

LA PORTE COUNTY

Herald-Dispatch

Rescuing what you don't eat

Initiative saves unused food from stores, and benefits pantries, soup kitchens

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Volunteers unload boxes of food from Walmart, Meijer, Aldi, Gordon Food Service and Big Lots, which was nearing its expiration date and would have been thrown out. Instead it will now go to area food pantries and soup kitchens.

MICHIGAN CITY — Food rescue is not a term everyone is familiar with, but it is the idea behind a new program that kicked off in Michigan City, taking food that would have been thrown away and providing it to homeless shelters and food pantries in the city.

“We started the Food Rescue project (Jan. 3) and it turned out even better than expected,” Jim Musial, executive director of Citizens Concerned for the Homeless said.

“A total of 182 boxes of food were received and distributed, not one box was unclaimed.

“The event will repeat Tuesdays and Thursdays,” he said. “We are so happy with the turnout of partners and the result.”

The project, called the Food Rescue Initiative, has been in the planning stages for some time and reached the “pilot phase” this week behind the coordinated efforts of CCH and community partners including Feeding America and the Food Bank of Northern Indiana.

“The impact we hope will be groundbreaking in La Porte County,” Musial said.

It involves local retailers “donating food nearing the end of its shelf life, which would otherwise be disposed of,” Musial said.

So far, Walmart, Meijer, Aldi, Gordon Food Service and Big Lots have agreed to take part, and Musial hopes other food retailers will join the cause in the future.

To start off the project, CCH volunteers will “pick up and deliver food on Tuesday and Thursday to a distribution point, where it will be picked up by local food pantries, soup kitchens and homeless shelters in Michigan City, and a food pantry in La Porte,” Musial said.

At the inaugural drop off, food was picked up by Trinity Episcopal Food Pantry, Salvation Army Food Pantry, Sacred Heart Food Pantry, Faith City Assembly of God Food Pantry, Center Township Trustee Food Pantry, St. Paul Soup Kitchen, 1st Presbyterian Food Pantry, Sand Castle Shelter For Homeless Families, Stepping Stone Shelter and Interfaith Community PADS.

The success left Musial ecstatic.

“Wow!!!” he posted on Facebook. “CCH distributed over 180 boxes of frozen meat, vegetables, fruit, bottled water and baked goods.”

Helping in the pickup and delivery effort were Keys to Hope participant volunteers Luke and Levi, Goodwill Senior Community Service Employment Program members Chuck and Mike, and Grace Learning Center veteran participant JJ.

All “really put their backs into it today, very impressive,” said Musial, who coordinated the event with the CCH director, while incoming board president Ed Merrion assisted and maintained the paperwork.

“CCH sincerely thanks our partners who made this event possible and created a blueprint for community response to food rescue and local food insecurity,” Musial said.

“Result-based accountability is our guide and goal under new countywide standards, which is making us better in serving our community and its brothers and sisters.”

The program will need help to expand, he said.

“We are applying for funding from grant providers, but in the meantime CCH will be shouldering the cost of this critical program as we fine tune the program.”

Anyone who would like to participate in this “community cause of feeding those less fortunate” can click on the link to the CCH donation page at sandcastleshelter.org/donate.php. For more information, contact Musial at (219) 879-2552 or (219) 809-9903.

—From staff reports