

Food Bank stresses growing needs

By [Tom Murphy](#)
Rocky Mount Telegram

Friday, May 23, 2008

The mission of the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina is to harness and supply resources so that no one goes hungry.

A Raleigh-based nonprofit, the food bank distributed more than 32.6 million pounds of food in fiscal year 2006-07 to a network of 870 participating agencies – food pantries, shelters, soup kitchen and group homes. It has warehouses in Durham, Greenville, Raleigh (main branch), the Sandhills (Southern Pines) and Wilmington.

Peter Sloane, regional operations manager for the food bank, and Anna Davenport, food resource manager, told Rocky Mount Kiwanis Club members on Thursday that the food bank is about capturing food that might have been thrown away or that is earmarked to be discarded.

The food bank has 45 active partners in Nash and Edgecombe counties, including churches, after-school programs and rescue missions that receive food and nonfood products, Sloane said.

Deliveries are made to the Rocky Mount area three times a week because half the food is perishable, Davenport said.

"We try to get refrigerators and freezers for agencies so they can work with the kinds of food we get," she said.

However, times are more challenging for the food bank, which is facing higher delivery costs because of rising gas prices, Sloane said.

"The face of hunger has changed today," he said. "There are hungry people in neighborhoods who are out of work because of downsizing or working families whose bills are exceeding their incomes, especially single-parent homes with kids."

About 149,000 kids in the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina's service area are in jeopardy of hunger, Sloane said. Food bank clients have to choose between food and paying utilities, rent or mortgages and medicine, he said.

Children in school are fed while school is in session; but when the school year ends they face hunger, Sloane said. The food bank is able to provide after-school meals and weekend meals for children through its Kids Cafe and Backpack programs that provide area youth with a list of food pantries where they can get food when school is out, he said.

Some "great partner agencies" in the Rocky Mount area include supermarkets and food distributors that allow the food bank to "harness distressed products," Davenport said.

The food bank recently distributed three tractor-trailer loads of juice boxes because the manufacturer failed to include vitamin A in the product, Davenport said. Food bank volunteers labeled each box, noting the deficiency, which is required by law, and delivered them to the food bank agencies, she said.

"We can distribute four pounds of food for \$1," Davenport said. "All the food we get is free, but we really need to

grow.

"Rocky Mount agencies have rolled up their sleeves, and this community has really come through."

Rising food prices are challenging the food bank's collection efforts, Sloane said.

"Farmers are growing more corn for ethanol rather than for food," he said. "There is less food and, when food prices go up, it's more strain on everyone.

"Pocketbooks are getting tighter, and donations are going down, which puts pressure on the food bank."
Vote for this story!

Find this article at:

<http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/local/content/news/stories/2008/05/23/foodbank.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.