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DWINDLING DONATIONS

Dallas Food Bank sees fewer 'extras': soap, shampoo, juice, coffee, pancake mix

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Rising costs and shrinking donations ARE forcing the Dallas Food Bank to reduce what it gives to clients.

Now the organization is hoping the community can provide a helping hand.

The food bank still provides the basic items needed in the emergency food boxes, but now can only give out toiletries when they are donated. Certain food items, such as juice, coffee, and pancake mix, are no longer purchased either.

Those are not "essential" items, said volunteer Mona Ordonez, but the toiletries and cleaning supplies helped fill another unmet need for families.

"Everyone got toilet paper, laundry soap, dish soap and a bar of soap. If you can't buy food, you can't buy that," Ordonez said. "That's just pretty essential, and now we're not buying that anymore because we need to buy food. That is the most important thing. We are first and foremost a food bank."

She noted that the Dallas community has been more than generous. The food bank is the beneficiary of numerous grants, food drives and donations from Walmart and Safeway, private donations, and gifts of pet food from local vet offices.

That generosity hasn't kept pace with the cost of running the operation.

Volunteer Leonard Hlavinka, who has worked with the food bank since the early 1980s, said the organization has lost some donors in recent years.

"They've dropped off and we don't get anyone to fill



Dallas Food Bank volunteer Carol Gagznos packs food on Friday morning. The food bank needs more donations.

JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

You can help:

What: Dallas Food Bank.
Where: 322 Main St., on the bottom level of the complex at the end of the drive way ramp.
When: 8:45 to 11:30 a.m., Monday through Friday.
For more information or to provide a donation: 503-623-3578.

their places," Hlavinka said.

It costs about \$4,000 per month to run the food bank. That money pays for rent, supplies and purchase of high-protein food to supplement donations. The staff is all volunteer, Ordonez said.

The shortfall is happening at a time when the need for the food bank is growing.

"There's been no reduction. I think probably the number of people we serve

is going up, slowly," Gary Medsker said. "We don't turn anyone away; we just give them what we can."

Dallas Food Bank can help up to 18 clients (individuals or families) per day Monday through Friday. In 2015, 2,895 food boxes were provided to people in need.

As an "emergency" food bank, it provides enough nutrition to last four or five days. Ordonez said they like



Donated bread items are staples at the food bank.

JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

to give more when they can, but, sadly, that is becoming more difficult.

"We're here and we fill a big need in the community," Ordonez said.

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS

Chen's Family Dish reopens at new location near Safeway.
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FALLS CITY

Falls City volunteers complete and install a new welcome sign.
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INDEPENDENCE

Central tennis prepares for district.
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MONMOUTH

Western Oregon University students plan two events to benefit local youths.
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SPORTS

Dallas girl heads to state golf tournament.
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EDUCATION

Falls City students study the physics of roller coasters in preparation to ride.
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POLK COUNTY

Polk County commissioner incumbent Jennifer Wheeler and challenger Terrence Taylor face off on economic issues in Polk County.
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Police look for crash witnesses

Itemizer-Observer staff report

DALLAS — The Dallas Police Department is looking for witnesses to Thursday night crash in the 800 block of West Ellendale Avenue.

At about 9:38 p.m., Dallas officers responded to a report of a motor vehicle accident. According to police, an adult male had crashed a 1996 Mitsubishi Eclipse into mailboxes and a tree. The driver was transported to a hospital.

Speed and alcohol use are believed to be contributing factors in this crash, according to police.

This case remains under investigation and no further details are available.

If you are a witness to this crash, contact Senior Officer Colby Hamilton at 503-831-3516.

Fire responses need improvement

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — A master plan recently completed on Dallas Fire and Southwest Polk Rural Fire Protection District reveals that response times to fires for both agencies are far slower than established standards.

For Dallas, the response time to a fire is within 18 minutes, seven seconds, 90 percent of the time. For Southwest, it's within 24:14, 90 percent of the time.

In 2015, Dallas responded to 36 total fires, including grass and wildland fires, while Southwest took 49 fire calls. Dallas and Southwest Chief Fred Hertel said that in the last year, three people have died in fires in Dallas.

The target response time is about seven minutes on a "priority structure fire" and 14 minutes for a medium risk structure fire, said Joe Parrott, a consultant with



Dallas Fire responds to a fire in March at Forest River.

JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer file

Emergency Servicing Consulting International, which completed the joint plan.

Dallas and Southwest fire departments have worked together under a contract for decades. While Southwest has its own board, Dallas's administrative team over-

sees both operations.

In addition to response times, the report pointed to financial and staffing issues for both agencies.

Parrott said the response times illustrate the challenge facing departments that depend almost completely on

volunteers, which both agencies do.

"That's the reality of a volunteer system," Parrott said. "Folks have got to come from home or work or wherever they are at, to the station and then out on a fire truck. It's just the way it is."

In Dallas, having people available to respond is an issue during the day when most volunteers are at work, many out of town. Coincidentally, that is also the time of the highest call volume, Hertel said.

Performance in the other two pieces of the response puzzle — the time it takes for dispatchers to notify emergency responders and actual travel time to scenes — are on target or just a little off within Dallas.

Southwest has a difficult time reaching some parts of its coverage area in a reasonable time because of the distance from the fire station.

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Relay seeks canned food

Itemizer-Observer staff report

POLK COUNTY — Polk County Relay for Life is holding a canned food drive from now until the event, on June 4 and 5.

Organizers are taking donations of small, 2- to 4-ounce cans of food, or small cans of cat or dog food, to weigh down Luminaria bags, which line the track Saturday evening.

Cans can be delivered to the Dallas Fire station, 915 SE Shelton St., Dallas, during business hours.

After Relay for Life, the food will be donated to the Salem Cancer Institute pantry, benefiting patients going through treatment, and the local animal shelter.

Relay for Life is a 24-hour event to raise awareness about and money to cure cancer of all kinds.

For more information on getting involved with Relay for Life:

THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK

wed
Come improve flexibility, balance and agility at the gentle Tai Chi stand or sit at the Dallas Aquatic Center.
11 a.m. Free.

Sunny
Hi: 83
Lo: 47

thu
Experience the bounty of Polk County Bounty Market at the Academy Building lawn each Thursday.
10 a.m.-3 p.m. Free.

Sunny
Hi: 82
Lo: 50

fri
Congratulations to three officers who graduate today from Oregon Dept. of Public Safety Standards and Training.

Sunny
Hi: 83
Lo: 50

sat
Grab your partner and do-se-do at the Guthrie Park Country Dance at the community center on Kings Valley Hwy.
7-10 p.m. \$5-\$15.

Showers
Hi: 63
Lo: 49

sun
Learn about the hobby of flying remote-control aircraft at the Wingdiggers club at Whitworth gym.
1-3 p.m. Free.

Cloudy
Hi: 69
Lo: 48

mon
Veterans can find support in others at the monthly Battle Buddies group, which meets at West Valley Hospital.
6-8 p.m. Free.

Mostly sunny
Hi: 70
Lo: 48

tue
Officer Indy will be at the Independence Public Library's spring fun club. Come learn about public safety.
4 p.m. Free.

Mostly sunny
Hi: 68
Lo: 46