2016 looks to be a very eventful year for us. We announced at a press conference in late February that we will be merging with TEAMwork for Quality Living (TQL), a local Delaware County non-profit, effective July 1, 2016.

The TQL focus is on working with people who have expressed a desire to make some necessary changes in order to change their path from surviving to self-sufficiency and then on to thriving. The end result will probably be a stable living situation and becoming free from the needs of various service providers in their lives. This combination of emergency food assistance through our various partner outlets (food pantries, soup kitchens and Tailgate Distributions) and the deliberate relationship building with people who want to move from struggling to self-sufficiency provides us with a much more holistic approach to our mission.

Early this spring we will also be starting a new for-profit commercial composting business. The new venture will produce high-quality humus compost on part of the acreage we have been leasing to a local farmer. We are partnering with Farmished, another local Delaware County non-profit, to get this operation in motion. We intend to sell the finished product wholesale to landscape businesses and nurseries who will use the product with their customers. We don't plan to sell retail to the public but might consider that down the road after we are established. In starting this business, we will be able to divert appropriate food waste we generate away from the land fill and into a usable product, so we save money in dump fees and make money in sales at the same time. We are looking at this as one source for sustainable revenue to help fund our operations.

We have also finished our Strategic Plan update. It is effective 2016 through 2018. In this deep analysis done in 2015, we have determined that we will need to prioritize our deployment of food resources, staff and program focus to aim at the bulls-eye and not just hope we are hitting the target. We have determined that Child Hunger Programs will be our #1 priority, and Senior/Disabled people will be our #2 priority. We will continue programming with food pantries, soup kitchens and Tailgate Distributions, but growth in these generalized methods of food assistance will be considered by looking at our new community maps which identify local food deserts. These maps will continue to help us be much
The newly established Carrie Mae Hyatt Food Pantry opened its doors to Anderson families in March.

A regional grant from the Rotary Club helped the pantry get on its feet with an initial grant that paid for the cost of equipment. They also provided a $1,000 credit on the pantry’s account to begin providing food from Second Harvest Food Bank.

Located at the former Morgan-Fenner Elementary School on 2010 Brentwood Drive, the pantry opens every Tuesday from 4 – 6:30 p.m. for local residents. Families can utilize the pantry twice a month, and the number of individuals in the household determines how much food they can receive.

As a collaborative effort of Concerned Ministers of Anderson, Anderson Township Trustee John Bostic, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commission and the Second Harvest Food Bank, the pantry is employing a “multiple church model” that has been successful in several communities. Ten churches have made financial commitments, and food pantry volunteers are being sought as well.

Bill Watson, owner of Pittt Barbeque and Grill, paid the initial transportation costs to have food delivered to the pantry. A finance committee has been established to provide for future transportation costs.

The pantry was named after Carrie Mae Hyatt, a lifelong community member of Anderson whose dedication helped those who struggled with getting food for their families. The first food director of Madison County, Hyatt was a community activist and civil rights supporter. In the 1970’s, Hyatt organized the first yearly Thanksgiving dinner for senior citizens and disadvantaged members of the community. She received numerous awards, including the 1989 NAACP B. Harry Beckham Memorial Award for Outstanding Service in civil rights. In 1998, the mayor of Anderson proclaimed August 29 as Carrie Mae Hyatt Day.

more strategic in targeting areas of high need versus establishing a new partnership with an agency where many resources and access points already exist. We are able to move forward with these maps because of a relationship we now have with an immersive learning class through the Ball State Geography Department.

We are now having conversations with many school superintendents about establishing food pantries in schools to get much needed food assistance to families whose children are attending the school. This type of program has been operating in a limited number of schools in our 8-county service area, but we are ramping up the dialogue and building new relationships and it is gaining a lot of traction. These food distributions can be overlapped with parent/teacher meetings, which has been shown to drive parental involvement to a significant level in some schools where very little involvement had been occurring. The amount of food distributed to each family is very important as well. The program we are building is based around the Feeding America “Map the Meal Gap” annual study which shows that an average gap of about 7 pounds per person per week exists for struggling families.

Partnering with a few churches located around a given school who will “adopt” a school can be the vital link to make this all come together. Area businesses have also shown a willingness to “adopt” a school for financial and volunteer support to make these food distributions a reality. This model is getting rave reviews from the school staff and their adoption partners alike. Several of the parents have been overcome with emotion with the generosity aimed at improvement in the lives of their children. This looks to be a win, win, win for the community, and that will feed progress. Imagine a community where no children are hungry for a generation of time. We have all the necessary pieces already, we just need the will.

Tim Kean
President & CEO
Quality Living

Second Harvest Food Bank of East Central Indiana and TEAMwork for Quality Living will merge our two organizations effective July 1, 2016.

Over the last several months, our board and management team at Second Harvest have been developing a long-range strategic plan for the continued growth and sustainability of the organization. Through this process, we looked closely at the issues related to hunger and food insecurity across East Central Indiana, and we challenged ourselves to evaluate every aspect of our organization to find solutions to these problems.

While there were numerous outcomes from this process, likely the most significant was a refined definition of our organizational purpose. Once this was in place, we were able to develop strategic objectives that will advance the organization and direct our energy, resources and expertise in two core focus areas.

This is best described in the following phrase: Help for Today and Hope for Tomorrow!

This merger represents the practical application of what Help for Today and Hope for Tomorrow looks like in real terms.

Second Harvest is in our 33rd year of operation. Picture our operation as a three-legged stool. The first leg is Food Distribution. This is how most people would define us. We access millions of pounds of food that would go to waste and get it into the hands of struggling people. This is what Help for Today looks like - providing immediate short-term assistance.

Our second leg is Education. We have always had an additional role and responsibility of providing a food education component for the people in need and to expand the knowledge of the general public regarding the circumstances of struggling people.

The third leg of our stool is our role in Advocacy. To speak out for those who have no voice, but have a right to be heard in all areas of our government and in our communities.

This merger adds an important fourth leg to our work; a pathway to Self-Sufficiency. This provides a way for someone who wants to change their circumstances so they will be on a path toward self-sufficiency. This frees them from dependency on the safety net of service providers. This additional leg of our stool will help “shorten the line” of need. Providing this important path for independence provides Hope for Tomorrow. In doing so, we all benefit.

"Imagine a community where no children are hungry..."
Purdue Polytechnic students are creatively working on a hydroponics project, “Simply Life,” that will allow Second Harvest to grow produce for its clients year-round.

This project, which will enhance Second Harvest’s logistical operations, allows produce to be grown in a controlled environment. Hydroponics produces high-quality fruits and vegetables by controlling all parts of the growing process. These plants are not produced in soil, but are grown in nutrient-filled sand, gravel or liquid. They will be grown by the students in a warehouse as a pilot project located on Madison Avenue in Anderson.

The students began producing spinach, lettuce and marigolds and look forward to start growing spinach and microgreens. To continue providing funds for the project, they are working on a storefront food market concept that will allow local chefs to purchase produce grown in the warehouse.

If Second Harvest incorporates hydroponics into its operation, they will produce a quality of food that will last. Instead of having all of its fresh produce sent to the organization, food can be grown in the warehouse, saving thousands of dollars on shipping costs.

This could have a huge impact on Second Harvest’s eight-county service area. Growing food year-round means the organization could better satisfy the needs of the 75,000 individuals who are food insecure in their eight-county service area. The longevity of produce would increase, Second Harvest’s carbon footprint would decrease, and money would be saved. The additional funds would be used for Second Harvest’s other operations.

Lorri Barnett, project coordinator and continuing lecturer at Purdue, said the students are excited and energized about the project. “It’s getting a lot of traction and kind of taking on a life of its own,” said Barnett. If the project runs smoothly, Barnett foresees putting a hydroponics greenhouse in each county Second Harvest serves.

Barnett and her students hope to grow produce from their hydroponics warehouse that is harvestable and will be shown to Second Harvest’s board of directors in the near future.