

Local pantries distribute food boxes to community

Food boxes allow families to choose what items would be most useful to them

By **Brittney Lively**
Freelance Reporter

Paying rent and utilities during the winter can be a burden for many residents of Lane County. Money shortages and tight budgets can often force households to turn to other sources, like emergency food boxes, in order to put food on the table.

Emergency food boxes are handed out at 22 local food pantries and are composed of food items that have been donated to the FOOD for Lane County warehouse. Last year about 80,000 emergency food boxes were distributed throughout the county.

"(Food pantries) are our primary way of getting food out to Lane County," said Dana Turell, director of communications and development at FOOD for Lane County.

An emergency food box is designed to provide families with enough nourishment to get them through three to five days, and depending on the size of the family, the average food box contains 20 to 30 pounds of food.

Each box includes an assortment of items depending on what is currently available in the pantry. Boxes can include frozen vegetables, fresh produce, canned fruit and vegetables, canned and dried beans, noodles, crackers, bread, dairy products and baking items. Also, most families receive a protein item, sometimes turkey or ham, but most often peanut butter or soups when meat is

not available.

"We don't actually make the boxes, said Beth Bartell, the Creswell pantry manager. "We are set up so that clients can come and pick out what they would like."

beneficial for their homes.

"The majority of our clients are very considerate of other people and don't take things unless they need them," Bartell said.

Over the course of a year, a family

up. Also, 25 percent of Lane County eats from an emergency food box, and in October the number of families helped by Catholic Community Services skyrocketed, reaching 1,700 families.

"We are stretched kind of thin right now," said Joe Sostich, the Food Program manager for Catholic Community Services

the busy months.

"A lot of our volunteers are people who are receiving food boxes and it's their way of saying thank you," Sostich said. "We couldn't do it without them."

While pantries are becoming busier and food is running low at FOOD for Lane County, many pantries are looking to other sources for help. Local food pantries are receiving fresh produce from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and donations of canned goods and money from corporate donors and local community members. Also, the University Residence Hall cafeterias regularly donate extra food that may have been prepared but never set out to be served.

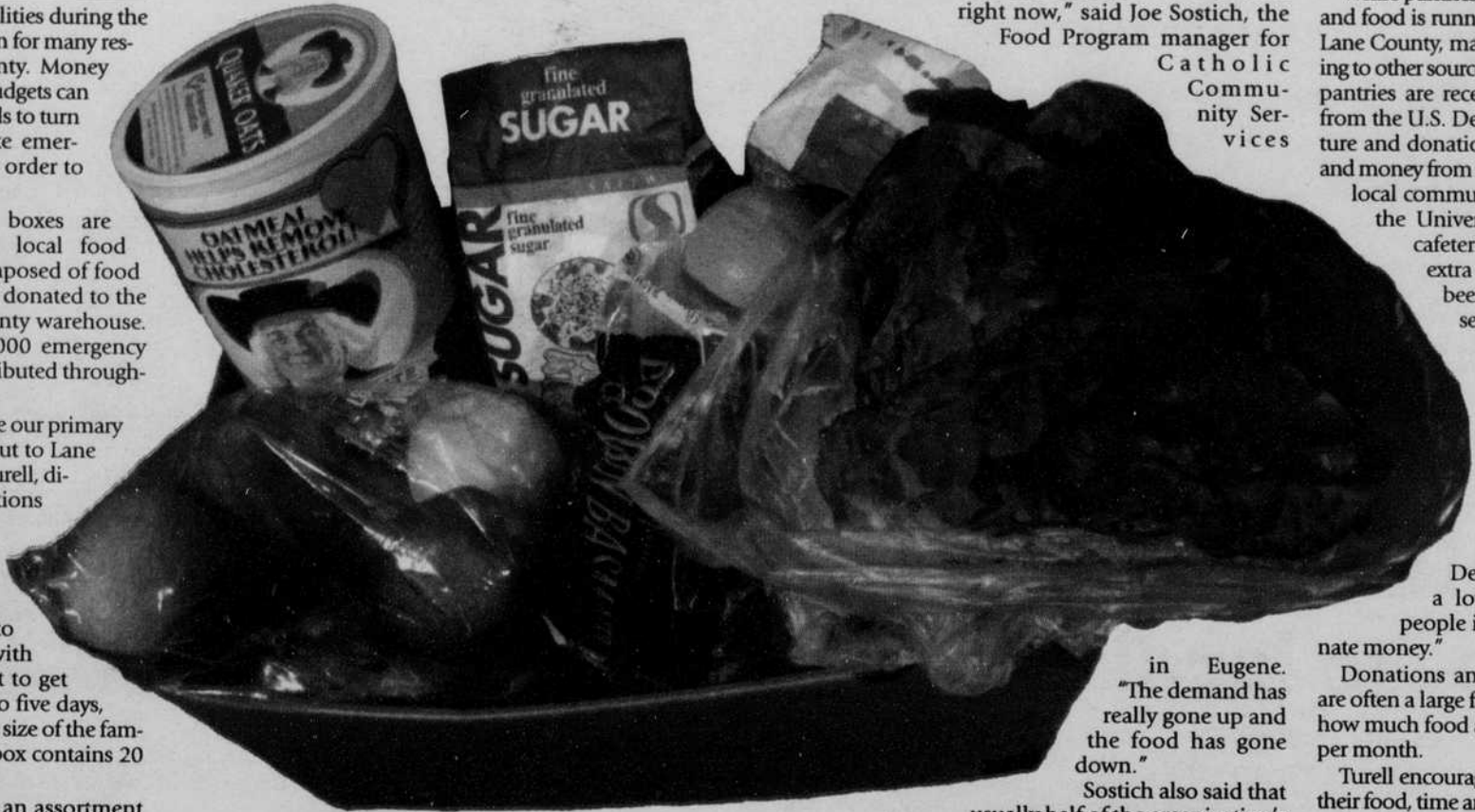
"The Boy Scouts had a food drive and raised about 1,450 pounds of canned and boxed goods," Bartell said. "And the postal carriers are also doing a drive in December. There's also a lot of very generous people in Creswell who donate money."

Donations and local food drives are often a large factor in determining how much food a pantry can give out per month.

Turell encourages people to donate their food, time and especially money.

"A dollar helps us distribute five pounds of food, and usually a person eats about five pounds a day," she said. "Help, whether it's donating food, money or just voting in a way that will help hunger. There's no better feeling than knowing that you've helped someone else."

Brittney Lively is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.



At most pantries, people are able to move through a line and choose food items from different categories, such as flour or sugar from the baking items, and milk or yogurt from the dairy items. People are given the opportunity to "shop" for themselves.

Using this system, families can choose what items will be the most

can receive a total of 16 — up from 12 — emergency food boxes from FOOD for Lane County. The increase was based on an increased need.

Catholic Community Services distributes about 40 percent of the food collected by FOOD for Lane County, but with the numbers continuing to rise, they are finding it difficult to keep

in Eugene. "The demand has really gone up and the food has gone down."

Sostich also said that usually half of the organization's yearly supply of food is donated during the holidays, and he attributes this to the fact that people feel more generous around this time of year.

In general, FOOD for Lane County is serving about 8 percent more people than it has in the past, and local pantries are relying on volunteers to help them make it through

Need Cash for the holidays?

Earn Extra Money

up to \$180/month

New donors bring this ad in for an extra \$5

IBR Plasma Center

Formerly Aventis

2 Locations:

1 Block east of 8th and Garfield
1901 West 8th Ave., Eugene
683-9430

225 Main St.
in Springfield
747-5227

Melange

Currently featuring:

Betsey Johnson

Michael Stars

Joie

Nicole Miller

C&C Tees

Lulu Guinness

Francesco Biasia

Citizens for Humanity

James Perse

Trina Turk

Adriano Goldschmied

Velvet

Seven for all Mankind

Hard Tail

Clothing • Jewelry • Accessories

located on the lower level of



www.melange4women.com
683-2595

open mon-sun: 10-6