

Have You Ever Been Really Hungry?

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

Have you ever been really hungry. I'm not talking about those pangs you get as you approach meal time, but that hunger that strikes deep and you have no idea where your next meal is going to come from? I haven't. I once fasted for 36 hours, but that was by choice. I had food around me the whole time that I could have had. My Dad used to talk about being in California in the 1930's and his job start was delayed for one week and he had to make do on little to nothing. I have no idea what that kind of hunger is like.

In the coming days we are all going to be thinking about Thanksgiving meals where gluttony will be the norm! But even as we think about that grand Thanksgiving Day meal, there are people in our own community that are hungry. The current politically correct term would be that these our citizens experiencing food insecurity. Forget that nonsense, these people are hungry and they are in our own town, our own county, our own state.

People don't like to think about that. It makes us uncomfortable. Hunger is for third world countries and big cities like Chicago or New York or Detroit. We don't want to know that hunger is also local, right here in Junction City, Grandview Plaza, Milford or Geary County. But it's real folks and it is right here. We gripe about government handouts and people milking the system, and that does happen. But there's a lot of people that just don't have enough to eat!

For these folks there is a beacon of hope. It's called The Food Pantry and it's at 136 West 3rd Street in Junction City. The manager's name is Edna and she works with a whole host of elves and angels who try to make sure that folks don't go hungry. Recently they signed up 30 new families who were in need of food. In a recent two day period they provided over 4300 pounds of food to those in need. People often think of the Food Pantry at the holidays, but Edna was quick to point out that people are hungry all year around.

That food that they provide doesn't just show up magically. They are dependent on generous donations from people and businesses. I know I often see folks collecting food or monetary donations for the Food Pantry, but you can go direct to the Food Pantry with your donations if you are so inclined. About the only thing that they can't take is home canned products or home processed wild game. They can take wild game IF it was processed at an inspected meat processing facility (locker plant).

The Food Pantry will certainly take cash donations, but they also have a lengthy list of items on their "wish list". Here are the items on that wish list: canned beans, boxed dinners, cold or hot cereal, condiments, all types of crackers, Hamburger Helper, jelly, canned meat including tuna, macaroni and cheese, pancake mix, pancake syrup, all types of pasta, peanut butter, Ramen, all types of snacks and soup, tomato products and canned vegetables. If many of us would just pick up a few extra of these items every time we're at the grocery store, put them in a box and once a month deliver them to the Food Pantry, it would make a world of difference. You don't have to wait and do it just once a year.

The Food Pantry's normal hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 12:45 p.m Monday and Thursday and 5:30 to 7 p.m. on Tuesdays. You can drop off your donations at those hours. But Edna was quick to point out that if you have donations to drop off, just call her at 785-375-4034 and she will make sure that someone is there to take your donation. So let's spend the next twelve months trying to make sure that no one goes hungry. It could be the best gift some families get this holiday season...