

Local Social Service Agencies See Greater Need This Holiday Season

By Steve Sbraccia 16 hours, 32 minutes ago

As we enter into the holiday season, local social service agencies are finding that as the unemployment rate increases so does the demand for emergency services.

Around the Triangle, some agencies report that requests for help are doubling over the same time last year.

Among those agencies seeing increased need is the Food Bank of Eastern and Central North Carolina.

It is taking in more food through donations, but finding it's shipping it out almost as fast as it comes in.

"It's going very quickly right back out the door," Christy Simmons with the Food Bank, said.

"The partner agencies we support, like food pantries, rescue missions and soup kitchens are seeing a 30- to 60-percent increase in those coming to them for emergency food services," Simmons explained.

On Monday afternoon, a local real estate group brought in 179 turkeys.

"We want to help those in the Triangle who can't put a turkey on the table themselves," said Gary Clark of Coldwell Banker's Howard Perry & Walston Real Estate

Another agency donating food were the people who work for the Wake County Clerk of Courts office.

"Last year we donated 266 pounds. This year we donated 283 pounds of canned goods" said Ben Throop.

Knowing this is a tough economy, both groups tried to increase their donations over last year's efforts.

And the Food Bank says that's important.

"50 percent of our food drive donations come between Thanksgiving and Christmas," Simmons said.

"Over at the Durham Rescue Mission, the shelves of its food locker look pretty well stocked. But once they start bagging the food items stuff for giveaway to the needy on Thanksgiving, those shelves are going to be pretty bare.

"Unlike the year before, our numbers are record breaking and it's not even cold yet," said Reverend Robert Tart, the chief operating officer of Durham Rescue Mission.

And this year, Tart believes they'll be seeing a lot more hungry faces come Thanksgiving day.

“We don’t know exactly what to expect,” he said, “but we’re figuring we’ll have record numbers to feed on Thursday.”

Besides food, the Durham Rescue Mission says it can use bedding and all kinds of clothes— especially men’s coats.