth to provide volunteer opportunities and welcome St. Vincent de Paul as a new partner to the Mobile Market program in support of families experiencing food insecurity. Through these partnerships, the commitment to feeding hungry families and providing nutrition education in Kootenai County will continue to grow and strengthen.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Eat Smart Idaho administrative team: Joey Peutz, Siew Guan Lee, Kristin Hansen, Cammie Jayo and Becky Woodhouse.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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