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San Diego – Nearly half a million people live in poverty in San Diego. Of this number, 163,000 are children. All of them face food insecurity, which means that little or no food is available at home, and often they will not know how they will get their next meal. To combat this problem, the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS), North County Transit District (NCTD), Albertsons/Vons, Girl Scouts San Diego are teaming up with the San Diego Food Bank for the 11th annual Stuff the Bus food drive.

Residents are being asked to help drive hunger away in San Diego by donating \$5 hunger bags at check out, or any non-perishable food item at one of the 75 San Diego County Albertsons or Vons locations during the week of Nov. 26 – Dec. 1. In a final push, on Saturday, December 1, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTS and NCTD will have buses at 15 different stores, and local Girl Scouts will be at 65 stores encouraging residents to help Stuff the Bus! A total of 1,249 Girl Scouts are participating in the food drive by either volunteering on December 1 or collecting groceries in advance.



Stuff the Bus organizers are challenging San Diego residents to break last year's record of 29,000 pounds of food for families during the holiday season. All donations will go directly to the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank, which will then be distributed to local organizations that help the hungry.

"MTS launched Stuff the Bus 11 years ago not only to collect food for families in need, but to help raise community awareness about the issue of hunger in San Diego," said Paul Jablonski, MTS chief executive officer. "This is a great partnership. The momentum continues to build. It's a great cause and we are confident the community will step up to the challenge."

"As a company, we are fully committed to hunger relief programs, and are proud to host a food drive tackling this important issue," said Shane Dorcheus, division president for Albertsons, Vons and Pavilions. "Stuff the Bus barrels are prominently located in all Albertsons and Vons locations in San Diego for this worthy cause, and we look forward to seeing them filled throughout the week."

Donating is easy. Vons and Albertsons both have pre-packaged "hunger bags" available for shoppers to purchase for \$5 and donate at check out. Or, shoppers can donate any nonperishable food item at any of the 75 stores in San Diego.

Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank president & CEO James Floros said, "We are very grateful to the community for supporting the Stuff the Bus Food Drive! With rising demand over the holidays from individuals and families in need, food drive donations are critical to the Food Bank since we are currently feeding more than 370,000 people per month in communities throughout San Diego County. We are very grateful to MTS, NCTD, Vons, Albertsons, the Girl Scouts San Diego and our supporters for helping us feed families in need. Every can of food donated will prevent a San Diegan from going to bed hungry. On behalf of the Food Bank's staff and family of volunteers we thank the community for supporting the Stuff the Bus Food Drive and helping our fellow San Diegans in need."

"Many families face hunger and food insecurity throughout the year in San Diego County," said Matthew Tucker, NCTD executive director. "The annual Stuff the Bus campaign is a wonderful opportunity for North County residents to donate food that will certainly brighten the holiday season for our neighbors in need."

Stuff the Bus is Girl Scouts San Diego's largest countywide service project. Girl Scouts earn a patch by volunteering on event day or leading their own friends-and-family grocery collections and delivering the donations at the drop-off sites.

"Stuff the Bus brings hundreds of Girl Scouts together with the community to help alleviate the critical problem of hunger," said Carol Dedrich, CEO of Girl Scouts San Diego. "Taking action to make the world a better place is a cornerstone of Girl Scouting. Through programs like Stuff the Bus, Girl Scouts learn firsthand how to become responsible, productive, caring and engaged citizens."

An MTS or NCTD bus, along with Girl Scout representatives, will be on-site at the following 15 Vons and Albertsons locations Saturday, December 1 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

- Carlsbad Vons (6951 El Camino Real)
- Chula Vista Albertsons (720 Third Avenue)
- El Cajon Vons (1201 Avocado)
- Escondido Albertsons (1509 East Valley Parkway)
- Lemon Grove Albertsons (7090 Broadway)
- Mira Mesa Vons (8310 Mira Mesa Boulevard)
- Oceanside Albertsons (3450 Marron Road)
- Oceanside Albertsons (3925 Mission Avenue)
- Rancho Bernardo Vons (11986 Bernardo Plaza Drive)
- San Carlos Albertsons (8650 Lake Murray Boulevard)
- San Marcos Albertsons (1572 San Elijo Road South)
- Serra Mesa Vons (3550 Murphy Canyon Road)
- Santee Vons (9870 Magnolia Avenue)
- Spring Valley Albertsons (543 Sweetwater Road)
- University City Vons (7788 Regents Road)
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From there the 15 buses will caravan to the Food Bank warehouse where Food Bank volunteers

will be waiting to unload the food into bins to be sorted and distributed during the holiday season. The food donations at the remaining Vons and Albertsons stores will be picked up by Food Bank vehicles later in the week.

For additional Stuff the Bus information, including a list of most needed grocery items, visit the MTS website at sdmts.com or the NCTD website at GoNCTD.com.

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