

Food *from A1*

In many cases, people receiving food bring it back to a family member or multiple family members.

That number changes every month, but most recently, according to Simochko, "there's approximately 60 people that come, just to this event, and take home food donations to a total of 166 people."

Before the food truck arrives at about 4 p.m., peo-

ple talk and make jokes. They all seem to know each other in some aspect or another, or at least know of each other. There's a community aspect about the whole process from beginning to end.

"For a lot of these people, this is the only time to get out of their home. So, it's a chance to invigorate their minds," said Simochko.

When the U-Haul pulls up, people scramble to help organize and unload. A lot of these volunteers need the food, too, and help out because they are grateful to receive it. Some aspects of the organization are still in the experimental stage, such as making sure there aren't too many people on one job. Occasionally, people will overcrowd one aspect, such as organizing the food, because they are newcomers who aren't familiar with the process.

"It's a learning process because you have new people in ... they think they have to fight for [the food] because they're not used to it," said one volunteer.

Where there is sometimes overcrowding in set up, there's also occasional understaffing in clean up. According to a volunteer, it can be a struggle to have enough people on the clean-up crew.

In the end, all the food gets distributed as evenly as possible, taking into account other family members who need food but couldn't make it to the food share.

One woman talked about helping people who don't have the ability to effectively help themselves, such as those living with dementia or Alzheimer's disease. She spoke of someone she knew who couldn't leave the house — and how important it

was to bring them food.

Another woman spoke of the way she felt accepted in the group and, most importantly, not looked down upon.

"[It's] a camaraderie of people who could also use the help. I don't feel poor — I feel like I'm part of a group," she said.

She mentioned the relief she feels from the food share as well. "It takes the pressure off ... of squeezing the food stamps."

It's also an idea-sharing opportunity.

Most of the food distributed is close to expiring or right on the cusp because of SVRA's status as a non-emergency group. This means they give out food that won't make it through the weekend in FFLC's storage, saving a lot of food from going to waste. Creative ideas on how to preserve food for longer periods are exchanged among SVRA volunteers. For example: Who has the storage for three gallons of milk and which foods can be safely frozen to preserve them.

One interesting situation in the past involved an enormous tub of peanut butter that was too big for any one person. Ideas were shared on how to ensure everyone who needed some could retrieve it. The tub ended up stored in one person's house and people could come by with a smaller jar and scoop some up to take home and use.

With the menagerie of food coming in, there seems to be something new every time, according to another woman there. She said that she'd tried all kinds of foods she normally wouldn't — or couldn't — buy at the grocery store because she wasn't sure she'd like it — and it wasn't worth the risk of buying. But SVRA has been the perfect opportunity to try something strange without the fear of wasting money.

People in need throughout the community are getting the help they need from SVRA, but some who need the help and qualify for it still won't attend the food shares. One volunteer thought it could be pride or embarrassment that keep some people away. But given the positive environment at the food share, it seems as though the group would be the last to judge.

Despite some who qualify choosing not to attend the last food share, held Aug. 16, the group had approximately 16 newcomers.

"Every time that we have one, there's more new people. It just keeps growing as they learn about us," said Simochko.

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