

# Marion-Polk Food Share Moving Into New Digs

■ Community Fund grant helps the food bank buy the Puentes Brothers former tortilla plant.

By Ron Karten

The most shocking fact is this: half of the 66,000 hungry Oregonians served by Marion-Polk Food Share (MPFS) are children.

Folks fed by MPFS food represent 17 percent of the two-county population.

"Emergency food boxes last year were up 24 percent from the year before," said Carolyn Homan, Deputy Director of MPFS. "It's been in the double-digit increases for the last five years."

MPFS provides food to the poor through 55 local organizations like the Grand Ronde Food Bank, and today, the agency gives out almost four times as much food as it gave out in 1987, when it spun off as a program of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency. MPFS programs have simultaneously expanded the range of foods it provides.

"It's changed dramatically," said Homan, to now include "rice, beans, flower, oil and produce."

The numbers alone explain the need for new facilities. On January 10, when MPFS moves into new digs in the Salem Industrial Park, the group will almost triple, to 29,000 feet, its existing storage capacity.

It was almost a year ago that the Spirit Mountain Community Fund granted MPFS \$125,000 for the new digs. The old Puentes Brothers' (Don Pancho tortillas) building in the Salem Industrial Park brings that gift to fruition.

"The Spirit Mountain grant was the first one we got," said Homan. "You can't believe what a boost it was."

MPFS raised \$2.6 million for securing and remodeling the facility. The building fund came in addition to MPFS's regular fund raising for

its \$1.2 million annual operating budget.

The group paid \$1.35 million for the Puentes Brothers' building. The rest of the money raised will go to remodeling and general fund-raising campaign costs, according to Homan.

Today, federal food distribution programs include school breakfasts and lunches, summer programs and nutrition incentive programs, and organizations like MPFS have added some local wrinkles of their own.

Margaret Grant, retiring Execu-

The irony of those already flush with food getting the good stuff so that the poor can get the basics is worth observing.

MPFS also holds several food drives each year as well as "a whole string of those kinds of (fund raisers)," said Homan.

In recent years, the facility received a grant to buy a refrigerator truck for outreach. "Before, (the food banks and other organizations) would come in once a month to pick up food. They would need a volunteer to do it. Now, the food comes out to them every week," said

website, "Many individual farmers lost their farms, while the total amount of farmland increased. Farmers planted more acreage to try and make up for poor prices — thus further depressing prices by increasing surpluses in a time of falling demand. At the same time, millions of people in the cities lost their jobs and were without means of support for themselves and their families. The danger of malnutrition among children became a national concern. The paradox of food being plowed under and livestock being destroyed while people went

hungry caused the Federal government to act."

While the federal government provided help in 1933 for much of the nation's poor, it did not create a program for Reservation Indians, who were too far off the beaten track to take advantage of food stamp programs, until the "Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations" program of the 1960s.

Margaret Grant, the first and only Executive Director of MPFS, has headed the Salem food bank since before its inception in 1987, when it was still a program of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency. Now, she is set to retire.

She recalled that in 1985, the food bank got an \$80,000 grant from the Gannett Corporation to buy the building on Front Street that the group is now leaving.

"Getting this building was huge," said Grant. "We'd been operating out of parking lots, then a house that somebody had given us without water or telephone. When we got a port-o-potty, it was a big deal."



**New Home** — Future home of the Marion-Polk Share. The 29,000-square foot facility in the Salem Industrial Park was partly funded by the Spirit Mountain Community Fund. The agency is set to move in on January 20.

Photo by Ron Karten

tive Director of the program, developed "Operation Hungry Child" that provides sack lunches for kids during spring breaks.

"Teachers had noticed that kids would get anxious when spring break time came," said Homan. "They knew they weren't going to get lunch (during the break)."

Last year, MPFS distributed 5,000 sack lunches during spring break.

In Salem each year, MPFS also holds a fund raiser called, Chef's Night Out. Great chefs from the area take time out each October to cook up their best stuff. Contributors pay to enter and then go from chef to chef enjoying from all their best. Local wineries contribute, too.

Homan.

The rural outreach helped ease congestion at the MPFS facility and also helped even out their food supply. That in turn keeps small rural facilities from having to increase their warehouse capabilities as their list of clients grows. The refrigerator truck also enabled MPFS to increase delivery of perishables.

By June, 2004, three years into the project, the rural outreach project had distributed 3,023,383 pounds of food."

The current incarnation of national efforts to provide food for the poor goes back to the dust bowl days of the 1930s when, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture

## Runner Takes Her Talents To College

■ Tribal member Shannon McKenzie starts at Lewis-Clark State College in Idaho.

By Ron Karten

Long a standout cross country and track star at Sam Barlow High School in Gresham, Tribal member Shannon McKenzie has brought her talents to Lewis-Clark State College in Idaho.

Running now as a freshman for the school, McKenzie already is listed as a runner of note on the college's website. Just for future reference, the website reported that McKenzie finished 36<sup>th</sup> at the NAIA Region I Cross Country Cascade Conference held at Lents Park in Portland early in November. The women's cross country team at Lewis-Clark is ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the nation, according to the website.

McKenzie, who just about owned

Lewis-Clark State college student and Tribal member Shannon McKenzie.

*"I live my life based on the quote, 'to give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift.'"*

~Tribal member Shannon McKenzie

the 1500 and 3000 meter races in high school, continues to focus on competition and running as she grows, and has added radiography to her future ambitions.

"I am very active in school and running," she wrote in her 'College Student Spotlight.' I am currently taking 15 credits and on plan for a degree in radiography."

Not surprisingly, McKenzie gets a lot of pleasure out of a lot of sports. She named soccer "and especially rollerblading" among those she continues to pursue, and added hiking, swimming and camping among her activities.

McKenzie attends Lewis-Clark on a cross country/track scholarship with additional help from the Tribe.

Her parents are David and Sherrie McKenzie. Her brothers are DJay and Keath. And her sister is Sharrah. Her grandparents are Bill McKenzie and Kathleen Parazoo.

"I live my life based on the quote, 'to give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift,' she wrote. Steve Prefontaine said that.

She's become part of our dreams since we've been part of hers. Bob Dylan said that, sort of.



Photo courtesy of Shannon McKenzie