

Expo visitors help food drive 'dump' hunger

Need continues after holiday season

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Western States Equipment hopes Spokane Ag Expo visitors will help the company collect seven dump truck loads of food this year, marking its seventh annual Dump Hunger food drive.

The company-sponsored food drive returns to the Expo this year. Since 2008, the drive has collected nearly 3.4 million pounds of food, which goes to food banks in Eastern Washington and Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Western Wyoming.

Each year Western States increases its goal. Last year, the drive collected the equivalent of six truckloads of food.

This year, the company hopes to collect 525,000 pounds, or seven truckloads. That amount of food will provide roughly 437,000 meals to people in need.

The company is seeking canned or dry goods or cash donations.

Western States marketing coordinator Whitney Mustin said the drive is especially timely, as food bank donations tend to drop off following the holiday season.

"As we get more into the deep part of the winter months, the food bank lines continue to get a little bit longer, quite frankly," said Rod Wieber, chief resource officer for Second Harvest in Spokane. "Donations, though, start to slow down. I think it's just not top-of-mind."

Heating bills and other

expenses increase during the winter, so people have to rely on local food banks to stretch their budgets, Wieber said.

The Expo provides a good opportunity to collect monetary donations, Wieber said.

For each dollar donated, Second Harvest can provide five meals to a family in need, he said.

Many Expo attendees are from rural communities, where Second Harvest distributes food, he said.

"They'll be helping out their neighbors and communities," he said.

According to a Western States press release, food donations can also be made at any Western States location.

Online

www.westernstatescat.com

Monetary donations can be made online through participating food banks.

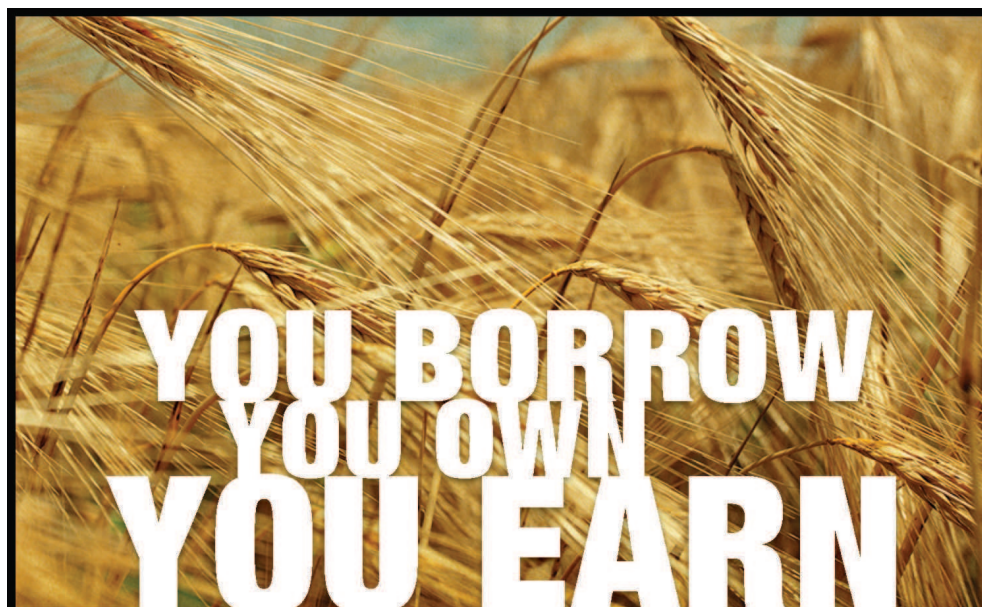
The biggest need is for boxed meals such as macaroni and cheese; peanut butter; canned fruit, soup, chili, stew or vegetables; cereal; dried beans; pasta; pasta sauce; rice; and stuffing mix.

"As a company, we appreciate any help (farmers and ranchers) are able to do, and we know the food banks appreciate it," Mustin said. "It's going to go to families in need."

The company plans to continue the drive beyond 2015.

"It's successful and it helps all of the communities out," Mustin said.

Spokane Ag Expo



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