

Published August 18th, 2010

Moraga Gives Nearly 9000 Pounds of Pears to the Food Bank

By Sophie Braccini



1st time volunteer Adam Nolan from Lafayette helps his mom at the pear harvest Photo Andy Scheck

age son, teen-age girls, and a family that included a three year old and a baby in a stroller, among many others. "They were all great, enthusiastic, and happy to be contributing," Reynolds adds, "One of the families whose yard we picked joined in the effort."

According to Sharon Zeppegno, of the Contra Costa and Solano Food Bank, Moraga is the only community that organizes such a collection. "This may be due to the fact that Moraga was such a large pear producer and that trees have been kept productive by being consistently pruned," she says, "and this is the only town that makes it a real community project and celebration."

Some of the Moraga trees are 70 to 80 years old, and those located on school district property are pruned every year by Foundation volunteers.

This year's picking resulted in 8968 pounds of boxed pears, according to the Food Bank; by August 12th it had all been given away. "We serve 132,000 people (89,000 in Contra Costa)," says Zeppegno, "Most of the pears were distributed in the grocery bags that people in need receive once a week, at a designated place and time. The remaining fruit was channeled toward our soup kitchens and other meal services."

The Food Bank particularly appreciates the Moraga donation that's made every summer. "We always run low on our supplies during the end of summer," explains Zeppegno, "people do not think of summer as a time of need, but most schools do not have a summer program and kids who receive food there are not helped during these vacation months." Additionally, some donation barrels that are located in schools are not active in summer.

At this time the Food Bank needs non-perishable items for children and families such as enriched cereals, tuna, peanut butter, canned fruits and vegetables, all of which are easy to stock. There are donation barrels in such places as the Moraga Starbucks, the post offices, the Lafayette CVS, and the Orinda Community Church (a complete list of donation centers is available at www.foodbankccs.org/docs-pdfs/OngoingFDList.pdf).

"Unfortunately, the number of people who need us has increased by 46% over the last four years," says Zeppegno, "we see a lot of newcomers in our distribution centers that are educated people, unable to find work." For more information about locations or how to hold a food drive, go to: www.foodbankccs.org.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA