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**For Immediate Release**

**Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC Awards Ashe County Sharing Center Exemplary Partner Agency Award**



**Left to right: Michael Sexton and Kelly Vannoy of Ashe Sharing Center**

**Winston-Salem, NC—September 20, 2016—**Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina named Ashe County Sharing Center the 2016 Exemplary Partner Agency of the Year at its 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Agency Conference held this week to coincide with Hunger Action Month. The award is given each year to a nonprofit partner agency that exhibits exceptional leadership and commitment to addressing the issue of hunger in their local community.

In August 2011 when Ashe County Sharing Center became a partner agency of Second Harvest Food Bank, they were serving an average of 418 individuals monthly. At this time, the pantry is now serving an average of 1,529 individuals monthly – a 265% increase in individuals served.

While continuing to serve this great need at the pantry, Ashe County Sharing Center identified underserved areas in Ashe County and responded by further expanding their services to include pantries at Ashe Memorial Hospital, Wilkes Community College-Ashe County Campus, Mountain View Elementary School and a mobile

pantry. It is this flexibility in response and vision that makes them an outstanding partner and contribution to the community.

Laura Lambeth, CEO, Ashe Memorial Hospital stated, "There is no one more deserving to have this honor bestowed upon them than Ashe County Sharing Center lead by visionaries Kelly Vannoy and Michael Sexton. Their mission to eradicate hunger in Ashe County, one person at time, is truly amazing. Their innovative approach to food insecurity should be a best practice for other food pantries across the United States of America. I am honored to partner with them in the work they are doing in the Ashe County community."

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**About Ashe County Sharing Center:** The food pantry at the Ashe County Sharing Center is our main program with other programs operating under its umbrella. The Ashe County Sharing Center is the major food provider for our needy neighbors in Ashe County. Over the past several years, our mission has undergone phenomenal growth and stepped up to address the hunger needs in our area. Clients may visit this pantry once each month without an appointment. Every effort is made to provide a variety of healthy choices. Fresh fruits and vegetables (when available), eggs, frozen meats, breakfast items, canned vegetables, peanut butter, evaporated milk, rice, and dry beans are items commonly distributed. Amounts offered are proportional to family size. Stocking the pantry is a constant challenge. For example, it takes 100 cases of canned vegetables each month to meet the needs. On average, the Sharing Center will distribute boxes of food to 485 families or 1600 individuals EACH month. The folks visiting the Sharing Center for help are our friends, our neighbors, our peers, and the reason for our mission. In addition, the Sharing Center operates 4 additional pantries meeting the unique needs of Ashe County citizens: Children's Pantry and Backpack Outreach, Wilkes Community College-Ashe Campus, Northwest Ashe Mobile Pantry, and the Ashe Memorial Hospital Pantry.

**About Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC:**

Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC is the leading hunger-relief organization providing immediate access to food to those who cannot afford it and passionately pursuing an end to hunger through outreach, education and advocacy. More than 400 partner programs across 18 counties (Alamance, Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Caldwell, Caswell, Davie, Davidson, Forsyth, Guilford, Iredell, Randolph, Rockingham, Stokes, Surry, Watauga, Wilkes and Yadkin) rely on Second Harvest Food Bank as a primary source of food, including food pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters and special feeding programs for children and seniors. Together, we serve more than 300,000 people in need of food assistance each year, including 100,000 children. To learn more, please visit [www.hungernwnc.org](http://www.hungernwnc.org).