

Meals

Continued from A1

The volunteers bundled against the freezing air worked ceaselessly to load boxes of food and ingredients into the long line of cars and trucks, with many of the drivers leaving with smiles on their faces and a thank-you light on their lips.

"I've always liked volunteering but there's something about the holidays," said Lisa Stewart, a first-time volunteer with NeighborImpact whose family lives in Minnesota. "Not having family is one thing, but not having food is a whole other thing."

According to Stewart, the last person to come through the line had looked at her checking account and found they didn't have enough money for food — much less Thanksgiving. She was shaking and crying and desperately needed it. Being able to help her, Stewart said, made her realize the impact.

"(It's) simple but wonderful," she said.

Kara Haeussler, volunteer coordination specialist for NeighborImpact, said Central Oregon has been facing extreme food scarcity for a long time and, according to a press release from NeighborImpact, the organization has already distributed 2,400 Thanksgiving meals this year.

Half of the meals were funded through Safeway and Albertsons Turkey Bucks program while the other half were



Cars line up on Nov. 17 at Redmond High School to receive turkeys and other Thanksgiving food during NeighborImpact's food distribution drive.

bought by the Oregon Food Bank.

"With inflation greatly affecting the cost of groceries, it's no surprise that many families are struggling to get meals on the table," said Carly Sanders, the NeighborImpact food bank director, in the release. "This distribution will enable families to celebrate the holiday without the barrier of a price tag."

Garth Brown, who also coordinates volunteers, said demand for food is up about 20 percent from last year and that they are on pace to distribute four million pounds of food this year. About half of that food comes in the form of produce and vegetables.



The Redmond community showed up in droves to the NeighborImpact Thanksgiving food giveaway on Nov. 18 at Redmond High School.

The organization's food bank, he said, feeds approximately 52,000 people per month. "(NeighborImpact is) a small

group of people and it's a good group of people," he said.

"The holidays are the holidays," said Charmaine Roberts, who volunteered on Thursday. "When times are tough, anything you can do to brighten the holidays is even more special."

Roberts, a former paralegal who has been volunteering with NeighborImpact since January 2020, said her life philosophy is to try to share resources, knowledge and power with others and do it in a way that protects people's dignity. NeighborImpact, she said, fits perfectly into her philosophy.

She's stayed with the program, she said, because it was fun and it felt like she was do-

ing something good — putting good energy into the universe.

"It's such a good program and it's such a needed program," Roberts said.

And, with many of the same people coming through week after week and month after month, Roberts has come close to many of those who participate in the program. She emphasized that while some may be embarrassed, there should be no shame in needing help.

"It's our duty to each other," she said. "Anything you can do to help people still enjoy the holiday dinner and not break the bank is pretty cool."

Additionally, NeighborImpact is looking to soon break ground on a new food distribution warehouse that will be about four times the size of the current warehouse. Currently, they can't bring in all the food they're allotted because they don't have enough space for it.

According to Brown, the fridge and freezer are too small for the needs of the community and staff are forced to work harder than they need to with the current warehouse.

The organization is looking for donations for the new warehouse, which is slotted to open in approximately June 2024.

For those looking to get involved this holiday season, NeighborImpact has a list of volunteer opportunities on its website.

■ Reporter: nrosenberger@redmondspokesman.com

Smokehouse

Continued from A1

Amanda Guthrie, manager of the Redmond Smokehouse, said that this history and family connections are what often bring people back.

"It's a very family-oriented business," she said.

In the backroom, she said, the Luna family has been butchering the meat for three generations while Guthrie herself got involved because her mother worked at the shop.

In high school, Guthrie began working at the smokehouse part time to make a little extra money and was intrigued by the marketing and product side of the business and decided to stick around.

While the original history of the smokehouse is a little hazy, the business was originally named the Redmond Lockers & Custom Meat and was built next to the train tracks to serve those who worked the railroads and the surrounding Redmond community.

Guthrie said the business eventually passed from the Abbas family to the Moores, who owned it until Justin Ellis bought the business in 2019.

Runge said the Moores worked really hard to get the seasonings just right and that she still shops at the smokehouse because of the way the shop has continued to make the meat.

"The only reason I go there all the time is because they have absolutely the best meat ever," she said. "It's just the way they process (it). There's no question."

Plus, she added, they're just good people and have a great crew.



Employees at the Redmond Smokehouse butcher meat on Nov. 16 as the holiday season begins to pick up steam.

"They're very congenial and they do what they say they're going to do," Runge said.

Guthrie said she's also seen a trend of younger customers coming in to buy the same handmade meats their grandparents would cook.

"We're getting a younger generation where they're like 'this is what my grandpa had. I want that taste. I want that flavor, not what my parents were making from the store,'" Guthrie said. "They want that true old-fashioned

taste."

Guthrie said they don't add any dyes or anything to change the look of the meats and that they cut their steaks fresh every day which makes them taste better.

Runge said she recently picked up her smoked turkey from the shop and has been buying their turkeys for years.

Ellen Phillips, another customer, said she goes to the store because they have very good meat and buys her Thanksgiving turkey from them every year as

well.

When asked why the turkey was better than other places, she had one response: "it just is."

"I like the store," she said, "that's all there is to say."

While most of the meats come from local producers, the organic, non-GMO and never frozen turkeys that fill the Smokehouse's cold storage every Thanksgiving all come straight from the Diestel Family Ranch in Sonoma, California, and are smoked in house.

"It's just the way they process their meats. They have a great history, the right seasonings, compared to a lot of the slaughterhouses."

— Sharry Runge, Redmond Smokehouse regular customer

"Every once in a while we do have to outsource out of Oregon, but generally when we do that it's because of it being better quality," Guthrie said.

Guthrie said the turkeys usually sell out every year because the families are able to taste the difference between their turkeys and others.

Additionally, the butcher shop is split between cutting large cuts of meat to sell in their small retail shop and doing custom meat processing for farmers and ranchers to sell at their own businesses. Guthrie said this split is one of the main reasons why the old-fashioned business has stuck around for so long.

Guthrie said they also have specialty jerky or pepperoni flavors every week but their cranberry walnut sausage is the most popular as they head into Thanksgiving. The meats can only be bought at the smokehouse, she added.

The top sellers are likely their jerky or pepperoni, Guthrie said, but their steaks and freshly-cut meats are next in line.

"Customers usually come back year to year because of the quality that we have brought to their holiday meals," she said.

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Mayor

Continued from A1

The Redmond Area Parks and Recreation District bond narrowly passed with 12,179 in favor of the bond to fund a new rec center and 11,374 against.

The accompanying parks district levy, however, failed with 14,019 people voting against it and 9,298 voting in favor.

"I'm feeling pretty excited about (the bond)," said Matt Gilman, the chairman of the parks district board of directors. "It'll let us focus on that operating levy and figuring out potentially other ways to get that funded."

Next steps, Gilman said, will likely involve talking with architects again and going through government processes to find contractors.

Both psilocybin measures, which would prohibit the manufacture of psilocybin products and treatment facilities within city limits, passed.

The manufacturing ban passed with 8,458 votes in favor of the ban and 6,526 against it.

The treatment center ban also passed with 7,869 votes in favor of the ban and 6,896 against it.

Additionally, tallies were finalized in the race for House District 53 which covers the southern half of Redmond. Democrat Emerson Levy won the district with 19,132 votes while Michael Sipe, the Republican candidate, received 18,720 votes.

"I am so grateful to the people of Central Oregon for placing their faith in me," Levy

wrote in an emailed press release. "The time people spent with me sharing their values, their hopes, their fears, and their dreams, will have a lasting impact on me as I begin my work representing this community in Salem."

Levy also acknowledged Sipe and mentioned that while they offered voters different visions of the future, they both shared a love for the community and a passion for serving it.

Levy will share responsibility for representing Redmond's interests with Republican Vikki Breese-Iverson, who won the

race for House District 59 that covers the northern half of Redmond with 9,003 votes. Lawrence Jones, the Democratic

candidate, received 4,644 votes for House District 59.

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