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Hood River News

Official Newspaper, City of Hood River and Hood River County



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December 30, 2005

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Cascade Locks rescues Santa during food drive



Photo by RaeLynn Ricarte

Cascade Locks volunteer firefighters Megan Webb, left, Jessica Bennett and Zachary Belt take their turn filling food boxes to give needy families all of the trimmings for a Christmas dinner.

By RAELYNN RICARTE

News staff writer
December 17, 2005

In spite of a sleigh breakdown, Santa has managed to collect hundreds of non-perishable food items for needy Cascade Locks families.

On Dec. 9, local firefighters put Santa's conveyance on the top of Engine 94. However, the light display that festooned the aging piece of equipment overloaded the battery.

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Santa was then grounded with nowhere to put the canned and boxed foods that citizens waited to give him.

However, Santa's helpers – including Mayor Ralph Hesgard and 20 firefighters – immediately launched Plan B. They brought out a brush rig that allowed Jolly Old St. Nick to resume his visits with some of the 1,150 city residents.

Cascade Locks Fire Chief Jeff Pricher said citizens of the rural community were as generous as usual with their donations. In fact, he said some contributors were waiting for the annual pick-up with a case of canned food.

By the end of the evening, Pricher said enough items had been donated so that 55 families could have a heaping box of meal supplies. In addition, individuals and businesses contributed \$1,000 to help the fire department provide a full holiday dinner.

Pricher said that money was used, in part, to buy turkeys, rolls and stuffing, provided at cost by Columbia Market.

Firefighter Megan Webb said the department also purchased extra yams, canned pumpkin and cranberries to round out the holiday fare. She said not only will families and individuals be given everything they need next Friday's delivery to cook a traditional dinner — they will also receive other banquet possibilities.

"They get some good stuff," said Webb while meticulously selecting items for one of the boxes.

These choices include the macaroni and cheese popular with children, pizza crust mix, saltine crackers, tea, and both fruits and vegetables.

Cascade Locks firefighters will spend about 28 hours this year preparing supplies and getting them distributed, according to Pricher.

"This is an opportunity for us to let this community know that we're trying to do everything that we can to help them out," he said.