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**CONTACT: Susan S. Muranishi, County Administrator (510) 272-6984**

**ALAMEDA COUNTY STEPS UP TO FIGHT HUNGER THROUGH “STONE SOUP” FOOD DRIVE**

The demands of holiday planning may still seem many weeks away, but Alameda County employees are already deeply invested in one of the County’s most popular holiday rituals: building imaginative displays focusing on the theme of “Hunger,” that for several weeks will adorn many of the County’s most-traveled public spaces.

The displays are the focus of Alameda County's Fourth Annual Stone Soup Holiday Food Drive and Design Competition, which kicked off last week with a flurry of giving and a surge of creativity shown by employees hard at work building displays constructed with donated boxes, bags and cans of non-perishable food.

The displays are designed to engage visitors to County buildings about the issue of hunger in the community. The creations are being built now so that they can help raise public awareness and still be dismantled well in advance of the holidays. The sacks of rice and noodles, cans of beans and other nutritious building blocks will be distributed by the Alameda County Community Food Bank, to help provide a holiday bounty to residents struggling to put food on the table.

"The level of creativity, generosity and community spirit shown by our county employees is very inspiring as we approach the holiday season," said Susan S. Muranishi, County Administrator.

**Alameda County invites reporters and photographers to visit the displays and view their inspired messages about helping the community’s less fortunate. County staff will be available to lead a tour of the many displays on Friday, November 18, and on Monday, November 21. For more information, call Guy Ashley at (510) 272-6569.**

In 2012, Alameda County used the old fable of Stone Soup – which celebrates generosity and collaboration in difficult times – to create a new spin on its annual holiday food drive to support the Food Bank through employee donations of food and cash. By injecting friendly competition into the food drive, and stirring the creative juices within Alameda County’s 9,600-plus person workforce, Stone Soup helped the County to more than triple its total holiday donations in the first year alone. And the numbers continue to grow. In 2014, employees donated more than eight tons of food and \$11,000 in cash, while last year donations reached six tons of food and over \$13,000 in cash.

Alameda County is particularly well-equipped to engage in the battle against hunger at holiday time. Many employees are already involved in the All-In Alameda County initiative, a multi-agency/community collaborative launched by Supervisor Wilma Chan to fight poverty in the community. One of All-In’s central goals is to end hunger in Alameda County by 2020.

“We are driven by the desire to find innovative new ways to address the issues of poverty and hunger,” Supervisor Chan said. “The Stone Soup food drive is a great example of our County employees working together and thinking outside the box to help the many families in our community who are depending on us.”

While the employee-built displays are drawing broad attention, so is the growth in cash donations generated by Stone Soup. The cash donations are especially valuable to the Food Bank, which distributes \$6 worth of food for every \$1 donated. As always, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors will give out awards in December to departments that build the most creative displays and generate the most donations.

"This project demonstrates the strong ties between County departments, County employees, community organizations and the community that we serve," said Scott Haggerty, President of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors.

Added Supervisor Keith Carson: "As many individuals and families continue to struggle with not having enough to eat, we can always count on our County employees to rally to the cause of fighting hunger through our Stone Soup Holiday Food Drive."

The Alameda County Community Food Bank will gladly accept donations through the holidays and beyond to help the less fortunate in our community. To donate, go to <http://www.accfb.org/>