

Press Release



Battle Ground Public Schools

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Chief Umtuch 8th graders sort and box six-plus tons of food for NCCFB

Mike Kleiner, teacher at Chief Umtuch Middle School in Battle Ground, describes the recent civic-minded project by nearly 150 eighth graders there as akin to “ants on a potato chip.”

He was explaining how the students swarmed all over dozens of boxes of food and household items destined for needy local residents by way of the North County Community Food Bank (NCCFB) in Battle Ground. The bounty is the NCCFB’s share of the food and supplies donated by generous residents in the annual countywide Walk & Knock drive on Dec. 5.

In the best spirit of the Christmas season, the enthused Chief Umtuch students working about an hour each of two days unloaded 12,888 pounds of goods from 10 pallets, carried it all inside the school cafeteria, sorted it, boxed it and loaded it into vans for the trip to the NCCFB.

The six-plus tons of food and supplies had been picked up at the Walk & Knock warehouse at the Port of Vancouver by an Andersen Dairy truck and driver from Battle Ground and delivered to Chief Umtuch Middle School.

Part of the students’ task was to check the pull date on everything, item by item by item. Anything with a pull date in the near future was designated for prompt distribution by the food bank. But in some cases, items were too old to give away and had to be discarded. The oldest item spotted by the students and discarded was a Betty Crocker angel food cake mix with a 1987 – yes, 1987 – pull date.

The students then sorted the food into one of 10 categories, such as rice and beans, canned vegetables, canned fruit and pastas and boxed it accordingly. That made it easier for volunteers at the food bank to prepare individual family packs for hungry north county recipients.

A grateful Elaine Hertz, executive director of the NCCFB who was helping at Chief Umtuch Wednesday, said the 12,888 pounds from the Walk & Knock food drive might – might – last until March. Then, it’ll be crunch time again.

Under Kleiner’s leadership, Chief Umtuch students have helped the NCCFB with December penny drives (larger denominations more than welcome) and various tasks. But this was the first time the students tackled the job of sorting and boxing the entire NCCFB share of the Walk & Knock collection.

Kleiner said the eighth graders spent an average of two class-periods on the project, usually as part of an enrichment class in which “service projects like this fit perfectly.”

Kleiner, who in 2007 instigated Christmas-season projects at Chief Umtuch to benefit the food bank, praised teachers and school administrators for their support. “This doesn’t work if everybody’s not on board,” he said. We’ve got a serious, kick-butt eighth-grade teaching team here.”

The NCCFB is at 17 N.E. Third Ave. in Battle Ground (687-5007; www.nccfoodbank.com). Volunteers and donations of cash or food are always welcome.



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