



PHOTO: BURRITO BRIGADE

BURRITOS BEAT HUNGER

Burrito Brigade reaches a milestone serving the Eugene community

If you head down the back stairwell, continue into the basement and wander through the underground halls of First Christian Church on a late Sunday morning, you'll hear sounds of food being chopped and wrapped and realize you've come across the Burrito Brigade, a group of volunteers making hundreds of burritos for the hungry.

With the mission to battle food insecurity in Eugene, an average of 20 volunteers gather from 11 am to 3 pm in the basement of First Christian Church on Sundays, and from 9:30 am to 2 pm at Bethesda Lutheran Church on Saturdays, to make burritos that are distributed via foot, bike and car throughout the city.

Burrito Brigade volunteers drop off burritos to the hungry at more than 14 locations including Conestoga Safe Spots, Opportunity Village, St. Vincent de Paul Service Station, First Place Family Center, White Bird Clinic and Occupy Medical. Some burritos are given directly to people out on the street.

As of Nov. 12, Burrito Brigade hit a major milestone, serving their 100,000th burrito since the group's humble beginning in March 2014. Jennifer Denson, a board member and organizer, explains that back then, the group served about 200 burritos per weekend, operating out of a house in the Whiteaker.

"We did what we could, which was focus on the importance of just getting any food out there," Denson says. "We didn't have nearly the detail and care and support we do now."

Now, Burrito Brigade serves nearly 1,000 burritos per weekend — about 325 sloppy-Joe-style burritos every Saturday and 500 to 600 rice, bean and veggie burritos every Sunday — and has been an official nonprofit since late 2015.

The first few hours of each weekend prep-session are for making burritos, and the process is as organized

and efficient as a well-oiled machine. Volunteers gather around plastic tables, begin chopping, slicing and preparing vegetables and ingredients with an intense focus, and also with joy.

"We have volunteers of all ages. Sometimes people come in big groups, and sometimes whole families come in together," Denson says. "It's 100 percent self-propelled and amazing to see."

On this Sunday afternoon volunteers cut heaping handfuls of fresh lettuce. They roast regular and sweet potatoes, slice organic tomatoes and onions, make warm rice in a 15-cup rice cooker and prepare individual pieces of foil to wrap each burrito. Precision is evident as the group makes its own spice mix to add for extra flavor and doesn't use anything processed.

All the vegetables are organic, when possible, and a majority of ingredients are donated to the group throughout the year. Much of the current produce was donated by Eugene Foodies and The Corner Market.

"The community support is amazing, but we still love getting new volunteers and more people involved," Denson says. "There is always a need for people to help battle food insecurity."

The group constantly looks for ways to reach more of the community's hungry. Burrito Brigade recently partnered with the University of Oregon when student government reached out about a need: The group now provides around 100 burritos to the UO each weekend for students who can't afford food.

Within the past few weeks, the group has secured a kitchen for the Burrito Brigade branch in Portland. "We are slowly growing and expanding — we are always trying to up our numbers wherever we can," Denson says. "It's a full community effort." ■

To find more information and learn how you can donate or volunteer, visit Burrito-Brigade.org or find the group on Facebook.

ACTIVIST ALERT

- "Defend Equality to Defend Democracy" is a town meeting 1:30 pm Saturday, Dec. 9, at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, 1685 W. 13th Avenue. Organizers say, "Join with others to defend democracy by working towards equality in our political and electoral systems." Presenters include national director of Move to Amend, Kaitlin Sopoci Belknap, Wolf-PAC (Oregon), Community Rights Lane County, NAACP Eugene/Springfield President Eric Richardson, The Bus Project Policy and Advocacy Director Gnora Gumanow, National Popular Vote (Oregon) Co-Director Eileen Reavey, The Equal Vote Coalition and Our Revolution Lane County. After the presentations, Oregon Sen. James Manning will facilitate a discussion among the panelists.

- Atlas Solutions is having a fundraiser at Thinking Tree Distillery 7 to 11 pm Saturday, Dec. 9, at 88 Jackson Street. The event is free and will have live funk music as well as spoken word by Plaedo Wellman, who says it will be a "good night of dancing, networking, mingling and furthering the local food resiliency cause." Nonprofit Atlas Solutions uses GIS mapping technology and is developing and implementing a program to coordinate emergency food sites with grassroots gardeners who want to participate in improving access to local food for at risk and low income families. According to Wellman this program is overseen by a volunteer task force using GIS to monitor hunger and maintain a network of farms, gardens, food pantries and food distribution sites. "Atlas Solutions' gardening priorities include community food resiliency, organic and local food production, soil health, biodiversity, water and habitat conservation."

- Join **Our Children's Trust** in viewing a **live stream** of oral arguments in OCT's climate case at the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco on Dec. 11. At issue is **whether the Trump Administration can evade trial** currently set for Feb. 5, 2018. The subject of oral arguments will be the Trump administration's extraordinary mandamus petition filed in June, seeking the Ninth Circuit's review of U.S. District Court Judge Ann Aiken's 2016 denial of motions to dismiss in *Juliana v. United States*. The Trump administration claims irreparable harm for having to participate in the ordinary pre-trial discovery process and go to trial. The live stream starts 9:45 am Monday, Dec. 11, in UO Straub Hall, Room 145.

- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Oregon Water Resources Department are hosting an open house to inform the public about **potential water storage reallocation in the Willamette Valley**, 3 to 7 pm Monday, Dec. 11, at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's office at 4034 Fairview Industrial Drive in Salem. The Army Corps says they are "studying this issue because demands on the valley's water supplies have changed due to increasing populations, development, irrigation and the listing of threatened or endangered fish species. Because of this, Portland District and OWRD are sponsoring a feasibility study to determine if and how to best reallocate reservoir space during the spring and summer months. To review the draft assessment, visit nwp.usace.army.mil/notice/article/1364275.

LANE COUNTY AREA SPRAY INFORMATION

- Evans Timber, 541-998-9899, plans to spray Triclopyr 3A, Roundup Custom, Tordon RTU, 2,4-D Amine 4, Escort XP, Forest Crop Oil and/or Plantskydd animal repellent on 644.3 acres in the Ferguson Creek area. See ODF notification 2017-781-13797, call [stewardship forester Robin Biesecker](mailto:stewardship_forester@odf.or.gov) at 541-935-2283 with questions.

- Roseburg Resources, 541-679-3311, plans to spread urea fertilizer on 3941.4 acres south of Walton. See ODF notifications 2017-781-13702 and 2017-781-13707, call [Dan Menk](mailto:dan.menk@odf.or.gov) at 541-935-2283 with questions.

- Oregon Department of Forestry, 541-935-2283, plans to hire Nick's Timber Services, 503-910-1120, to spray imazapyr on 8.6 acres near Nelson Creek. See ODF notification 2017-781-13700, call 541-935-2283 with questions.

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