FEEDING SAN DIEGO BENEFITS FROM PLATING CHANGE PROGRAM TO SUPPORT A LOCAL RESTAURANT WHILE COMBATTING HUNGER

Initiative drives business to struggling North Park restaurant to provide nutritious meals for those in need

SAN DIEGO (January 27, 2021) — Feeding San Diego, the county’s leading hunger relief and food rescue organization, is working with TV personality, entrepreneur, advocate & philanthropist Marcus Lemonis and local San Diego celebrity Bill Walton to support those facing hunger and a local business in need.

As part of the #PlatingChange program, Lemonis’ The Lemon-AID Foundation has purchased $30,000 worth of meals from local restaurant Encontro North Park, to be distributed by Feeding San Diego using its MealConnect app, a free food rescue platform that makes it easy to connect excess food from donors such as restaurants, caterers, hotels, meeting and event planners, and convenience stores to local Feeding San Diego community partners that serve people facing hunger. For the next ten weeks, 100 meals will be picked up every Tuesday and Thursday from Encontro by Feeding San Diego partner, The Salvation Army, using a refrigerated van donated to The Salvation Army by Feeding San Diego. One hundred meals a week will go to those in need in San Diego, all while driving desperately needed revenue to a local restaurant.

“The small business community has always really been my family,” says Lemonis. “At the end of the day, we believe that feeding people in San Diego is important and Encontro is serving the plate and allowing us to do that. We are blessed by the fact that this local restaurant can help us and we want them to be profitable while doing so.”

Encontro North Park was suggested to Lemonis by friends he worked with to launch the project. Lemonis has shaped his career around supporting small businesses, and Bill Walton is a longtime supporter of hunger relief initiatives with Feeding San Diego. Lemonis’ Plating Change program, which he came up with as a response to the pandemic, is an effort to try to drive revenue to small businesses while addressing the food insecurity problem in the U.S.

“This will help the community by feeding people that don’t have food right now, and that’s the most important thing. These are scary times and I can’t imagine what it’d be like without the bare necessities,” said Jason Hotchkiss, chef at Encontro. “In addition to helping the community, this helps us because it brings up the morale of the team, because we’re doing something positive for the community and that’s what Encontro is all about. We used to have charity nights once a week.”

Since the pandemic hit in March, Feeding San Diego has seen an estimated 50% increase in need. By working with local restaurants to meet this demand, it ensures that restaurants can keep staff while simultaneously helping the community.

“It’s incredible to be able to partner with someone like Marcus and his foundation to be able to directly help a local restaurant whose business has dropped dramatically due to the pandemic,” says Dan Shea, CEO of Feeding San Diego. “With our distribution infrastructure, we can easily work with local restaurants to get the meals to those most in need.”
San Diegans can text BILL to 707070 to donate a meal to Feeding San Diego.

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ABOUT FEEDING SAN DIEGO

[Feeding San Diego](#) is a non-profit organization on a mission to connect every person facing hunger with nutritious meals by maximizing food rescue. Established in 2007, Feeding San Diego is the leading hunger-relief and food rescue organization in San Diego County and the only Feeding America affiliate in the region. Feeding San Diego provides more than 31.2 million meals every year to children, families, seniors, college students, military families, and veterans in partnership with a network of 320 local charities, schools, faith communities, meal sites, and food pantries. More than 92 percent of the food provided to the community is rescued. By diverting more than 27 million pounds of food from the landfill every year, Feeding San Diego is reducing greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 25,000 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent, which is comparable to taking 5,300 cars off the road for a year. To learn more about Feeding San Diego and its COVID-19 response, visit [feedingsandiego.org](#).