

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Northwest Harvest Celebrates Fruitvale Community Market**

**YAKIMA** - On April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Northwest Harvest will have a community celebration of its 4,000-square-foot no-cost neighborhood market on Fruitvale Blvd in Yakima. The celebration on the 4<sup>th</sup> runs from 1pm – 5pm and will have family-friendly activities including an afternoon of live DJ's, kids' tents, free food from local food trucks and good vibes. The market will officially open to customers on April 5, 2023, from 9:00am – 3:00 pm

The Fruitvale Community Market will allow shoppers to have an experience similar to that of any grocery store, except no payment is required at the end. Unlike the traditional foodbank model where food is bagged and distributed, in this model shoppers are engaged in their in-store experience like customers and allowed to shop with dignity.

"The truth is hunger doesn't have a certain look or demographic: hunger can happen to anyone. Hunger hurts all of us; ending hunger will take all of us," said Christina Wong, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy at Northwest Harvest. "No one should feel ashamed or fear asking for help, and this model removes the stigma of hunger and strengthens our sense of community."

To further Northwest Harvest's commitment to community, The Fruitvale Community Market will not only the last few months, the rising cost of groceries has stirred the discourse surrounding consumers' buying habits, which has ultimately influenced where they shop. The free grocery store model will actively make nutritious foods more accessible to the Yakima community. Food will be given freely with no questions asked or documentation required.

Over 600 Yakima residents have RSVP'd to attend the community celebration with Northwest Harvest on April 4th. A 12:30 PM private ribbon cutting will be followed by a public celebration featuring live DJs, market tours and activities for those of all ages. Food distribution will begin at 9:00am on April 5<sup>th</sup>.

"We have been working tirelessly to bring this resource to the Yakima Valley. We are thankful to the many Yakima-based businesses, our donors, and supporters from across the state who helped this center move from vision to reality," said Laura Perez Hamilton, Chief Advancement Officer at Northwest Harvest. This market allows us to align with our overarching goal of helping to put a dent in food insecurity across Washington State."

**Washington State Food Insecurity Facts**

- 1 in 12 Washington households experience food insecurity.
- Washington state has the fourth highest GDP (Gross Domestic Product) nationally – but ranks 37th in food insecurity.
- 1 in 6 Washington children live in a household that faces challenges in putting enough food on the table.
- SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) helps 1 in 9 Washington workers put food on the table. SNAP supports 12% of Washington residents or 1 in 8 people. Nearly 55% of SNAP recipients are families with children.
- Nearly 41% of SNAP participants are families with older adults or are disabled.

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*Northwest Harvest is an anti-racist, anti-oppression organization committed to transforming an unjust food system into one that is more responsive and accountable to the communities most impacted by discrimination. In addition to distributing food to over 400 partners throughout Washington State, Northwest Harvest aims to shift public opinion, as well as impact institutional policies and societal practices that perpetuate hunger, poverty, and disparities in our state.*