

Area food banks prepare for holiday rush

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

Things are about to get very busy at food banks across the country.

The flurry of activity will come as no surprise to seasoned employees and volunteers. It happens every year as the holidays roll around and suddenly it seems like every school, church and business is sponsoring a food drive.

"Around the holidays I'd say we get about 80 percent more donations," CAPECO Food Programs Manager Diana Quezada said.

Quezada was preparing for the boost in donations with a growing checklist pinned to the wall of her office at the CAPECO warehouse in Pendleton.

Some food pantries like the Agape House in Hermiston stockpile nonperishable food to get them through the lean donation times in January and February, but Quezada said CAPECO tries to move everything that comes into its warehouse within a month. As a member of the Oregon Food Bank network, CAPECO can count on shipments from the state food bank during months that see fewer local donations.

"Just because we don't have food drives doesn't mean people don't get food," she said.

CAPECO distributes about 1.2 million pounds of food each year, some directly to families in need and some through allocations to emergency food assistance programs like the one run by the Agape House.

The Agape House serves about 900 families a month in the Hermiston area. Stanfield's food basket program serves about 120 to 150.

Bev Sherman, one of the volunteers who runs Stanfield's food bank, said they get some donations directly from the community and some from CAPECO. The



Warehouse assistant Tom Little puts together a food order for the Stanfield food bank at the CAPECO warehouse in Pendleton.

extra donations around the holidays allow the food bank to be open every Monday (except the one after Thanksgiving), instead of twice a month, during November and December.

Sherman said volunteers try to offer items that can be cooked together into a nutritional meal.

"We print up a menu of what we're offering for that day," she said. "We don't have a big enough area to let (clients) get it themselves but we let them pick off the menu and we go get it for them."

Letting clients pick out their own food instead of handing them a pre-packaged box is something Quezada said CAPECO and the Oregon Food Bank encourage. It gives clients a sense of ownership and normalcy, she said, and cuts down on waste.

The type of food that comes into the CAPECO warehouse varies, Quezada said.

Last Wednesday, for example, volunteers from the job training program Trenditions, Inc. were sorting and

bagging a one-time donation of 8,000 pounds of pinto beans.

Quezada said the 1.2 million pounds of food distributed by CAPECO each year doesn't count what CAPECO is able to give to the Oregon Food Bank on months that a local food processor or producer comes through with a large donation.

"We're their local contact, so they'll call us and say 'Do you want this?' and then if there is more than we can use we'll send it on to the Oregon Food Bank," Quezada said.

Girl Scout troop leader Michelle Kane said the Girl Scouts always contact area food banks about a good drop-off day before doing their annual regional food drive.

"We try to have someone near each food bank coordinate collection in their area," she said.

The girls collect food in the spring, knowing donations drop off after the winter, and divide up their cities into sections so that no one gets asked for food by more than

one troop. They end the day by bringing in their collected donations to the Agape House or another food bank for a weigh-in.

"The girls really get into this," Kane said. "They feel like they're competing against themselves in the year before."

The CAPECO warehouse gives a glimpse of where the food that goes through the organization ends up.

One portion is dedicated to a USDA program where income-qualifying tribal members and people who live on reservations can come pick out a month's worth of food.



CAPECO distributes nearly 1.2 million pounds of food locally every year.



Food Program Coordinator Tori Bowman prepares a shipment of food for the tribal commodities program at the CAPECO warehouse.

Another is dedicated to putting together boxes for senior citizens, who can pick up a few days' worth of food to supplement what they get through their local food bank.

A large walk-in freezer holds meat and other "rescue

food" donated by Safeway and Wal-Mart when it is still good but past the corporation's sell-by policy.

What CAPECO could use now, Quezada said, is more volunteers to come and help sort and package the holiday rush of food.

OSP seeks stolen vehicle after two high-speed pursuits

The Oregon State Police are asking for help locating a stolen vehicle after troopers from Hermiston were involved in two unrelated high-speed pursuits in 24 hours.

The first incident happened on Nov. 3 at about 8:30 p.m., when a trooper attempted to pull over a 1993 Chevrolet Camaro for a lighting violation on Highway 730 east of Umatilla.

According to a news release, the driver of the Camaro led the trooper on a chase east on Highway 37, also known as the Pendleton Cold Springs Highway, and Highway 334 before going off the road and "down a steep embankment" into a wheat field at the intersection of Highway 334 and 335 south of Helix.

"The Camaro continued through the wheat field and out of sight of pursuing troopers," according to the OSP statement.

The Stanfield Police Department and Umatilla County Sheriff's Office helped find the Camaro, which was abandoned a short distance away.

Early the next morning on nearby Reeder Road a 1982 GMC pickup truck was reported stolen. Police believe the two incidents are connected and are asking for help locating

the GMC, which is white, has no tailgate and has an Oregon license plate of BRS869.

The second high-speed pursuit occurred on Wednesday, Nov. 4, at about 4:30 p.m. after troopers from the Hermiston office responded to a report of a 2008 Dodge Avenger, possibly involved in an earlier domestic disturbance, parked in the emergency vehicle turnaround at milepost 174 on Interstate 84 east of Boardman.

An OSP trooper made contact with the lone occupant of the vehicle who, according to the news release, "became belligerent and fled the area at a high rate of speed."

The trooper pursued the vehicle eastbound on Interstate 84 at speeds up to 100 miles per hour until the suspect slammed on his brakes.

"The trooper managed to slow considerably and make an evasive maneuver, but the vehicles still collided," according to the statement, and the Dodge Avenger came to rest in the median, where Clint D. Cureton, 22, of Grande Ronde, Oregon, was arrested without further incident.

No one was injured in the collision.

Cureton was lodged in the Umatilla County Jail on

charges of reckless driving and felony attempt to elude in a vehicle, exceeding the speed limit 100+ and driving uninsured, with further charges pending.

Morrow County Sheriff's Office assisted in the pursuit.



PHOTO COURTESY OREGON STATE POLICE

A 2008 Dodge Avenger and an Oregon State Police patrol car sit in the median along Interstate 84 after colliding during a high-speed pursuit of the Avenger.

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