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Food Shelves Gain As Eagan Experiences Record National Night Out Parties

Cash and food donations equal to nearly 36,000 pounds of food were donated by Eagan residents at a record number of National Night Out parties, August 3rd. 176 neighborhoods participated in getting to know their neighbors and heightening their crime prevention awareness. 150 neighborhoods received visits from Eagan Police and Fire Department personnel, along with Minnesota National Guard members and the Dakota County Mounted Patrol.

In honor of the 150th anniversary of Eagan's founding, 111 neighborhoods also donated food toward Eagan's goal of raising 300,000 pounds of food for local food shelves—150 tons in Eagan's 150th year. Those neighborhoods donated the equivalent of 35,836 pounds of food, with the Royal Oaks apartment complex making the single largest donation, equal to nearly 5,000 pounds of food.

"Our shelves were bare prior to August 3rd," said Lisa Horn, Executive Director of the Eagan Resource Center.

Following National Night Out they had neighborhoods dropping food donations by every 15 minutes, "allowing us to fill our shelves for a couple of months at a very critical time," Horn said. Food donations frequently decline significantly during summer vacation time, and families face the added stress of feeding their children at home during the day without the free and reduced lunches when school is in session. The unexpected benefit to the NNO donations were "spectacular" Horn said, because "so many people who didn't know we existed before, or who had never been to the Resource Center (located at 3910 Rahn Road) just stopped by."

The other big donation was from the Eagan Citizens Crime Prevention Association itself, donating \$11,000 worth of Minnesota Twins tickets as incentives. 124 neighborhoods received 4-packs of Twins tickets, and one lucky neighborhood in the 4700 block of Beacon Hill Road won the random drawing for an entire suite for 24 people for the October 2 Twins game against the Toronto Blue Jays, complete with food and soft drinks. That's a value of nearly \$3,000.

"Eagan citizens responded overwhelmingly to National Night Out," says Eagan Police Chief James McDonald. "A lot of the credit for the increase in the popularity of National Night Out should go to the Eagan Citizen's Crime Prevention Association. Aside from providing the Twins tickets, they really were creative in supporting the City Council's 150th food drive. With the amount of food they raised, there is little doubt their efforts increased citizen awareness to provide food for the needy and make Eagan a safer place." Chief McDonald noted that in 1999 Eagan began NNO with just 29 neighborhoods.

Cash donations helpful; ongoing needs

Cash donations to the food shelves actually leverage nine times the purchasing power of actual food donations and can ensure supply of the most needed items. Food shelves are still in need of child-friendly foods like juice boxes, canned meats, healthy snack bars, apple sauce, and cereal. Officials are also asking residents to consider donating fresh left over garden produce and non food items like laundry soap, dish soap, shampoos and other hygiene items. Updated lists of needs are shown at www.eaganrc.org under the "How to Give" section and at http://360communities.org/services/emergency_food_shelf.aspx.

With demand for food shelf services at an all time high at both the Resource Center and the 360 Communities food shelves, Eagan currently has collected 282,708 pounds of food towards its 300,000 pound goal. For questions about how you can get involved in either the Eagan 150th Food Drive or with National Night Out and Neighborhood Watch programs go to www.eagan150.com and www.cityofeagan.com/nno.

"It will be hard to top 2010's number of participants, but we hope the experience so many neighborhoods received from getting to know their neighbors and deepening their partnership with (police/public safety) will make people want to come out again next August," said Eagan Police Chief Jim McDonald. "It's a tribute to the caring people we have in Eagan that they would make a difference for others, too."

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