



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **PROVIDING MORE PRODUCE TO NEIGHBORHOODS IS GOAL OF PARTNERSHIP WITH THREE NON-PROFITS**

**Comment [SC1]:** Please add Brighter Bites and YMCA logo and contact information

HOUSTON – April 17, 2020 ... Now more than ever, it is important for us all to incorporate healthy eating into our daily lives to keep our immune systems strong during the COVID-19 crisis. For those with already limited access to food, this time can be especially challenging, including accessing fresh fruits and vegetables. But a partnership with three local non-profits is working to make sure that more fresh produce is available in neighborhoods that need it the most across Houston.

Recently, Houston Food Bank had the opportunity to secure an increased amount of produce and jumped at the chance to ensure distribution of this valuable commodity to as many people as possible. To channel this produce out to the community, they are joining forces for produce distributions with YMCA of Greater Houston and Brighter Bites.

The food bank and YMCA had already begun working together on other projects when the idea for these additional distributions was born. And for YMCA, this partnership means a great deal to them: other than the fact that they are able to help ensure that individuals and families are able to put fresh and healthy food on their table, this partnership has personal meaning because it has allowed them to bring about 100 of their previously furloughed staff back to work to serve the community.

"YMCA of Greater Houston is honored to partner with the Houston Food Bank and Brighter Bites to ensure families have access to critical food supplies during this difficult time," says Steve Ives, CEO, YMCA of Greater Houston. "With this powerful partnership, we will be able to better serve the Greater Houston area and those communities struggling to put food on the table."

All of the produce is provided by Houston Food Bank. Brighter Bites, a local non-profit that delivers fresh produce and nutrition education to families to help them healthier habits, is participating by training and monitoring staff at the sites to make sure that the packing of the bags/boxes has balanced nutrition distribution.

"We are so very proud of our partnership with the Houston Food Bank and the YMCA of Greater Houston during this crisis," says Brighter Bites CEO Rich Dachman. "It is because of this incredible joint effort that thousands of Houston families will be receiving a weekly supply of free fresh fruits and vegetables to help them create healthy meals at a time when they need to increase their immunity while their financial resources may be even more limited."

The produce distributions are taking place at locations throughout the city, using a drive-thru model and social distancing (mask, gloves, etc.) in keeping with CDC recommendations. Each distribution

will include at least 20 pallets of fresh produce (16,000 – 20,000 pounds) and expects to serve 2,400 families each day (800 families per site, currently).

“COVID-19 has impacted every facet of life, including access to food and dining habits,” says Brian Greene, president/CEO of Houston Food Bank. “But we want to make sure that the food we distribute during this crisis remains produce focused as it is during ‘normal’ times. We want to always provide food for better lives, and we are grateful for the strong relationships we have with other social service organizations so that together we can best serve the community.”

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**Comment [SC2]:** Paula – should the boilerplates be in alphabetical order? Wasn't sure.

### **About YMCA of Greater Houston**

First organized in 1886, the YMCA of Greater Houston is one of the city's leading non-profits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. The YMCA, a United Way of Greater Houston agency, seeks to serve all – regardless of age, income, faith or background and we welcome everyone. In the greater Houston area, 25 YMCA facilities, one overnight camp and hundreds of program sites strive to empower youth, build healthier families and foster inclusive communities. Anchored in the Houston community, the Y has the long-standing relationships and physical presence not just to promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change. To learn more, call 713-659-5566 or visit us on the web at [www.ymcahouston.org](http://www.ymcahouston.org).

### **About Brighter Bites**

Brighter Bites is a nonprofit that creates communities of health through fresh food with the goal of changing behavior among children and their families to prevent obesity and achieve long-term health. Brighter Bites is an evidence-based, multi-component elementary school, preschool, and summer camp program that utilizes reliable access to fruits and vegetables, nutrition education, and consistent exposure to recipes and messages that feature fresh food. Since 2012, Brighter Bites has provided more than 27 million pounds of produce and millions of nutrition education materials to more than 275,000 individuals (including teachers) in Houston, Dallas, Austin, New York City, the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area, and Southwest Florida. To learn more about Brighter Bites visit [www.brighterbites.org](http://www.brighterbites.org).

### **About Houston Food Bank**

Houston Food Bank's mission is to provide food for better lives. Last year we provided access to 104 million nutritious meals in 18 counties in southeast Texas through our 1,500 community partners which includes food pantries, soup kitchens, social service providers and schools. We have a strong focus on healthy foods and fresh produce. In addition to distributing food, we provide services and connections to programs that address the root causes of hunger and are aimed at helping families achieve long-term stability, including nutrition education, job training, health management and help with securing state-funded assistance. We are a resource for individuals and families in times of hardship. We are a solution to food waste, working with grocery stores and growers to rescue food before it reaches landfills. In collaboration with our community, we advocate for policy change and promote dialogue on ways to increase access to food and to improve the lives of those we serve. Houston Food Bank works alongside our partner food banks in Montgomery County, Galveston Country, and Brazos Valley. Houston Food Bank is a certified member of Feeding America, the nation's food bank network, with a four-star rating from Charity Navigator.

Visit us online. Website: [houstonfoodbank.org](http://houstonfoodbank.org); Facebook: [www.facebook.com/thehoustonfoodbank](http://www.facebook.com/thehoustonfoodbank);  
Twitter: @houstonfoodbank; Instagram: @houstonfoodbank; Youtube Channel:  
<http://www.youtube.com/houstonfoodbank>

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