

Thunderbird food drive provides dinners, X-Mas joy

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Food goes to Jim Harlin Pantry, then to the needy

Every year, for as long as anyone can remember, the folks at Thunderbird Supply, 1907 W. Historic Highway 66, have put on a food drive to help out those in need during the Christmas Holidays.

This year, organizers thought the economic uncertainties of 2016 might mean a not-so-lengthy yield.

But what was collected in the store over a three-month period was more than what was expected.

“It’s something we do particularly during this time of year,” Leo Torrez, retail sales manager at Thunderbird, said. Torrez oversees the collection effort. “From what we get, we then give it to the Jim Harlin Community Pantry and they distribute it.”

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Torrez, who's been involved with the collection effort for several years, said the store collects canned and dry foods and "most anything else that people coming through the door want to give." That amounts to more than 4,000 pounds of food, he said, adding, "It's a good deed to do at this time of year."

Alice Perez, the executive director at the Jim Harlin Community Pantry, said the collection effort is definitely appreciated. She said about once a week – sometimes more – Community Pantry trucks bring loads of the donated food across town from Thunderbird Supply.

"It's something that's done for people who need it," Perez said. "If we have an excess at the end of December, then we continue our distribution effort."

Thunderbird donates the large boxes necessary to hold the food items. When the sorting is complete on the other end, Torrez and Perez estimate that enough food is collected to feed more than 200 families around McKinley County – which is what collection efforts have averaged over the years, Torrez said.

A typical food box consist of macaroni and cheese, flour, stuffing, mashed potatoes, cornbread – everything needed to make a large holiday dinner.

"I think it a very nice thing what Thunderbird does," Jeremy Yazzie, 35, of Gallup said. "For some people they can't afford a lot during the holidays or anyway for that matter. I know I appreciate it."

Torrez credits the store employees who volunteer their time to set up and man tables and who make the Thunderbird collection effort such a success.

"We do this to help people at Christmas time," Tanya Begay of Gallup, a Thunderbird worker, said.

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“It’s something that is very worthwhile to do,” added fellow Thunderbird employee Karen Shorty, also of Gallup. “We think everybody who is a part of this is so grateful,” the two said.

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