

# Great Food Drive includes donated eggs, omelettes alfresco

By Mark Ellis  
The Southwest Portland Post

It was mid-March, and Old Man Winter hadn't quite given up his grip on Portland. But that didn't stop the Oregon Food Bank from setting up an omelet queue in the U.S. Bank parking lot at Barbur and Terwilliger boulevards and offering a scrumptious breakfast to donors who braved the cool, rainy day.

Sponsors of the food drive included KGW NewsChannel 8, US Bank, Tillamook Cheese, and Nest Best Eggs. "We're calling it the Great Food Drive," said coordinator Jean Kempe-Ware of the March-long effort to raise food and cash donations.

She talked about the spike in food box distribution levels that occurred through the early part of this decade, a rise which has sustained its peak of around 750,000 since 2004.

More and more seniors, disabled individuals, and working poor fami-

lies are finding that higher prices and economic down-turns have challenged their ability to put food on the table.

"Thirty-seven percent of the folks who seek our help represent households with children," said Kempe-Ware, who also pointed out that over the last 22 years the percentage of seniors receiving food has gone from 3 to 7 percent.

Another aspect of the problem can be presented as a Catch-22. In the quest to aid the process of America's independence from foreign oil, farmers are converting land historically dedicated to food production to the production of the type of inedible maize-style corn used in bio-fuels.

Some experts have pronounced "the end of cheap food," and donations from the food industry which in past years have represented that largest single Oregon Food Bank donor are down. "We need to make up that shortfall with our food drives, and cash donations," Kempe-Ware explained, adding that, "A ten dollar donation suffices to create

one food box for a hungry family."

On hand for the tasty and nutritional aspect of the drive was Kathleen Sparks, Northwest sales manager for the Nest Best Egg Company. Nest Best was slated to donate 680,000 eggs through March.

Sparks corroborated the reality of how more land devoted to ethanol production and higher transportation costs due to oil prices translate to higher prices at the grocery store. The cost of feed for Nest Best hens has doubled in the last year.


According to Sparks, a diet which includes the protein and other nutrients provided by eggs has been attributed to healthier brain function, especially in seniors. "Eggs are just about the perfect food" said Kathleen, as she folded fresh-

cut onion and tomato into a deliciously light and fluffy omelet.

Nearby, a table with muffins, pastries orange juice and all the fixings for a full breakfast was set under an umbrella. For a \$20 donation folks could pile their plates, and enjoy the kind of meal that all too many low-income and disadvantaged people in Portland Metro and the surrounding counties are finding harder to put on the table.

"The Great Food Drive is an ongoing success," concluded Kempe-Ware, who said she was looking forward to continued community support for her organization's mission: "to eliminate hunger and its root causes, because no one should be hungry." For more information: [www.oregonfoodbank.org](http://www.oregonfoodbank.org).

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