

For Immediate Release



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Feeding South Dakota launches produce program to strengthen hunger relief

Sioux Falls (10/5/2026) — Feeding South Dakota has announced the launch of a new produce program that will provide fresh fruits and vegetables at no cost to the organization's agency partners across the state. Made possible with financial support from [The Wellmark Foundation](#) and John T Vucurevich Foundation, the produce will increase healthy food options for food insecure individuals while increasing the capacity for local agencies to serve their communities.

"We know that our work to fight hunger is not just about distributing food, it's about providing the right food," said Lori Dykstra, CEO of Feeding South Dakota. "While fresh produce is one of the most important types of food we can provide, it is often one of the most difficult for our agency partners to obtain. This program lifts that barrier, helping put fruits and vegetables on more tables."

Research continues to demonstrate the connection between nutrition and health outcomes. Diets that include fruits and vegetables can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases, support healthy development in children, and improve overall well-being. Feeding South Dakota's network of partners includes food pantries, hot meal sites, clinics,

and outreach programs in communities across the state, providing a broad opportunity to improve health outcomes for South Dakotans facing hunger.

"Everyone should have the opportunity to live a long, healthy life. Access to fresh, nutritious food is fundamental to making that happen," said Laura Jackson, chair, The Wellmark Foundation. "Good nutrition is one of the foundational building blocks of lifelong health and well-being. The Wellmark Foundation is proud to support Feeding South Dakota's efforts to bring more healthy food options within reach for more people and communities across the state."

According to the latest *Map the Meal Gap Study* released by Feeding America 130,340 South Dakotans are food insecure. For many households, when grocery budgets are stretched, families find themselves prioritizing affordability over nutrition, making fresh produce one of the hardest items to keep on the table.

"As food insecurity grows, Feeding South Dakota continues to find new ways to make fresh, healthy food more accessible to families," says Jacqui Dietrich, John T. Vucurevich Foundation President and CEO. "Too many people in our communities face barriers to accessing the nutritious food they need to thrive. This work is helping make Rapid City a place where no one goes hungry, and we're excited to see this impact grow and benefit families across South Dakota."

Feeding South Dakota expects the program to distribute thousands of pounds of fresh produce annually.

"We're grateful to the John T Vucurevich Foundation for supporting this program in the Rapid City area, and to The Wellmark Foundation for ensuring the program is available in communities across the state," Dykstra said. "They are helping strengthen the fight against hunger in South Dakota by creating access to healthy food for our neighbors facing hunger and flexibility for our agency partners to meet the needs of the communities they serve."

Find a Feeding South Dakota agency partner near you by visiting the Find Food page of the website at www.feedingsouthdakota.org

About Feeding South Dakota

Feeding South Dakota is the state's largest hunger-relief organization, serving families, children, and seniors in all 66 counties through its partners and programs. Working alongside donors, volunteers, and policymakers, Feeding South Dakota is committed to addressing immediate needs while advancing long-term solutions to end hunger in South Dakota.

About The Wellmark Foundation

[The Wellmark Foundation](#) is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the health of Iowans and South Dakotans by funding initiatives that address upstream barriers to health and create meaningful, lasting change in the communities it serves. The Wellmark Foundation is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

About the John T Vucurevich Foundation

The John T. Vucurevich Foundation is a locally rooted community investor in the Rapid City area. The Foundation serves as a connector, bringing together people and ideas to transform shared interest into shared outcomes, helping our most vulnerable neighbors reach their fullest potential. Since 1989, the foundation has awarded \$125 million to area nonprofits.

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