

Summer mobile food van offers food to anyone in need

By MARY SWIFT staff writer Jun 16, 2016



(Brian Myrick / Daily Record)

HopeSource volunteers Craig Mabie and Robert Holcomb set up a mobile food bank at the Ronald School building, Tuesd

Cindy Jones stood on the sidewalk outside the Pennsylvania Place Apartments in Roslyn Tuesday and beamed.

The 58-year-old Jones, who is physically disabled and lives in low-income housing, had just packed up a bag of produce and other food items from a HopeSource mobile food van parked in front of her apartment.

“I think this is awesome,” she said. “Most of the people here are disabled. The food bank is awesome but a lot of us who live here don't drive. To have them come to us is amazing.”

It was a message Craig Mabie, the volunteer driver, heard more than once on Tuesday, the official launch date of a program that aims to bring fresh produce and other food items to Roslyn and Ronald this summer.

The van was on East Pennsylvania Place in Roslyn from 10 until 11 a.m., then moved on to spend an hour in the parking lot of the old Ronald School at the corner of Third Street and Atlantic Avenue in Ronald.

It will be back at the same times and locations on June 28, July 12 and 26. Food will vary depending on what is available but generally will have fresh produce, bread and grains such as oatmeal. On Tuesday, recipients were choosing items ranging from fresh patty pan squash and zucchini to pasta, tomato sauce, microwaveable popcorn and bottled tea and a host of other items. Some also were picking up bags of pet food for their cats or dogs.

Mabie, who also is a member of the Friends of the Cle Elum Library, also offered free paperbacks to anyone who was interested.

No requirements

Mabie, referred to as the “instigator” of the project by one HopeSource staff member, said it's just a way of providing nutrition options for people in need. HopeSource already operates a mobile food van service that brings weekly food boxes to clients who are physically unable to get into the Upper County Food Bank in Cle Elum.

The new program is in addition to that service and is open to anyone who needs food.

You don't have to be living in subsidized housing, elderly or disabled to take advantage of the new mobile food van program, he said. There's no proof of income requirement, no proof of residence requirement, no requirement to do anything but sign in and give the size of the family you're getting food for.

“There is no requirement other than to need food,” said Mabie, who gave each person who visited the van a warm welcome.

Tanya Thomas, 63, is one of the people thankful for his role.

“It's a great idea, just a great idea,” said Thomas who noted that many of those living at the Pennsylvania Place Apartment are “stranded” except for transportation on a HopeSource vans or from friends or family members.

“It was fantastic,” she said as Mabie and two helpers loaded up the van and prepared to pull out. “I'm glad they came out. Now we just have to get the word out so that others know.”

A gift to keep the program

A short time later at the Ronald school, Mabie stood and waited as clouds gathered. A light rain fell briefly and turnout appeared non-existent. By the time the stop was nearly over, no one had appeared.

Then the clouds broke. A man came up, packed up a sack of food he said was for a neighbor, and handed Mabie a check for HopeSource for \$100.

Mabie was thrilled.

“This is great,” he said.

Vendors at the Roslyn Farmers Market provide some of the produce for the project. Safeway also contributes. So does the Roslyn Market, said Joanne Rushton, HopeSource's Upper County manager.

She said HopeSource doesn't know how the project will play out. But she does know there are people who can use the help of some fresh fruit and vegetables or other items.

"I know there are people out there stuck until their caregiver or family member comes by," she said. She also knows there are people who are not comfortable walking through the door of the food bank in downtown Cle Elum.

"If we're making food available in their neighborhood they just might stop by," Rushton said. By taking the van to Ronald, Rushton said the hope is that some people who may be camping because they have no permanent residence will come by to take advantage of the program.

Cinnamon Studebaker, a caregiver for two residents of Pennsylvania Place, called the new program "wonderful."

It really helps," said Studebaker, who noted that others, not just those who live at Pennsylvania Place, will benefit. "There's so many people just one paycheck away from disaster," she said.

Mary Swift