

Whole Foods, United Way team up for food drive

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Whole Foods Market and the United Way have teamed up in Fort Collins' second annual Grab and Give campaign, a food drive that allows Whole Foods customers to buy pre-made bags of food for the needy through the end of December.

Grab and Give allows customers to donate pre-made bags of food to 14 non-profit agencies in Larimer County. These non-profits are United Way partner agencies that range from Meals on Wheels to Larimer Center for Mental Health. The agencies are then responsible for distributing the food to people in need.

Customers are able to purchase \$5 breakfast bags, \$10 lunch bags, \$10 dinner bags or a \$25 Fill the Pantry bag that includes a variety of non-perishable meals. Each of the bags provides a meal for a family.

The money provided from the bags all goes toward food that is distributed in the Larimer County community.

"Whole Foods Market believes that we have a responsibility to invest in our community and give back to our community," said Grace Hanley, a program coordinator. "Winter is a really difficult time for families in need, so all the help that they can get is just an amazing thing."

Hanley said that day in and day out, team members have been asking for donations, showing on an individual level how much they care for the community.

Although the Grab and Give program is a countywide program, the Fort Collins Whole Foods Market alone has raised \$56,000 in food this year, \$11,000 more than last year.

Kevin Farrel, a Whole Foods employee, said the main importance of this program is the wide spread of people they are able to reach.

"There's a dramatic increase in poverty and people who have been laid off from their jobs. It's good that the food is getting dispersed to so many organizations throughout the county," said Farrel, a junior natural resources major who is leaving to study abroad next semester. "That way, the maximum numbers of families are able to benefit from this."

Keely Aggers, vice president of Resource Development at the United Way, said that many partner agencies are seeing a 50 to 100 percent increase in demand for services, which is a greater need than seen in the last five years.

"A program like this, at this time, couldn't be better in getting those food resources to agencies that ensure the food is getting to people who really need it," Aggers said. "With the current

economic situation a lot of people in this community are facing big challenges meeting their basic needs and food is one of those basic needs."

The Grab and Give program runs through Dec. 31, and customers are able to purchase the pre-made bags at the Whole Foods Market in Fort Collins, located at 2201 S. College Ave.

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