

COMMUNITY

United Food Bank Drew Hundreds at Produce Bonanza

By AnnElise Makin

More than a hundred people lined up one early Saturday morning in front of the United Food Bank (UFB) location on East Javelina Avenue in Mesa waiting for fresh produce to be given away at the Community Produce Bonanza.

"This program was a whole new idea for us," said UFB Chief Development Officer Lisa Goin, who had helped start this outreach. Since Arizona growers had donated large quantities of citrus and vegetables, the UFB decided to make the goods available to the general public.

"There are so many people going hungry in the community, who don't directly benefit from our agencies' services," Lisa said. "So, we took this opportunity to help additional people."

Two large bins with lettuce, numerous grocery bags of tomatoes, and many other nutritious produce that did not make the cut for retail, by fault of shape or size, found grateful recipients.

"We are lucky that citrus is so abundant in Arizona," Lisa stated. Altogether, one million pounds of citrus had been gathered statewide this year. These fruits had

either been donated by growers or gathered through volunteer neighborhood gleaning efforts.

Thus the Mesa Produce Bonanza, too, had plenty of oranges, lemons and grapefruit to share. By noon, more than 300 people had come for the healthy stuff.

"It was a wonderful morning," Lisa recalled. "People were so happy about the good quality produce, and asked us if we did this often. But for us, too, this was the first Produce Bonanza."

The favorable welcome of the produce giveaway confirmed what Lisa has observed many times before—the face of hunger has changed. It has become more inclusive—not a good thing. Hunger is now affecting all ages and facets of society.

"We saw people of all ages, single, elderly and families," Lisa recalled. "And everybody was so thankful." ■

Meeting people's basic needs, especially providing nutrition, has become a growing challenge. If you would like to help United Food Bank, or, if your school, business or organization is interested in organizing a food or donation drive, you can download the forms and information at www.unitedfoodbank.org/.



United Food Bank Benefits from Successful Drives

Thanks to some creative food drives from businesses, schools and community friends, United Food Bank was able to help an increased number of hungry people this winter season. This is how some organizations helped.

TURKEY DRIVE INCREASE

Last fall, United Food Bank collected more turkeys, nonperishable items and cash for their turkey drive than in the previous year. The community donated a total of 6,400 turkeys in 2011, compared with 5,000 in 2010, due in part to the creative efforts of the various turkey drives in the community. Frontrunner was the City of Mesa, with a major turkey collection day, *Turkey Tuesday*. City employees topped off efforts with 411 turkeys and more than \$3,000!

ARTISTIC BINS FROM ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Arizona State University students helped United Food Bank this holiday by painting food drive bins. Food drive bins are used daily in schools all over the East Valley. With more than 180,000 pounds of food, and close to \$11,000 coming in from schools last year, these bins are essential to the success of the food drives. Their new paint jobs make them easy to spot on participating school campuses.

BOY SCOUTS CONCERTED ACTION

At a time when the United Food Bank was down by about a million pounds of food, the Boy Scouts Grand Canyon Chapter kicked in with massive action. The Scouts distributed flyers to households, inviting people to donate nonperishable goods from their cupboards. In this nationally replicated campaign, the Mesa Food Bank benefited tremendously. The Scouts brought in 154,000 pounds of food, remarkably exceeding last year's 125,000 pounds (22.5 percent increase).

EDUCATION

Self Development Charter School offers unique program

By Rachel Hunt

Students attending Self Development Charter Schools (SDCS) have a unique opportunity to attain important educational goals through the Six in Four (SIF) program.

SIF is an option for high achieving students in fifth through eighth grades. Students must excel in all academic areas. To enroll in SIF, students begin their program in fifth grade, during the 2012– 2013 school year.

In today's world, it is critical for students preparing for careers in science, technology, engineering and math to receive early exposure to the core coursework.

Participating in the SIF program allows those students who are ready to complete necessary math and science classes early. For example, students will complete Algebra II in the eighth grade. Taking courses earlier gives students the option to undertake the challenge of accelerating a high school program and accomplishing six years of schooling in four years.

Science is another focus of the SIF program. In this program, students will have the opportunity to complete chemistry during their eighth-grade year. SDSCS offers this program in our newly built Science Technology Center.

The middle school program also incorporates our

blended language learning program, working with an elite college. This program gives our students the opportunity to learn Latin, Spanish or Mandarin. Students have the opportunity to participate in and receive high school foreign language credit when they have reached that point.

Although SDSCS presently offers an accelerated program, in which all students learn at one grade level higher, the SIF program provides an additional academic and intellectual track.

Eligible students, who complete the SIF program, are allowed to begin college coursework early. In addition, completion may lead to scholarships for academic competency. Therefore, these students will complete two years of college at a faster rate when compared with the pathway typical of middle and high school students. The students benefit from the early exposure to entry-level college classes.

Parent Rebecca Gau enthusiastically supports the program, with both of her sons attending SDSCS. She is a proponent of the SIF program. "I am thrilled that SDSCS



offers the Six in the Four years [program]," she said. "My son is in Algebra 1, while in the sixth grade, and has completed a year's worth of Mandarin. He is excited to do his homework, and still has time for sports and other after school activities," Rebecca continued. "I am confident he is getting the best education possible."

"The program is amazing," stated Max, an SIF student. "I am overjoyed at the fact I can earn college credits in high school."

Consider the SIF program for your student. Space is limited for the 2012-2013 school year. ■

For more information, please contact Jennifer Salvatori at (480) 641-2640. You also can visit our Web site for more information regarding the SIF program and other highly rated programs at SDSCS.