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For Immediate Release

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FOOD FORWARD OPENS THE DOORS TO ITS NEW HIGH IMPACT PRODUCE RECOVERY HUB

The hub, called the Produce Pit Stop, will provide free large-scale donations of fresh fruits and vegetables to communities in need, while reducing the environmental consequences of food waste.

Los Angeles, CA – For just over a decade, Southern California-based nonprofit Food Forward has worked to address food waste *and* food insecurity with one simple solution: connecting produce that would otherwise be wasted with the people who need it most. The organization's three award-winning produce recovery programs rescue perfectly viable surplus fruits and vegetables from going to waste and donate this healthy food, free of charge, to 1,800 hunger relief agencies across the region.

This "just-in-time" food recovery model has helped to provide more than 75 million pounds of produce to communities across Southern California experiencing food insecurity, while simultaneously ensuring edible fruits and vegetables do not end up rotting in landfills. In 2018 alone, the organization recovered 23.1 million pounds of produce and now, with the opening of an innovative distribution hub in Southeast Los Angeles, the Produce Pit Stop, Food Forward's capacity will increase by 50% from 2018-2020.

For its first five years of operations, Food Forward's only sources of produce were backyard fruit trees and unsold fruits and vegetables from farmers markets. The organization's two volunteer-powered programs, Backyard Harvest and Farmers Market Recovery, have engaged over 10,000 volunteers to collect this produce over the past decade. Food Forward's recovery efforts expanded when Founder/Executive Director Rick Nahmias learned there was an immense amount of food going to waste at the Los Angeles Wholesale Produce Terminal, the center of the largest produce district in the country. With hundreds of millions of pounds of fruits and vegetables annually moving through this district that predominantly serves supermarkets and restaurants, pallets of produce can be dumped if not considered cosmetically perfect, if a fresher shipment is arriving, or if there is simply too much on hand due to overproduction.

In early 2014, Food Forward launched a Wholesale Produce Recovery program to begin collecting truckloads of produce that could not only help to feed individuals and families experiencing food insecurity, but also prevent greenhouse gas emissions caused by food waste. In the program's first year, Food Forward expected Wholesale Produce Recovery to rescue 300,000 pounds of produce—instead it recovered over 4 million.

Since then, the program's small staff has recovered tens of millions of pounds from over 200 wholesale vendors, donating them all to hunger relief agencies serving eight Southern California

counties. This massive amount of food was recovered without storage or refrigeration, via a “just-in-time” model, making it necessary to find a home for each pallet before accepting the donation and severely limiting how much food the organization could rescue.

In 2018, Food Forward was awarded a grant from CalRecycle’s Food Waste Prevention and Rescue Grant Program to open a much-needed warehouse space to support and grow its recovery efforts. The Produce Pit Stop, located in the city of Bell, CA, is the only one of its kind in the region and will enable Food Forward to redirect millions of pounds of fresh produce to hunger relief agencies each month. The warehouse is on the campus of The Salvation Army’s Bell Shelter, the largest homeless shelter west of the Mississippi, and adjacent to Grow Good, a nonprofit urban farm. This location will offer unique synergistic opportunities for partnership between the organizations, from composting spent produce to the promotion of urban agriculture. The Produce Pit Stop’s official opening and ribbon cutting will take place on Thursday, June 20 from 11 am - 1 pm [more details below].

“The Produce Pit Stop marks a new chapter for Food Forward and our fight against hunger and food waste. After ten years of staging massive truckloads of produce on other agencies’ docks and in parking lots, we will have 6,000 square feet with the necessary storage, equipment, and refrigeration to more efficiently mix produce varieties and temporarily hold large loads, allowing this food to ultimately reach many more people facing food insecurity,” says Rick Nahmias, Founder/Executive Director of Food Forward.

With 1,800 hunger relief agencies relying on Food Forward for donations of fresh produce, this space will enable the distribution of a greater quantity and variety of fruits and vegetables, and thus provide more diverse nutritional options for food insecure individuals and families. Food Forward expects this food rescue hub to transform the produce recovery ecosystem of Southern California by helping to feed over two million people this year, while greatly reducing the environmental impact of food waste.

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About Food Forward:

[Food Forward](#) (501(c)(3)) fights hunger and prevents food waste by rescuing fresh, surplus produce, connecting this abundance with people in need and inspiring others to do the same. Fruits and vegetables are collected from backyard fruit trees, public orchards, farmers markets, and the downtown Los Angeles Wholesale Produce Terminal. 100% of the recovered produce is donated to hunger relief agencies across eight counties in Southern California. The organization has won four consecutive Food Recovery Challenge awards from the U.S. EPA (2015-18) for its work to prevent and reduce food waste.