

Barer cupboards: Grand Ronde Food Bank needs help

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

With an increasing need for food, the Grand Ronde Community Resource Center's Food Bank is asking for help.

And it is not alone. Across Oregon and the nation, food contributions are down. Way down.

The statewide Oregon Food Bank and the regional supplier that delivers to Grand Ronde, Marion-Polk Food Share, each have seen drastic reductions this year in the amount of food available to help the needy.

Oregon Food Bank's Web site reported: "OFB continues to see a severe decline in U.S. Department of Agriculture commodities. During the last two months, USDA commodities dropped an additional 300,000 pounds. Overall, during the last four years, USDA commodities have dropped 52 percent or more than 6 million pounds.

"Food industry donations are down 1.1 million pounds in comparison to the same period last year. The combination of a strong consumer market, high commodity prices, increased biofuel demand, and increased efficiency in food manufacturing and international markets means both national and local sources of food are way down."

"Overall, the Oregon Food Bank is down 75 percent," said Grand Ronde Food Bank Director Alisa Larson. "We've seen a 25 percent to 75 percent reduction on all of their items."

The Grand Ronde Food Bank's cupboards are not bare. However,

IF YOU NEED HELP

The Grand Ronde Community Resource Center is at the end of North Street in Grand Ronde, behind Bunnsville in the old Knox farmhouse. The center's Food Bank is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays and Fridays. It also provides senior meals, food preservation and a community garden. For more information, contact Alisa Larson at 503-879-5731.

the food bank is down to a three- to five-day supply of basics compared with its usual inventory of five to seven days.

Still, needs are up again this year. From 252 families served in 1999, the food bank's first year, it has so far this year served more than 2,000 families with the busiest time of year still ahead. Service to individual clients has increased from 744 in 1999 to 6,808 so far this year.

During 2006, the food bank distributed almost 209,000 pounds of food.

Most wanted food items include canned meats, soups, chili, vegetables and fruit, with rice, cornmeal and oatmeal also in short supply. Local food contributions have been very generous, Larson said, including the Knight family in Elder housing that donated a whole truck load — more than 1,500 pounds — of food last month.

St. Michael's Catholic Church, Schindler's farm stand and the Grand Ronde Station all have made significant contributions, said Larson, with community member



Photo By Toby McClary

Grand Ronde Food Bank Director Alisa Larson, left, and Nutritional Outreach cook Angela Arndt stand in front of empty shelves at Grand Ronde's Food Bank. Food contributions are down across the nation.

Frank McPherson donating 19 to 20 dozen fresh eggs each week.

"We're not turning people away," said Larson, "but there's quite a reduction in what is available. There's less of everything and there are things that there are none of."

"They have some stuff, but not enough," said homeless Tribal member Kietra Nielsen, 23. "They have the best food of any (food bank) that I've been to, but (at present) no potatoes and meat. Everything else was pretty good. They gave us a lot of vegetables, that's for sure."

Nielsen moved from Montana a few weeks ago and has been camping in Grand Ronde while working with the Tribal Social Services network to find a place to live.

On campus this year, Genifer Grout and Shanna Eide, who work at the Health Clinic, are developing

fundraisers for employees of the Health Clinic, Wellness and Adult Foster Care. Together, they are challenging the rest of the Tribal departments, led by Tribal members Shannon Simi and Angella McCallister, who work in Social Services and Cultural Resources, respectively, said Human Resources specialist Steve O'Harra. O'Harra takes a leading role in the effort every year.

In 2006, the Tribal

employees collected more than 10,000 pounds of food that was split between the Grand Ronde Food Bank and the Grand Sheramina Food Bank serving Grand Ronde, Willamina and Sheridan.

This year, the Tribal employee effort is working toward two distributions, one before Thanksgiving and one at the end of the year's efforts, on Dec. 17, O'Harra said.

Planning was just getting started in late October this year for a Nov. 5 Kickoff Lunch at the Community Center.

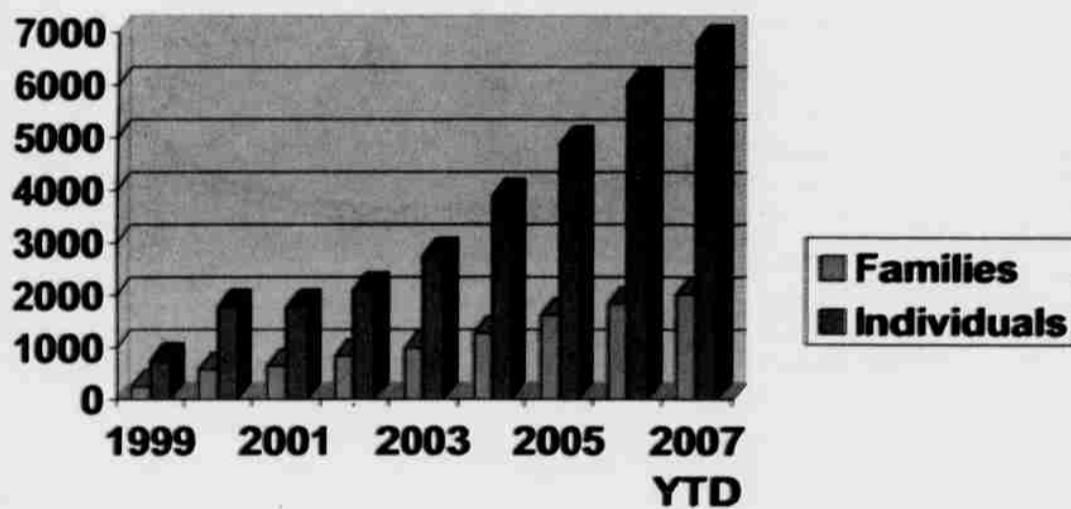
Before that, the Culture Committee had already offered to collect canned food at the Nov. 18 Restoration Pow-wow. The summer pow-wow food collection in August netted 375 pounds for the Grand Ronde Food Bank.

In addition, Tribal Elder Linda Brandon, as Culture Committee sponsor of the effort, resolved with other committee members, including Tribal Elders Bob Tom, Pat Allen, Patsy Pullin, Donna Casey and Carol Logan, and Tribal Cultural Resources Director David Lewis, "that we would all donate cans of food every time we have a meeting for Culture, and when we set the barrel up for the pow-wow, we're all going to be there and promote the food drive."

Among fundraisers of recent years, staff participated in a Thanksgiving turkey bowling contest and a 50/50 raffle contest.

"Expect a lot of activities," said O'Harra. "It's a worthy cause and we're trying to have some fun doing it." ■

Food Bank Numbers Increasing



Graph created by George Valdez



Congratulations to Danaee Towner and Leo Ayala on the birth of their beautiful baby girl

MACIE LAROSE

Love, Grandma Diane and family.

Congratulations to Kyle Towner and Jessica Cavan on the birth of their son

Karsen Jacob

Love, Grandma Diane and family.



Congratulations to Joe & Syd Lane on the birth of their baby boy

Gavin Michael

Love, Grandma Diane and family.

Happy 7th Birthday

Mia

We love you,
Mom, Marcus, Miguel and Lisa.

