

Idaho Falls Post Register, Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2010 – by Clark Corbin (2 pages)

Corporate food drive exceeds its goal

Organizers of a regional food drive spearheaded by Western States Equipment have quadrupled a fundraising goal for restocking food bank shelves. Western States wrapped up its six-week, post-holiday "Dump Hunger" food drive last week, collecting the equivalent of 587,861 pounds of food. The business's goal was 150,000 pounds of food, enough to fill two of the company's dump trucks.

In calculating the final total -- which represents a mix of food and cash donations -- Western States officials utilized a formula that equates \$1 with 5 pounds of food.

"I've been absolutely stunned watching the process move forward because of the amount of money and food," said Josh Johnson, who organized the local effort for Western State's CAT Rental Store in Idaho Falls. "The local community really stepped up to the plate to take care of the people around us."

The Idaho Falls location raised 72,000 pounds of Western States' total, Johnson said, nearly half the original goal the company hoped to raise collectively between its 13 locations. All the money raised in Idaho Falls will be given to the Idaho Falls Community Food Bank later this month, Johnson said.

Food drive organizers relied on a mix of corporate and private donations to exceed their goal. Albertsons, C&H Construction and Basic American Foods were among the businesses that contributed large donations to Dump Hunger, Johnson said.

Johnson had an emotional response to this year's campaign because of the prolonged recession and its impact on construction companies, which represent a large portion of Western States' business.

"I'd like to think we helped a few of our own customers in the process," Johnson said. "The construction industry, as you know, was hit the hardest."

Based on the success of this year's event, Western States plans on making Dump Hunger an annual fundraiser, Johnson said. "We want to thank the community, from the bottom of our hearts, for their passion, generosity and help in making this such a success," he said.

Idaho Falls real estate firm expands roster

After expanding its roster of agents by 70 percent over the past three years, employees at Exit Realty Idaho Falls have moved into a larger office. The business moved from an office off 17th Street to 1075 S. Utah Ave., Suite 325, in the Taylor Crossing development, franchise founder Tello Baird said.

Baird started the operation three years ago with three agents. Exit now employs 21 agents, he said. "The market turned (downward) four months into it three years ago," Baird said. "Even through tough times we have continued to grow and expand with new agents."

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Baird attributes some of his company's growth to a residual bonus system Exit offers its agents. Every Exit agent who successfully recruits a new agent the company hires earns a "sponsoring residual" equivalent to 10 percent of the recruit's gross commissions, Baird said.

Exit is celebrating its expansion by inviting the public to an open house from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Feb. 25 at the Taylor Crossing office. More information is available by calling 522-0711 or visiting www.exitrealtyidahofalls.com.

Technology panel discussion planned

The Center for Advanced Energy Studies is among the sponsors of an upcoming panel discussion on the topic of commercializing technology. The "Colloquia" event runs from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Thursday at University Place Auditorium, 1776 Science Center Drive.

During the event, which is open to the public, several venture capitalists will speak about publicly funded research and the transfer of intellectual property from national laboratories and universities to the private sector.

Panel members scheduled to participate include Mike Altree, CEO of Convergent-Digital Corp., Cory Steffek of the Altira Group, and Jason Stolworthy, acting deputy director for Idaho National Laboratory Technology Development. For more information, call Kortny Rolston at 526-0962 or e-mail kortny.rolston@inl.gov.

St. Anthony chamber to present awards

The Greater St. Anthony Chamber of Commerce will recognize a handful of businesses during an awards ceremony Friday. Ceremonies begin at 6 p.m. at South Fremont Junior High, 550 N. First West. Tickets are \$25 and include dinner and a dance. For more information, call the St. Anthony Visitor's Center at 624-4870.

Smith's raises money for Haitians

Smith's Food & Drug stores in seven Western states raised a combined total of \$82,422 in January to benefit the American Red Cross' Haitian earthquake relief efforts. Last month, customers at all 132 Smith's locations were able to contribute by voluntarily adding any dollar amount to their purchases at checkout.

Four Smith's stores in eastern Idaho, including the Idaho Falls location on South Woodruff Avenue, raised \$1,177 of the total, Smith's spokeswoman Marsha Gilford wrote in a news release.