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UCare funds more than 20,000 meals for Minnesotans ***\$132,000 donation to Second Harvest Heartland ensures fewer*** ***Minnesotans go hungry in the new year***

MINNEAPOLIS, Jan. 6, 2021 — During this economic downturn, food insecurity is on the rise – a significant social risk factor impacting health. Since the onset of the pandemic, 1 in 8 Minnesotans have experienced hunger (up from 1 in 11 prior to Covid-19). The state’s leading hunger relief organization Second Harvest Heartland notes that no one can grow, maintain good health or reach their full potential if they are hungry. The advocate group Hunger Solutions reports food shelves ended 2020 with a record 3.75 million visits – nearly 1.5 million more visits than in 2008 during the recession.

To offset this hungry winter, UCare is stepping up to provide funds to the [Second Harvest Heartland Minnesota Central Kitchen](#) and [winter markets](#). Minnesota Central Kitchen brings together restaurants, furloughed chefs and caterers, and hunger-fighting organizations to tackle hunger and service-sector layoffs brought on by the pandemic. They provide prepared hot meals to respond to the surge in hunger and see Twin Cities-area communities through recovery. A recent [National Geographic article](#) highlighted their work.

UCare is also supporting winter markets that are large-scale distributions of produce, emergency food boxes, protein and dairy. The markets are held weekly throughout the Twin Cities metro area and in Greater Minnesota. Upcoming winter markets will be hosted at [Sanneh Foundation](#), [Corcoran Community Center](#), [Open Door](#) and [Christian Cupboard Emergency Food Shelf \(CCEFS\)](#).

“When Second Harvest Heartland leaders told us they’d seen a 30% increase in food demand since March, we knew we had to take action. By providing individuals and families with more than 20,000 meals this winter, we can help mitigate this Covid-era hunger surge,” said Ghita Worcester, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs and Chief Marketing Officer. “These nutritious chef-prepared meals and winter market staples will

ensure our members and the community have access to the food they need to stay healthy, especially during the pandemic.”

“By powering emergency food distributions, our friends at UCare are tackling these tough, hungry times head on. If we all do what we can, we *will* ensure the winter of 2020 does not become the hungriest winter in memory. UCare is joining these efforts and we’re grateful for their collaboration,” said Allison O’Toole, CEO of Second Harvest Heartland.

About UCare

[UCare](#) is an independent, nonprofit health plan providing health care and administrative services to more than 500,000 members throughout Minnesota and parts of western Wisconsin. UCare partners with health care providers, counties, and community organizations to create and deliver Medicare, Medicaid and Individual & Family health plans. All UCare health plans have earned accreditation from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).

The health plan addresses health care disparities and care access issues through a broad array of community initiatives. UCare has received Top Workplaces honors from the Star Tribune for 11 consecutive years since the rankings began in 2010.

About Second Harvest Heartland

[Second Harvest Heartland](#) works to end hunger through community partnerships. As one of the nation’s largest, most efficient and most innovative hunger relief organizations, we leverage our unique position in the emergency food chain to make an impact.

Second Harvest Heartland believes no one should ever go hungry, as our region produces more than enough food for everyone. Helping hungry neighbors find their next meal—so they can thrive at work, in the classroom and in their communities—is what drives Second Harvest Heartland, its partners and supporters. In 2019, we helped provide more than 97 million meals to nearly 1,000 food shelves and meal programs serving 59 counties in Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

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