

Letter carriers' annual food drive is Saturday in Longview in Kelso

By The Daily News | Posted: Tuesday, May 4, 2010

Mail carriers are hoping to pick up more than letters at Longview-Kelso area homes this Saturday, when the annual National Association of Letter Carriers food drive takes place.

Nonperishable food items are at the top of carriers' wish lists.

Foodstuff collected locally will go to the Help Warehouse, the area's largest food bank.

Warehouse program manager Lois Shelton said the food drive couldn't have come at a better time. The need for food is constant, she said, and area food banks give out an average of 5,200 food boxes to people in need each month.

"It's not surprising. We're seeing a lot of the 'newly unemployed,' people who have had jobs until recently," said Shelton. "People begin to come to the food banks for help once their unemployment benefits run out and they've used up their savings. They've hit bottom."

Shelton noted that she and her staff at the food warehouse are seeing an increase in single parent households.

"We're seeing a lot more fathers with young children this year," she said. "Families are needing more help more often. It's ongoing rather than occasional. That tells me that people have no other resources."

The postal food drive is the area's second biggest of the year, with December's Walk n' Knock the largest. The food drive in this area is organized by the National Association of Letter Carriers Locals 2214 and 2103.

Letter carriers in Kelso and Longview will leave blue plastic bags in people's mail boxes on Thursday, and carriers and their families will pick up the food on Saturday, delivering it to Help Warehouse in the CAP building, located at 1526 Commerce Ave., (Longview) or to the post office in Kelso.

The cost of the bags is \$2,500, which was donated again this year by the Pacific Surgical Institute, Longview Junior Service League and L&J Feed.

Volunteers are still needed to box up food through the day, especially between 3 and 6 p.m., when most of the food is delivered by the letter carriers. People who are interested in volunteering are asked to call Help Warehouse at 425-3430, extension 281. Because of laws, no one under 16 years is allowed to work in the warehouse.