

Food Bank of Northwest Indiana

2248 W. 35th Ave.
Gary, IN 46408
Phone: 219-980-1777
Fax: 219-980-1720
www.foodbanknwi.org



Supplying food to local pantries
for more than 25 years

Contact: Megan Sikes
Communication/Advocacy Manager
219-980-1777 ext. 305
msikes@foodbanknwi.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SPREAD THE LOVE PEANUT BUTTER DRIVE COMES TO A CLOSE Second Year of Drive Surpasses Last Year in Participants and Jars

Gary, IN— During the month of September, 41 area schools participated in the second years of the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana's Spread the Love Peanut Butter Food Drive. Donations were also made at all area Strack & Van Til Food Markets, Ultra Foods, Town and Country Food Markets and Boston's Gourmet Pizza Restaurant and Sports Bar in Schererville. The drive, which helped highlight Hunger Action Month, was designed not only to raise jars of peanut butter, but to also get kids thinking about domestic hunger and how it affects those in their communities. This year a total of 27,180 jars of peanut butter were raised, 3,891 jars more than last year. Some schools and families decided to make donations of other non-perishable food items in observance of concerns over peanut allergies. A total of 40,503 pounds of food were donated through the Spread the Love drive.

A little friendly competition was added to the drive to help spur donations and keep kids interested. The middle and high schools who raised the most jars of peanut butter will receive a traveling trophy, and the classrooms in each elementary school that raised the most will win a pizza party sponsored by Boston's Gourmet Pizza Restaurant and Sports Bar. Schools were broken into two categories, public and private schools, in order to keep the competition fair. The winners of the public school division were Munster High School in Munster, and Willowcreek Middle School in Portage. The winners in the private school division were Andrean High School in Merrillville, and Forest Ridge Academy in Schererville. These four schools raised a combined total of 3,660 jars.

Derek Frazier, Food Procurement Manager for the Food Bank, got the idea for the food drive from the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma which holds an annual canned good drive in local schools. Frazier expounded on the idea by having students focus solely on raising protein rich peanut butter. Peanut butter is a food pantry staple due to its high protein content and ease and longevity of storage. And with the recent 40% increase in the price of peanut butter, the donations couldn't have come at a better time.

"To see such a huge increase in the number of schools participating this year over last year is just amazing," says Frazier. "Over 40,000 pounds of food in one month is just incredible. These kids went above and beyond, as did our outside partners. One Strack & Van Til store in Hammond raised over 2,000 jars all on their own," he adds.

So would the schools participate next year? Yes says Noel Kraus, fourth grade teacher and a Student Council sponsor at St. Mary's School in Griffith. "We will participate in the "Spread the Love" event again. We have even discussed ways on which we can raise more for the cause. We are always looking ahead. We have considered involving our Parish members for next year's drive and "Spread" the information to them. The other Student Council Sponsors and I, along with our student council members, feel with the help of our church, we can get even more peanut butter." St. Mary's raised 670 jars of peanut butter.

In addition to hoping the rest of the Diocese of Gary schools will get on board with the drive next year, Miss Kraus had some words of encouragement for other schools that may be on the fence about joining, "We are a small school, but take great pride in raising big funds for organizations. If we can do it with a smaller school population, larger schools can for sure do it!"

The Food Bank is looking to expand the Spread the Love drive even further next year and get even more schools on board to participate. "We'd like to welcome new schools who would like to participate, and challenge our current schools to top what they've done these past two years and continue to make this drive a success," says Frazier. If schools our outside organizations and business are interested in being a part of next year's Spread the Love drive, please contact Derek Frazier at 219-980-1777 ext. 310 or by email at dfrazier@foodbanknwi.org.

The Food Bank of Northwest Indiana is located in Gary and supplies food to over 100 pantries and soup kitchens in Lake and Porter Counties. In addition to distributing food to their member agencies the Food Bank also runs the Backpack, Kid's Café, Mobile Pantry, Food Rescue and Pantry on the Go programs and offers pantry referrals. Last year the Food Bank distributed over 4.7 million pounds of food, and served over 5,000 individuals a week.

#

If you would like more information about this topic, or to schedule and interview please call or email Megan Sikes.