

## 'Stock the Shelves' campaign sets \$150,000 goal to help Fox Cities food pantries

By Cheryl Anderson • Post-Crescent staff writer • October 11, 2009

In the past year, the economic recession has pushed more Fox Valley residents into a place they may have never dreamed they would be: needing help.

The programs set up to meet some of the most basic needs of these residents also have been pushed.

"More and more people are living paycheck to paycheck, if they're lucky to have one at all," said Mary Harp-Jirschele, executive director of the J.J. Keller Foundation. "Our local food pantries have become essential to the health and well-being of many families — our friends and neighbors."

The foundation, Express Convenience Centers and a host of Fox Cities credit unions are joining forces for The Post-Crescent's 14th annual "Stock the Shelves" campaign to ensure the health of food pantries in the Fox Valley.

The goal for the campaign, which kicks off today and runs through Nov. 22, is an unprecedented \$150,000. This year's Do It! motto is, "Now. More than ever."

Last year, largely thanks to the J. J. Keller Foundation, which matched \$35,000 in donations, "Stock the Shelves" set a record high for the campaign by raising \$73,000, about \$45,000 more than the previous year.

"But we cannot forget what individual donors and workgroups did," Dan Flannery, The P-C's executive editor, said. "When the employees of JanSport donated \$11,000, that made a huge difference. But so did the flood of \$10, \$20 and \$30 donations from individuals. Every dollar makes a difference."

Eighteen food pantries in The P-C's circulation area equally shared last year's donations, with each receiving about \$4,000. This year, the campaign will help 19 pantries.

Cash donations are important for food pantries like Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry in Kaukauna because the money allows them to buy items that don't get donated or that are in short supply, said director Betty Simon-Wochinski, whose pantry serves about 200 people each week. Those items include things like milk, eggs, meat, canned fruit, toilet paper, personal care products, laundry detergent and dish soap.

Campaigns like "Stock the Shelves" also make people aware of the community's ongoing needs, said Monica Clare, director of operations for St. Joseph Food Program in Menasha, the largest food pantry in the Fox Valley.

"Every food drive or cash drive that people do — that's how we are supported because we receive no government funds," Clare said. "Every campaign is helpful to us, and we are just grateful for all the community support we get."

The campaign starts on solid footing.

-- Again this year, the J.J. Keller Foundation is helping with a \$35,000 matching grant.

-- New this year, Express Convenience Centers, a division of U.S. Oil Co., will donate 5 cents per gallon from all gas purchased at Express stores from Kaukauna to Neenah during the campaign until a goal of \$35,000 is reached.

-- Also for the first time, 18 Fox Cities credit unions are pooling resources to donate \$35,000. The credit unions: Badger Globe, Best Advantage, Capital, Community First, CONE, Evergreen, Envision, Fox Communities, KimCentral, Labor, Lakeview, Menasha Corp. Employees, Members United, Menasha Employees, Premier Financial, Prospera, St. Elizabeth Employees and Unison.

"This is the first year that U.S. Oil has joined with J.J. Keller in what I will call an honest effort with 'Stock the Shelves,'" said Jim Anholzer, general manager of Express Convenience Stores. "We've gotten involved in the past ... but now the Express stores are getting involved as well."

Express stores also will have donation collection cans at registers and will be drop-off points for donations of nonperishable food, a first for what's traditionally been a money-only campaign. St. Joseph's also will collect food donations, which will stay with that pantry.

"It's the least we can do," Anholzer said. "When we were asked by The Post-Crescent and J.J. Keller to partner up, it just made sense."

Each branch of the credit unions also will be a drop-off point for financial (and, in some cases, non-perishable) donations, either through cash, check or credit card.

"To be able to work together collaboratively has been fun and rewarding for all of us," said Cathie Tierney, president and CEO of Community First Credit Union. "Given the current economic conditions, we see firsthand the impact that unemployment and other challenges are having on our members, their families and our communities."

Credit unions are invested in the communities in which they operate, said Carla Watson, president of Badger Globe Credit Union, Neenah. "Credit unions work together ... we help each other out all the time. And if there's a joint community cause, I mean, why not?"

The Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region again will collect financial donations. Donors will be named in advertisements in The Post-Crescent throughout the campaign.

Flannery said there is a very clear and simple reason why The P-C's Do It! campaigns resonate: The people of the Fox Valley.

"From the giving spirit of community-based and family-based foundations and businesses to the give-as-much-as-you-can philosophy of individual donors, the people of our community set the bar very high," he said.

Pat Leigl, social services director for Salvation Army-Fox Cities, agrees.

"Fortunately, our community is here to support us, and food drives help us a lot," she said. "We can't do it without them. We've been blessed because people care, a lot."

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