

Schools start food drive

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It's become a tradition. For as long as most people can remember, schools and community organizations throughout the canyon organize food drives to support the area's neediest families at this time of year.

At Stayton High School, the school's student government class is inspiring students to be leaders in community service. The school is the largest contributor to the food bank every year, according to Stayton Community Food Bank manager Edna Rickman.

Last year, the high school school collected 9,000 pounds of food. All schools involved in food drives, including Regis High School and St. Mary Catholic School as well as North Santiam School District, collected 13 tons of food last year.

"We get the food, which saves us from having to buy a lot of things," Rickman said. "It also makes children and students aware that there are people out there who need these things and (gives) a sense of character."

Food drives at several schools in the North Santiam School District are sponsored by the Stayton Lions Club with support from the Kiwanis Club of Stayton. The service organizations pick up and deliver the food after it is collected.

Stayton High School's ASB students organize a competition between third period classes that lasts two weeks.

Senior Ema Swaim and junior Kristina McDonald lead the community service committee. They organize activities and incentives to keep students donating.

"I think it's successful because Stayton is so competitive," McDonald said. "We have a lot of students and teachers who love to win."

The students have planned events that charge canned food donations for admission. The school already held a video game session. A holiday band and choir concert is Monday. Every student will bring home a bag to fill with food Friday. The Future Business Leaders of America hold a carnival for children Friday.

"I know what it's like to live on the other side. I've been someone who needed help," Swaim said. "Being the one who gives the help is great for me. All that hard work and knowing you

helped people feels really good."

This year, the need is great, Rickman said.

"We gave out 33 boxes on Nov. 23," Rickman said.

That's a record for the food bank, Rickman said. New clients have also increased; 15 percent of last month's clients were first-time applicants, he said.

Student government teacher Nicole Duncan said the food drive shows the community that students can make a difference.

"I think to see high school students giving back shows they do care and will rally around our community," Duncan said. "A lot of students in our community are affected by this and benefit from this happening."

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