

Unique New Support Comes to Blizzard Box Project

Blizzard Boxes for the 2009-2010 winter season are now on the shelves of Clearfield County Meals on Wheels & more recipients. If you are not aware of what they are, Blizzard Boxes are small boxes containing an assortment of non-perishable foods that provide the equivalent of 2 traditional hot meals on wheels. They're funded entirely with local contributions, usually packed by volunteers, and then delivered prior to bad weather by the Meals on Wheels & More staff.

"Every year, something changes," noted Sue Kordish, Licensed Nutritionist/Dietitian for the Clearfield County Area Agency on Aging. The container may vary in size or even be a bag; the food items differ based on what food items can be found at the best price and in the amounts needed. The faces of the volunteers change, and the location where the boxes are packed moves from time to time.

"This year, during a casual conversation with Brian Rosenberger, General Manager at the Wal*Mart Distribution Center in Woodland, a wonderful opportunity emerged for us to really take the technology and community involvement to a new level," Kordish explained. Rosenberger, who says Wal*Mart is very community minded and always looking for ways to contribute to local projects, suggested that the Agency take advantage of the distribution center's space and staff by moving the packaging process to that site. After a short meeting at the distribution site, plans were firmed and the wheels set in motion.

Food items were purchased and delivered, a packing date was set, volunteers from Wal*Mart Distribution Center, Clearfield Rotary Club, and CCAAA staff were lined up, labels were printed, and boxes were donated. Everything came together on November 18 when volunteers gathered at the Wal*Mart Distribution Center. "A task that usually takes about 15 – 20 people 5 hours or longer to accomplish was completed in 2 ½ hours by 9 total helpers," Kordish said. "Slightly less than 900 boxes were neatly stacked on pallets and shrink-wrapped. The next day, they were dropped off at the receiving dock of our Meal Production and Distribution Facility in Technology Park. It was amazing." Mary Murphy, Certified Nutrition Project Director for the Agency, then dove-tailed the delivery of the Blizzard Boxes into the next weeks' regular Meals on Wheels & More routes until all consumers had their back-up supply safely tucked away.

This is the 27th year that Blizzard Boxes have been used in Clearfield County. Kordish underscores that it is creative suggestions like Wal*Mart Distribution Center's this year, and others in past years, which enable the Agency to continue to provide more and better service to the residents of Clearfield County. For more information about the Blizzard Box project, Meals on Wheels & More, and other services provided by the Agency, call 814-765-2696.