



## Press Fact Sheet

Village Harvest is a volunteer organization in the greater San Francisco Bay Area that harvests extra fruit from homes and small orchards, then passes it along to local food agencies to feed people in need. Since our founding in 2001 volunteers have harvested 4 million servings of nutritious fruit, 1.5 million pounds, through the power of community action.

The organization is now one of the oldest and largest organizations of this type in the world. In addition to our nationally recognized Harvesting for the Hungry program, we provide information and education on fruit tree care, harvesting, and using fruit through our web site [www.villageharvest.org](http://www.villageharvest.org) and toll free telephone (888) FRUIT 411.

## Context

- Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties provides food assistance to 1 in 10 people in the local community, an average of 240,000 people every month. Most are families with children and seniors.
- There are many millions of pounds of fresh fruit going unused and to waste just in Santa Clara County backyards, and millions more throughout the greater San Francisco Bay Area.
- A backyard fruit tree usually produces far more fruit than a household can use themselves, and there is enough going to waste from local backyards to provide for our local community's hungry.

## Mission and Programs

Our mission is to bring together neighbors and community organizations to provide food for the hungry, preserve our agricultural heritage and skills, and promote sustainable use of urban resources. We do this through the following programs:

- **Harvesting for the Hungry.** VH organizes and coordinates volunteer harvesting teams to pick fruit from local backyards and small orchards, distributed to community charitable food organizations.
- **Homeowner Education.** VH provides information and referrals at no charge on fruit tree care, harvesting, and where to take their excess fruit to benefit the community.
- **Preserving.** Volunteers provide education and information training sessions, tastings, and recipes on using home-grown fruit to create jams and other preserved foods.

## Results

- In 2012 Village Harvest volunteers picked a record 231,000 lbs. of fresh fruit, a half million servings benefitting many tens of thousands in the community. Since our inception in 2001, volunteers have harvested a total of 1.5 million pounds of fruit, equivalent to 4 million servings.
- In 2013 volunteers have picked 120,000 lbs through June 1.
- Village Harvest operates year round, with 15 to 20 harvests every month.
- Harvested fruit is donated to 15 food agencies in the South Bay and Yolo Counties.

## **Organization:**

- Village Harvest is a nonprofit IRS 501(c)(3) charitable organization started in 2001 by Joni Ohta Diserens. The organization is now led by Executive Director Craig Diserens, has three staff members, and a large team of volunteer leaders and organizers.
- Over 1100 individuals volunteer and contribute up to 9,000 hours of service each year. Our volunteers range from school children to seniors, from athletes to developmentally disabled. We host groups from high tech companies, church groups of all faiths, community service organizations, schools, and gardening groups.
- Headquartered in San Jose, but with volunteer teams operating in many parts of the greater San Francisco Bay Area including Santa Clara, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, and Yolo Counties.
- To support our growth, we apply Silicon Valley technology and business skills with software and a “virtual organization” that enable us to manage the thousands of homes and volunteers that participate over a large geographic area.
- Funded by private contributions from individual donors, foundation grants, and corporate matching gift programs.

## **For the Community:**

- Web site [www.villageharvest.org](http://www.villageharvest.org) offers information on fruit tree care, harvesting, using fruit, and recipes.
- Tree owners can offer their extra fruit to benefit others by signing up on the web site. Those without Internet access can call toll-free number (888) FRUIT 411 (888-378-4841). A tree owner can keep what they need, and the rest will be donated to local food agencies.
- Individuals and groups may find events and sign up to volunteer through the web site.

## **Additional Facts:**

- Our record breaking tree is in the Cambrian area of San Jose; we harvest up to 1,800 lbs from this single grapefruit tree. The typical tree we harvest yields 200 to 300 lbs. of fruit a year.
- In parts of Santa Clara County, the soil is so deep and fertile that it's not unusual for us to be harvesting nearly 1000 lbs of fruit on a regular basis from these trees.
- Harvesting for the Hungry was piloted as a concept in Palo Alto with 5,000 lbs harvested in 2001.

## **For Further Information:**

Village Harvest  
P.O. Box 9231, San Jose, CA 95157  
(888) FRUIT.411 (888 378-4841) main  
[www.villageharvest.org](http://www.villageharvest.org)  
[info@villageharvest.org](mailto:info@villageharvest.org)

Last updated: 6/1/2013