

Letters/Opinions

Program connects farmers, city folk in hunger struggle

FRESH from the season of good cheer and giving, it is time to renew our benevolent spirit to continue helping those in need throughout the year.

Abating hunger is the business of agriculture, and we are reminded that those we may have helped during the holidays remain very much in need.

As a volunteer for the Salvation Army, I spent most of my spare hours in November and December writing vignettes for the local newspaper that match up needy families with sponsors who purchased presents and food for their selected recipients. I was the one who read the forms completed by those in need seeking help, and their stories are fraught with unbelievable misery.

What strikes me is that this industry we work in has within its grasp the food to provide the most basic needs of these families struggling to provide for children and themselves. I see so much production throughout the year, and my experiences at year's end with the poor underscore the link between the farm and processor, and those who cannot afford to buy much at our stores.

That's why I wanted to take a moment to laud the Farmers Ending Hunger program, which Oregon Department of Agriculture Director Katy Coba lauds as an "astonishing" program in its simplicity to make it easy for farmers "to plant a few extra rows of peas or beans, and have the cost of processing, storage and transport paid by their urban non-farm counterparts."

Ziari's zest

Farmers Ending Hunger, christened two years ago by Easy Wireless owner Fred Ziari, who Coba calls a "visionary Hermiston [Ore.] engineer," provides products to the Oregon Food Bank for distribution to those in need.

Ziari works with farmers through his business that helps producers improve production through technology, such as infrared aerial photography

Our Say

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spotlighting field areas that may need chemical input tweaking. He poured thousands of pounds of food into the Bank in November.

Nor-PAC joined the effort in 2006, delivering 40,000 pounds of food to the bank.

Earlier versions of the program provided 10 tons of watermelons to hungry children in Portland, Ore., schools.

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski praises the bank program as a helpful effort throughout the year.

"We all enjoy the benefits of children who can learn because they don't go to school hungry and malnourished," he says.

Believe me, many still do, as my experiences through the Salvation Army have proven to me.

Good people like Ziari are instrumental in this giving spirit. His program is inspired, involving transportation donations to pay for delivering food to the bank. Sponsors also contribute to storage and processing, since fresh products don't do well in giving programs.

Donors are encouraged to donate \$500 to adopt an acre of land set aside by farmers to feed the hungry. But this doesn't reimburse the growers, who contribute their work and property freely. It goes mostly to getting the food into the hands of the hungry.

Interested in getting involved? Check out the new Farmers Ending Hunger Web site at www.farmersendinghunger.org.

Help is needed.

Your Say

Berry story had it wrong

Thanks for the berry article November 2006 in *Western Farmer-Stockman*. I believe [the story] has incorrect statistics on production, however.

Oregon may lead the nation in black-berry production, but I'll bet Michigan is No. 1 in blueberries, and Washington is No. 1 in raspberries.

Brian Cieslar
Whatcom Farmers Co-op
Lynden, Wash.

Editor's note: That's right, Brian.

Thanks for pointing the error out to us.

WFS fan likes potato coverage

I appreciate receiving the *Western Farmer-Stockman* at our home here in Corvallis [Ore.].

You do a top job with your feature

articles, which are on the cutting edge of new developments.

It is worthwhile to know what is going on at other state experiment stations. Your report on the great [World] Potato Congress in Boise was an eye-opener to all of us not associated with that industry.

My sincere congratulations to you for putting out a great agricultural publication.

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