

Food Bank Visits Rising

Monday, 24 September 2012

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Last week KMXT talked with Monte Hawver, the executive director of the Brother Francis Shelter, who said usage at the shelter is on the rise. Brother Francis isn't the only local organization that has noticed a rise in community need. Kelli Foreman is the public educator for the Kodiak Baptist Mission Food Bank. She said summer usage usually spikes at the food bank with seasonal workers in town, but this year they noticed a lot more year round residents seeking out the food bank.

-- (Food Bank 1 :46 “What we've noticed the most is we do have high numbers, we're serving about 1,000 individuals each month and in past years we have had that spike throughout our summer months, but what we've noticed this year is we don't have a lot of seasonal workers that have come in to work in the canneries or in town. So we haven't had one to two time applicants that will only use our services for a couple months. What Alex, our food bank director is really seeing is these are community members, people that are here year round. And so to have that increase of people that is a consistently high number can be a little bit stressful when you're trying to provide food each month, because we're not going to see a drop off in the month of September and October. In the month of August we saw 59 new applicants come through.”)

Foreman said she's not sure why the numbers are going up. She said people who used to donate to the food bank are now coming in to use their services. Usage is expected to increase in the coming months as people start to turn on their furnaces and ask whether or not they should heat their homes or buy food. As difficult as providing food can be, Foreman said she is continually impressed by the generosity and creativity of how the community gives.

-- (Food Bank 2 : 29 “We do have a lot of the local grocers here that donate each week to the food bank. We go out to the coast guard base and they also have started to donate. We've had some boats that have actually recently started to donate as well. If they come in from a trip and have excess food they bring that by which is just fabulous to have. Even some of the local canneries, they have bycatch fish. And if they can process that and seal it for us then we are able to use that and so we've been able to do that as well.”)

She said food drives and individual or family donations also help a lot. This summer the food bank received a hefty grant through the Wal-Mart Foundation during Pitbull's visit to the emerald isle. She said donations like that help keep the food bank running in different ways.

-- (Food Bank 3 : 25 “From the paper side of it we need

electricity to heat our building and keep our freezers cold so we can provide meat and different items for our food bank clients. And we need fuel in our vehicle to be able to pick up the food to serve. So things like the \$10,000 grant do help significantly keep us running, especially when we see this increase in need.”)

While the food bank delivers to local residents regularly, Foreman said the number of villages requesting services has also increased.

-- (Food Bank
4 :22 “We serve the villages and we’re seeing a big increase in that. Ouzinkie is one that has popped up quite a bit lately with services and we pack monthly boxes that go out to about four of the villages. We have donated boat space or we’ve even had some planes fly some things out so it’s really great to have our community help get the food where it needs to be.”)

Foreman said with holidays on the horizon the food bank will be looking for ways to help make Thanksgiving and Christmas enjoyable for those in need and hopes the community will continue to stay involved with donations and volunteering.

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