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Contact: Margaret Mittelstadt
Director of Community Relations
(414) 431-3377 x170
margaret@outpost.coop



Outpost shoppers purchase over \$65,000 in food for the hungry

It is a great start to the New Year at Outpost Natural Foods. Owners and shoppers of the local grocery co-operative purchased 1,642 bags worth of natural and organic groceries to feed the hungry as part of the co-op's annual Buy A Bag program. That's equivalent to purchasing over \$65,000 in food. "It's a record year for Buy A Bag sales. We had set a goal of 1,500 bags, which we shattered. It just goes to show the dedication of our shoppers and enthusiasm of store staff to provide food for those in our communities who are facing hardship," says Margaret Mittelstadt, Outpost Community Relations Director. "It's cooperation in action."

This was the eleventh year for the annual community program that ran from November 1 through December 31. Since its inception in 1999, the Buy A Bag program has provided over \$377,000 worth of food to Hunger Task Force to help feed the hungry in the community. The program itself is simple. For each \$20 donation a shopper makes, Outpost uses that money to buy \$40 worth of natural and organic foods for the hungry – including fresh produce. The food would be enough to fill a standard grocery bag. All funds donated are used to purchase the food.

Hunger Task Force Executive Director, Sherrie Tussler, underscores the need for emergency food donations and the relationship that has grown over the years with Outpost. "The Outpost Buy a Bag program surpassed all expectations, with shoppers and owners of Outpost combined purchasing power delivering more than \$65,000 worth of wholesome foods to help local families during truly hard times. Hunger Task Force salutes generous donors who kindly put dinner on the table for people in need. As the local food bank we value this partnership with a local grocer and the tradition of charity that it represents."

Food items to be donated include dried rice and pasta, fruit spread, peanut butter, canned soups and beans, spaghetti sauce, fruit juice, hot cereal and fresh bags of carrots, apples and potatoes. All of the food will be delivered to Hunger Task Force later in January.

"Concern for Community" is one of the seven international cooperative principles that all co-ops are modeled after. According to the National Cooperative Business Association, this means cooperatives "work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members." (www.ncba.coop)

Serving the greater Milwaukee area since 1970, Outpost Natural Foods Cooperative operates three successful locations at 100 East Capitol Drive, Milwaukee, 7000 West State Street, Wauwatosa, and 2826 South Kinnickinnic Avenue, Milwaukee. Co-owned by nearly 15,500 individuals from Southeastern Wisconsin, it employs nearly 300 people and is the fourth largest cooperatively owned natural foods grocer in the country. (www.outpost.coop)

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