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# Hunger fight escalates

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As holiday shopping lists are compiled and budgets reviewed, nonprofits that provide food baskets to the needy also are preparing to work twice as hard to meet demand this year.

"We're bracing ourselves for the same thing we've been seeing over the past quarter — at least a 25 percent increase in need," said Betsy Timm of Catholic Charities of Santa Rosa.

Timm feels strongly that in the worst of times, people are reminded of the true spirit of Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Are the holidays really about the next big splurge, or the urge to help one's fellow man?

"There is an opportunity for people to examine what's important to them," Timm said. "It is not uncommon for us to receive notes with donations thanking us for the opportunity to give."

This year, Catholic Charities is making a special effort to reach those in need who can't afford to drive into Santa Rosa.

The charity's rural Food Project turns \$20 into two pounds of dry beans, four cans of beef stew, two bags of rice, four cans of green beans, four cans of tuna, four cans of peaches, four boxes of macaroni and cheese, four cans of soup, two cans of refried beans, two pounds of pasta, four cans of tomato sauce, two jars of peanut butter and four pounds of ground chicken.

"We can do that because \$1 purchases \$5 worth of food when we buy from the Redwood Empire Food Bank," Timm said.

The Redwood Empire Food Bank is Sonoma County's largest distribution point for food programs administered by charitable organizations. These smaller food programs rely on the 21-year-old food bank to purchase items at very low cost.

Food Bank Executive Director David Goodman noted that a huge factor for the agency is the cost of fuel, a large part of its budget.



JEFF KAN LEE/*The Press Democrat*  
Ron Karp, executive director of Food for Thought, displays bananas at the organization's store in Forestville

"Only 15 percent of our food comes from Sonoma County. The rest needs to be driven in. That's 9.4 million pounds of food on trucks — and that's expensive," he said.

Goodman said he is seeking donations of food, money and volunteer hours to meet the increased needs this holiday season.

"I am so grateful for so much wonderful support. But this year, if we all do what we've just been doing, we'll lose ground. Everybody needs to do double," he said, emphasizing that if financial support is not feasible, volunteering will help.

For Ron Karp, executive director of Food For Thought, the Sonoma County AIDS Food Bank in Forestville, financial support is not as big an issue this year.

What he needs are more boots on the ground to haul boxed chicken and turkey dinners.

"Every food program needs money, donations, but what we need right now is volunteers to help deliver Thanksgiving and Christmas boxes," he said.

A recent call for donations in a Food For Thought mailer stressed the rising prices of fruits and vegetables, especially bananas, which many recipients use to take medications.

Karp hopes backyard farmers with edible leftovers will make arrangements to drop off produce. Donors can do so at 6550 Railroad Ave. in Forestville or at any of the following Food For Thought food drives:

Saturday Nov. 15 at Safeway in Sebastopol or Oliver's Market on Stony Point Road in Santa Rosa;

Nov. 22 at Sonoma Market in Sonoma, Fircrest Market in Sebastopol or Safeway on Fourth Street in Santa Rosa;

Dec. 6 at G&G Market in Petaluma or Lucky in Sebastopol;

Dec. 13 at Safeway in Guerneville, Oliver's Market in Cotati or Lucky on Bicentennial Way in Santa Rosa.

"We serve 550 clients, which includes about 40 children. These are the weeks that we could really use some help," said Karp said.

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