

'Need is in our own back yard'

Community Foundation lends a hand at roving food bank pantry

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Chilly, daylong rain provided a gloomy backdrop Thursday as members of the Lake County Community Foundation sought to demonstrate the level of need in Lake County.

Philanthropists, potential donors and board members on the foundation's fourth annual bus tour found themselves in a steady rain as they helped distribute food to the needy from a Northern Illinois Food Bank truck at the Pearce Community Resource Center in Zion.

The focus of the bus tour this year was local hunger, as the foundation stresses that poverty and food insecurity are not limited to the inner-city areas of Chicago. "It provides some insight into what's going on right here in the county. A lot of people on the tour are from Highland Park, Lake Forest and Lake Bluff," said foundation board President Kitty Lansing. "A lot of people are philanthropically focused on Chicago."

As for helping with the food distribution, Lansing said, "It's always good to have a little hands-on experience. You can always read about things."

"We want the donor community to realize the need is in our own back yard," said foundation spokeswoman Susan Niederlander. "Part of our mission is to help people realize we have dire needs right here."

The tour's stop at Pearce Center also demonstrated the benefits of consolidating resources.

The center houses a host of agencies that provide resources for those in need, including the Community Resources for Education and Wellness (CREW) Substance Abuse and Anger Management Division, Zion-Benton Workforce Development Training Center, Zion-Benton Children's Services, Care Net Family Resource Center, LOVE INC. and the Coalition for Healthy Communities.

Zion Township Supervisor Cheri Ditzig, who volunteers with CREW, said the group helps the agencies collaborate to save money and provide a one-stop help center for clients.

Meanwhile, the Lake County Community Foundation uses its expertise to secure and direct grants and donations to local agencies in need.

Niederlander said food security was chosen as the foundation's theme this year "because we're seeing such an increase in need, obviously due to the economic times."

At the street level, the results of such efforts were tangible Thursday. Robert Thompson of Zion, wet but happy, walked away from the mobile pantry with a large box of staples that will help keep food on his family's table.

"There's cereal, vegetables, fruit and five different kinds of meat," he said with a smile. "A lot of good things."

Foundation facts

For more information on the Lake County Community Foundation, visit lakecountycf.org

Mobile food pantry

Chilly, daylong rain provided a gloomy backdrop Thursday as members of the Lake County Community Foundation sought to demonstrate the level of need in Lake County. Volunteers on the foundation's fourth annual bus tour found themselves in a steady rain as they helped distribute food to the needy from a Northern Illinois Food Bank truck at the Pearce Community Resource Center in Zion.



Darryn Reed, 16, of Zion, helps Jennifer Ester, of Beach Park, during food distribution by the Northern Illinois Food Bank from the 35-foot refrigerated Mobile Pantry Truck in Zion. (Thomas Delany Jr./News-Sun)



Martha Brown, 16, of Zion, and Linda Busto (right), 15, of Beach Park, hand out bananas to Janice Kopta, of Zion, while volunteering for the Northern Illinois Food Bank from the 35-foot refrigerated Mobile Pantry Truck in Zion. (Thomas Delany Jr./News-Sun)



Emmanuel Reyes, 16, of Zion, unloads packages of frozen chicken for distribution by the Northern Illinois Food Bank from the 35-foot refrigerated Mobile Pantry Truck in Zion. The Lake County Foundation hosted its 4th annual bus tour which included helping with food distribution in Zion. (Thomas Delany Jr./News-Sun)



Kia Cook, 15, Zion, hands boxes of cereal to Ralino Vidal, of Zion, while volunteering her time for food distribution by the Northern Illinois Food Bank from the 35-foot refrigerated Mobile Pantry Truck in Zion. (Thomas Delany Jr./News-Sun)



Shaqueita Tanner (left), 16, of Zion, passes out bags of potatoes during food distribution by the Northern Illinois Food Bank from the 35-foot refrigerated Mobile Pantry Truck in Zion. (Thomas Delany Jr./News-Sun)



(left to right) Renee Petersen of Libertyville, Leslie Mitchel Bond of Glencoe, and Tanya Vartivarian of Chicago, unpack boxes of food for distribution by the Northern Illinois Food Bank from the 35-foot refrigerated Mobile Pantry Truck in Zion.
(Thomas Delany Jr./News-Sun)



Trying to keep dry while waiting for their number to be called are (left to right) Nora Estrada, Elliot Estrada and Dolores Martinez, all of Waukegan, during food distribution by the Northern Illinois Food Bank from the 35-foot refrigerated Mobile Pantry Truck in Zion. The Lake County Foundation hosted its 4th annual bus tour which included helping with food distribution in Zion. (Thomas Delany Jr./News-Sun)



Northern Illinois Food Bank Agency Services Manager Kris DeSmedt (right) of Wheaton collects the #57 slip from Denise Prentice of Zion. The Lake County Foundation hosted its 4th annual bus tour which included helping with food distribution in Zion. Prentice said she has waited in line for one hour for her number to be called. (Thomas Delany Jr./News-Sun)