

The Community Page

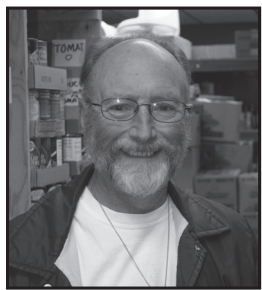
Run on the Bank!

While large U.S. financial institutions are in trouble, another immediate bank threat is closer to home: The Idaho Falls Community Food Bank is virtually empty.

This is not merely an unfortunate event in an otherwise prosperous community, rather it is a serious situation for many area families who currently depend on the generosity of their neighbors to help them and their children get through a temporary crisis.

The Food Bank organization, one beneficiary of the Scout Food Drive, is a committee of the Regional Council for Christian Ministry, a local non-profit religious organization with offices at Trinity United Methodist Church.

The Idaho Falls Community Food Bank is an outgrowth of an earlier organization of families who were members of "Bread for the World," a Christian organization urging the end of hunger. These organizations determined a need for a food bank in this area in order to meet emergency food needs, and May of 1980 saw the fulfillment of their vision. The Food Bank



Buck Horton,
director of the
Idaho Falls
Community Food
Bank

was originally housed in the basement of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, but in November of 2004 the First Presbyterian Church invited it to move to its current donated location at 245 N. Placer.

Because the help given there is of a temporary nature—for emergency needs only—recipients are eligible to receive only six boxes of food in a six-month period. Careful records are kept and correlated among supporting agencies to prevent duplication of efforts. This distribution is managed entirely by volunteers, with



Volunteers at the soup kitchen lend helping hands and hearts.

Buck Horton and Laurel Redd supervising. The hours they donate are beyond counting, and set a perfect example for the young scouts who assist in procurement.

In 2007, the Food Bank distributed 4,693 food boxes, feeding 14,407 adults and children. It is estimated that the value of donated food in 2007 exceeded \$320,000. In 2008, the demand was greatly increased, leaving the shelves virtually empty between food drives.

Food from the Scout Food Drive is also shared with the Idaho Falls Soup Kitchen, another service that has seen its numbers rise this year. The number of people attending used to vary between 50 and 75, but that number has doubled in the last six months of service.

The Soup Kitchen, under the direction of Marilyn Sanow, has been serving a free lunch to the hungry for 22 years, most recently at its address at 301 South Boulevard. After the donated food arrives, a group of volunteers from 16 area churches provide the planning, cooking, serving

and cleaning up six days a week. These volunteers return month after month because they enjoy this opportunity to serve, and never fail to leave without feeling uplifted by the appreciation of those who are fed.

The help offered by those who give their time is always unfailingly kind. These capable volunteers, Boy Scouts included, help to erase the hopelessness that many families feel when they are confronted with monumental financial distress. This caring aid thus allows families to have a respite during which they can work to improve their circumstances.

An area as beautiful and blessed as ours surely has the heart to follow their lead and give from our bounty to those in need.

If you would like to donate your time or food please contact The Soup Kitchen at (208) 557-5750 or the Idaho Falls Community Food Bank, located at 245 N. Placer, at (208) 390-1952.



Helping Others



"On my honor I will do my best, to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight."

This Scout Oath is not just a formality for a Court of Honor. Rather, it is a code to live by and can be seen in action in the Idaho Falls area when local scouts spread out in their neighborhoods to "help other people at all times."

The oath is as real as is the war on hunger, with battles raging all across the country in behalf of families in need. Scouts of the Grand Teton Council won a formidable victory this year when they collected nearly 425,000 cans of food for donations to area food banks. The 2008 collection army consisted of over 12,000 scouts who went door to door to gather food left there by generous neighbors. A new strategy, however, increased the donations by an estimated 25 to 30 percent. Rather than merely leaving bags to be filled, a door hanger was left at each house a few days before the collection, alerting the household, and if no food was left, the scout rang the doorbell and personally solicited a donation—a much more effective approach. As a result of this act of service, many thousands of meals will be provided for our neighbors who otherwise would go hungry.

The increased effort rippled across the entire distribution pond, even requiring nearly a week longer just to sort the donated food.



This success couldn't have come at a better time when demands upon local food banks are growing weekly.

Even though this success is cause for celebration, the benefits of this food drive go far beyond feeding hungry people, and become a win-win situation for everyone involved, most especially the scouts themselves.

Leaders and parents of young men freely admit that boys are growing up in a world few of us would have imagined a decade ago and feel great concern that they have the opportunity to develop those character traits that lead to happiness and fulfillment in adulthood. Unfortunately, traditional family values are

increasingly being eroded in a world of self-involvement and hedonism. The question is how to compete in such an environment, how to keep boys' interest, and how to foster a sense of belonging instead of gang mentality.

Many of the answers lie in just such a program as Scouting in general, and the Scout Food Drive in particular. As one wise man once observed, it is impossible for parents and youth leaders to compete with the world of entertainment, for example, in the amount of money and expertise spent to attract our youth and their dollars. But the good news is that we don't have to in order to lead them to fulfillment. There is a tool available to us that all the enticement to the contrary cannot duplicate, and that is the joy found in service.

These young men are learning at a young age to be compassionate and generous. One young scout, the embodiment of this premise, found upon knocking that the single-parent family within was in need themselves, so he hastily ran to the truck, removed a supply of canned food, and left it at the house with the family. Remarkable for a young boy to recognize this need—a recognition born of a habit of service to others, of putting the Scout oath into practice, not just repetition.