

The Herald-Sun



Weaver Street Market begins food partnership



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ORANGE COUNTY — Weaver Street Market kicked off a new effort Wednesday to help local hunger relief organizations feed food-insecure families.

This year, Weaver Street Market will partner with PORCH, TABLE, Orange Congregations in Mission and Interfaith Council for Social Services. Once per quarter, the market's three locations in the county will participate in a two-week food campaign.

The first campaign started Wednesday with an ultimate goal to donate 1,000 bags of fresh produce and eggs to PORCH.

PORCH, or People Offering Relief to Chapel Hill-Carrboro Homes, is an all-volunteer organization established in 2010. The group gathers donations of fresh, healthy food, sorts it and delivers it to local families.

Weaver Street's Carrboro store aims to donate 500 bags, Hillsborough hopes to donate 300 and Southern Village's goal is 200.

Shoppers at Weaver Street can choose from three donation levels — a quarter bag, a half bag or a whole bag.

A \$30 donation will buy a whole bag of produce worth \$60, a \$15 donation will buy a half bag worth \$30 and \$7.50 will buy a quarter bag worth \$15.

Owner services coordinator Brenda Camp said that the partnership with PORCH has proven to be beneficial for both partners.

Initially, Weaver Street planned to ask shoppers to donate nonperishables. But when Weaver Street found out about PORCH's Food for Families program, which incorporates fresh food, the market knew it could ask its owners and shoppers to contribute to a cause dear to their hearts — local and organic produce.

Weaver Street will hang its donated bags in its store windows. When the campaign is over, Weaver Street will buy the produce from its farmers and suppliers, making up the difference in price.

Shoppers can also donate money in boxes at each register.

Camp said each campaign could be different based on the needs of the organization.

She said that the staff coordinating each partnership consider things like, "How can we best help that program? What can we ask our owners and shoppers to do that is meaningful to them?"

It's not only about donating food and money, Camp said. Shoppers who sign up to volunteer with any of the partner organizations will gain the opportunity to enter in raffles for different prizes, such as restaurant gift certificates or tickets to Weaver Street's wine show.

Weaver Street has long been involved in the community and has always allowed nonprofits and other organizations to set up a table outside its stores.

However, Camp said, the new partnership program "gives us a chance to really explore and learn more about what's needed."

It is estimated that 20,900 people in Orange County are food-insecure, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's September 2014 Report on Food Insecurity in America.

Weaver Street general manager Ruffin Slater said that the primary goal in the new Community Food Partnerships is "to bring together community resources to achieve a greater impact on hunger relief than any group could achieve alone."

The campaign to support PORCH will continue until March 3. The next campaign to support TABLE, a Carrboro-based organization that feeds hungry children, will occur sometime in May.

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