

Food bank cuts ribbon at opening ceremony

Public invited to celebrate successful fundraising campaign, new pantry site

By Katherine Lacaze
EO Media Group

The South County Community Food Bank celebrated its successful community driven campaign during an ice-cream social and ribbon-cutting ceremony July 25 at the food pantry's new facility on North Roosevelt Drive.

The site opened in January after volunteers moved equipment and food from the pantry's temporary location, at the former Coastal Research & Maintenance building, to the new location, north of the Seaside School District's bus barn.

The new building is not "new" in a technical sense — it was constructed from two portable classrooms formerly used by the Cannon Beach Elementary

School. But the pantry recently acquired the structures, a donation from the school district. They were recycled and renovated to become the pantry's home for the foreseeable future.

"Everything is intentional, sustainable and is there to plant the seeds for passion and creativity and engagement," said Mary Blake, a member of the pantry's board of directors.

A community without hunger

A few years ago, the board of directors knew they would need to build a permanent home for the food pantry. At first, they considered going after an available federal block grant of \$1.5 million. The application process was cumbersome, Blake said, and although the organization had applied for and obtained grants in the past, the board had to decide if a \$1.5-million building would fit the community. They decided it would be

"maybe a little over the top," Blake said, and opted instead to "roll up our sleeves and do a grassroots effort. And that's what we did."

In June 2014, with about \$65,000 in hand, the board launched its operational and capital fundraising campaign, themed "Imagine a Community Without Hunger."

Community organizations, including the American Legion Post 99 and the Seaside Rotary Club, held fundraisers benefiting the food pantry. Businesses and individuals donated about \$100,000 in services. The organization received several donations and grants. The food pantry exceeded its goal, raising about \$210,000, in addition to the initial \$65,000 and in-kind donations. The board was on budget for the roughly \$350,000 project, which included buying the land, retrofitting the portable buildings and buying some new equipment, Blake said.

From the local schools and service groups, to individuals and businesses, "there really hasn't been a group or anybody that hasn't been touched by our food pantry," he said.

The pantry closed its temporary site, which the organization rented for several months from Bank of the Pacific, at the end of December. The new location, at 2041 N. Roosevelt Drive, Blake said, is "right up front, right on Highway 101, because the food pantry is part of the fabric of our community. A lot of our people rely, as part of their day-to-day living, on our food pantry."

In March, artist Bill Lutz painted a mural of an apple tree in the front entrance that "symbolizes the connections essential for our services to exist," according to a sign hanging nearby. The sign includes a list of people who gave donations of money, in-kind support and volunteer time that brought the pantry to its current reality.

The South County organization is looking at potential sites to provide more community gardens or grow products to benefit the local food pantry. The



KATHERINE LACAZE/EO MEDIA GROUP

South County Community Food Bank held a ribbon-cutting and ice cream social July 25 at its new location on North Roosevelt Drive, which was opened earlier this year thanks to a grassroots, community effort.

food pantry has reached one milestone, but it's just the starting point for a new journey, Blake said. "For a lot of people, this is the beginning of hope," he said. For more information, visit www.southcountyfood.com or call 503-738-9800.

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