

'Best event yet': 26,000 pounds of food given away to La Porte County residents at PNW

STAFF REPORTS Mar 3, 2021 0



Volunteers of all ages helped out Tuesday at Purdue University Northwest when the United Way of La Porte County, Northern Indiana Food Bank and Citizens Concerned for the Homeless conducted the county's largest mobile food distribution since the start of the pandemic.


Photos provided / Citizens Concerned for the Homeless

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WESTVILLE — Jim Musial has been doing this for a while, but the executive director of Citizens Concerned for the Homeless called Tuesday's mobile food distribution at Purdue University Northwest the "best ever."

"The perfect storm," Musial said, "26,000 pounds of food; United Way sponsorship and Food Bank contribution; 24 PNW faculty and (social work program) students volunteering for the event... "our beloved Quilt Ladies' (Steady Stitchers Purdue Extension) homemade masks, even a couple of youngsters to help ... was cold but productive."

Some 540 families, representing 1,582 family members, were served at the event, which the United Way of LaPorte County partnered with the Food Bank of Northern Indiana, PNW and Farmers to Families to sponsor.

“On Tuesday, organizations like the ones mentioned above and many other volunteers came out to help load boxes full of food into the cars of our community neighbors,” according to Ellen Devereux of the United Way.

Those in need of food assistance received fresh perishable items and dry goods, all pre-bagged and pre-boxed. Boxes were placed safely into the trunks of cars for a contactless delivery to keep everyone safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, she said. The location on U.S. 421 in Westville was just a short drive from Michigan City, La Porte, Kingsford Heights, and surrounding areas, Devereux said.

Farmers to Families provided boxes including dairy, produce and pre-cooked meat. United Way provided boxes of non-perishable goods, fruits, vegetables, and eggs. Each family that participated Tuesday received approximately 50 pounds of food, she said.

“Purdue Northwest provided many volunteers from their social work program to give their students a chance to see firsthand how our community can all come together for the same goal,” Devereux said.

Food resources took a big hit at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and still continue to be a need in our community, she said.

“When speaking to those that drove through to receive food, all were appreciative and thankful for this event as this distribution, for some, is their main source for food.” Residents are urged to continuously check on the social media pages of the United Way, Food Bank of Northern Indiana or CCH for updates on upcoming food distributions.

The next event will March 9 in La Porte, with location and other details to be announced.