

A Typical Visit to the Vernonia Cares Food Bank

Vernonia Cares Food Bank (VCFB) is located at 627 Adams Avenue inside the American Legion Building, just behind the West Oregon Electric Office on the way to Anderson Park. Curbside parking is available in front of the building and across the street. The Food Bank is open Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. For those who are unable to access the food bank during business hours due to their work schedules, appointments may be made by calling 503-429-1414 and leaving a message.

Due to current economic conditions, many people may find they need a little help with their grocery budget. First-time visitors to VCFB may not be sure what to expect. This article describes a typical visit. After entering the front doors of the building, clients register with Tina at the reception desk. Registration includes basic information about the client's household such as names, ages, and dates of birth for each person living at this address. New clients will be asked to show ID which verifies they live at this address. A driver's license, rent or utility receipt or even just a letter that came to the person at the stated address is sufficient. As Tina gathers this information, she prints the completed form and the client signs the application. The target population

for VCFB is households that fall within the USDA income guidelines. Those guidelines are currently a base monthly income of \$1,670 for one person plus \$577 per additional household member.

The registration process usually takes less than fifteen minutes; this application remains on file for one year. All clients' names are kept confidential. If the client returns within the year, and no changes have occurred within the household, the process is even quicker. The application is simply signed for the new month's groceries and the shopping begins. Tina will ask a few food questions so the frozen and refrigerated portion of the order can be filled by volunteers while the client begins shopping.

A VCFB volunteer will become a personal shopping assistant to this new client. The goal of VCFB is to provide three days of groceries, given once a month. Quantities of food are tailored to the household size. Carts with boxes and bags are filled with non-perishable groceries as the client and volunteer stroll past the shelves of food. This permits the client to indicate his or her household's food preferences. VCFB President Carolyn Velasco states, "There's no use giving a family a can of pickled beets if no one likes them! This

shopping style pantry helps eliminate wasted food. We appreciate the ability to be a user-friendly food pantry for our clients."

At the end of the shopping, the client adds a few loaves of bread to his or her order. The sack of frozen and refrigerated items is placed on the cart. If the client is able, he or she is asked to help defray the cost of the bread delivery by adding to a donation box located at the registration table. (Bread is donated to VCFB from Safeway in Forest Grove. The funds help pay for the transportation cost to bring it to Vernonia.) The cart is then wheeled to the client's car, the food is



Vernonia Cares volunteers Tina Brewington, Penny Dean, Barbara Rainbolt, and Dave Howard show a typical food order at the food bank.

unloaded and the cart is returned into the building. Bread is available once a week; pantry orders are available once a month. A typical order for a household size of four is pictured with this article.

February 2009 statistics show that VCFB assisted over 150 Vernonia households that month. These households contained more than 400 people, one third of whom were children or senior citizens. Groceries are purchased through the Oregon Food Bank. A strong supporter of Vernonia Cares Food Bank, the United Way of Columbia County historically has provided about one third of VCFB's annual budget. All other funds are raised through fund-raisers or direct donations.

The generosity of faithful donors who donate food or funds allows VCFB to be a valuable service agency to local people who need grocery assistance. "We are your hands extended to the hungry," emphasizes VCFB Director Sandy Welch. "One in five people in Oregon goes to bed hungry. Grocery items given in food drives are an example of what helps VCFB stock our shelves. This is a giving and supportive community! Financial donations help purchase food, keep the freezers running and keep Vernonia Cares doors open. When donors and volunteers work together, hungry people are fed," emphasizes Welch. Food donations may be brought to the Food Bank during business hours or arrangements made by calling VCFB at 503-429-1414. Tax-deductible monetary contributions may be sent to Vernonia Cares at PO Box 126, Vernonia, OR 97064.

Christian Aid Ministries Back to Help Vernonia... Again

Christian Aid Ministries (CAM) has again sent help to Vernonia. The Mennonite relief group based in Ohio, has, for the third time, mobilized a relief team to assist Vernonia in flood recovery.

A crew of fifteen construction workers and their families have been hard at work in Vernonia since early March, and were planning to leave at the end of the month.

They were originally scheduled to help construct new replacement homes that Community Action Team is building as an option for flood victims who are choosing to be bought out. But that project, managed by Casey Mitchell, was not quite at the new construction phase when the CAM team arrived, so other projects have been found to take advantage of their skills, manpower and good will. They have worked on building decks, stairways, and done sheet rock projects for flood victims.

One of the projects the CAM team has been involved in is the renovation of what Casey Mitchell is calling the "Corey Hill House." The house sits next to the new replacement home lots, and is an old mill house that is being renovated to be used as a senior citizen rental by Community Action Team. The house has been lifted and turned ninety degrees, placed on a foundation, is being resided with cedar shingles, is having a deck added, and will be completely renovated inside. The CAM team has been hard at work on that project.

CAM has also helped move along the Schaumburg House, framing that project and giving it a boost towards completion. The Schaumburg House is being constructed in part with donated supplies and labor for Dean Schaumburg and his family. Schaumburg was severely injured in a logging accident almost two years ago, and the family's rental was flooded in December, 2007.

Christian Aid Ministries provides disaster relief assistance throughout the world as just one of their many programs and projects.



Members of the Christian Aid Ministries team work on a home restoration project on Corey Hill.

**SATURDAY
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TEXAS HOLD 'EM TOURNAMENT AT THE BUCKHORN RESTAURANT

Registration at 5:30pm, Tournament play starts at 6pm
50% of fees go to Local Charities.

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To register or for more information contact:
George Tice **429-3751** or Aaron Miller **429-6049**.

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