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A turkey in every PT pot - thanks to Arrow Lumber: Small food banks also rely on help from benefactors

By Allison Arthur of The Leader

Although it was cold on Monday, Barney Wagner was sweating a bit as he helped unload some of the 2,600 pounds of potatoes his company donated to the Port Townsend Food Bank. Minutes later, he oversaw the unloading of 260 turkeys as well.

"There's a lot of hungry people, and this is our mission," said Wagner. "The man upstairs has blessed our company like you wouldn't believe." Wagner is president and founder of Arrow Lumber & Hardware, which opened up shop in Port Townsend last year. The company donated 60 turkeys a year ago.

Port Townsend's food bank is one of nine food banks to which the Buckley-based company will give \$35,000 worth of food this year. Overall, the company donated 1,405 turkeys to food banks from Port Townsend to Enumclaw to Morton.

When Cadian Hendricks, manager of Arrow Lumber in Port Townsend, learned the number of families served each week by the PT Food Bank, and Hendricks told Wagner, Wagner said, "We're going to fill the need."

Although business hasn't been as good this year as in previous years, "we're not cutting back, and next year if the need is greater, we'll step up to the plate," Wagner said while unloading potatoes Monday morning from a 48-foot semitruck. The same rig also carried wood pellets and concrete mix.

Wagner also donated bags of Top Ramen. He got feedback last year that the macaroni and cheese he had donated required butter and milk. "All you need with Top Ramen is water," he said.

Wagner said he only buys Butterball and Norbest for quality reasons, and a Bonney Lake store gave him a great deal on Norbest. The turkeys range from 12 to 14 pounds.



Barney Wagner, president of Arrow Lumber & Hardware, helped unload potatoes he donated to the Port Townsend Food Bank. Photo by Allison Arthur

Filled the need

If it weren't for Arrow Lumber, the Port Townsend Food Bank would have had to buy turkeys.

"It means people get turkeys," beamed food bank Assistant Manager Shirley Moss. "We didn't have to buy them." She noted that Wagner stepped up this year even though he got little recognition for the 60 birds last year.

Before Arrow arrived, the food bank had three donated turkeys.

"As much as we appreciate those [donations], it doesn't cover the 300 families we're going to be seeing," Moss said. Moss expects to break all records for serving people today when the food bank opens at its new home at Mountain View Commons, 1925 Blaine St.

"Last year we broke all records at 282, and this year we've already done 260," she said of the weekly family count.

She won't know how far the supplies will stretch until people show up around 11:30 a.m.

An immediate need that remains is dairy products, she said. "We've purchased eggs this year, and if we cut them in half we should have enough to give a half dozen" she said.

But donors, if they want to help, can make things simple by just donating cash.

"We appreciate anything anyone gives us, but the money does go further," Moss said. "Generally, the community is generous this time of year, and we're starting to see it. But we're seeing a lot of new people [coming to the food bank], and I think we're going to see even more because it's comfortable to come to us now," she said.

Because the food bank is inside the old school, people don't have to stand outside in the cold. Folks can sit down, take a number, and wait to be served.

Still, Moss worries that there are people who could use help who aren't ready to come.

"I think there's a lot of people sitting home hungry and not using us," she said.

Moss recalled how one woman told her a story about a friend who was in need but wouldn't come because she's a Christian and "should be donating to," not using, the food bank.