

# Food Bank's New Warehouse

By Dennis Roler for the Daily Courier

Just 16 months after opening a new warehouse, the Josephine County Food Bank has a lot on its plate, thanks to partnerships with local groups.

Many local residents, including 200 children, have pitched in to plant and harvest produce from the food bank's garden at Raptor Creek Farm, on Upper River Road just west of Grants Pass. This, along with other food, flows to a network of pantries around Josephine County to feed about 11,000 people each month.

The long list of community groups participating include AllCare Health, the Oregon State University Extension Service, the Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, WorkSource Oregon, College Dreams, OSU Master Gardeners, Kairos and LDS Church Missionaries.

"The Seeds to Supper," a youth gardening and education program, alone has had

almost 200 children go through it, according to Sam Engel, food bank manager.

He gives much of the credit for the bloom in volunteerism to the food bank's new \$1.9 million warehouse. "One of the biggest changes to what we do now - other than being able to do it in a beautiful, purpose-built building - is that we can now flow work and workers between the warehouse and farm," he said. "This has opened up a new world of volunteer opportunities and employment and skills training."

So what does all this activity have to do with the Rotary Duck Derby? Over four years, \$314,000 was raised by the Duck Derby as matching money for a federal grant to pay the rest of the building's costs. That was 65 percent of the \$480,000 raised locally as a match. Money from the 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 races was

pledged by Rotarians in Josephine County to fund the project.

The project fit the theme of the race, helping Josephine County youth and their families, because 34 percent of those benefiting from emergency food baskets are children, according to Engel. The new 13,000-square-foot warehouse not only helps with work flow, but saves the food bank \$25,000 a year it was paying in rent for a warehouse in Grants Pass half that size.

It has also allowed the food bank to save on energy costs, because it's placed 150 solar energy panels on its roof. Engel said the additional cooler space also has the food bank planning for an expansion of the farm to increase its harvest of produce.

The warehouse and farm sit on property owned by the city of Grants Pass and leased to the food bank on a long-term contract. About 2.5 acres of it is garden. It produces almost 25 tons of food a year. The warehouse, which resembles a modern barn with its curved roof, can hold close to 200 pallets of food.

"It is so much easier to work in space that was designed for the collection and distribution of food than it was before," Engel said. Big benefits he lists are



**Dutch Bros employee works at Raptor Creek Farm**



**Boys and Girls Club at Raptor Creek Farm**

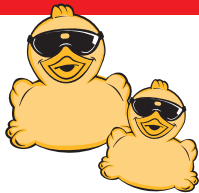
improved lighting, more cooler space and less time - at least 10 hours a week - spent going between the garden and warehouse sites.

The warehouse itself was several years in the planning stage, with the Raptor Creek Farm Steering Committee, former Josephine County Food Bank Manager Susan Scheufele and other staff doing much of the work. Construction began in the summer of 2014. Adroit Construction of Ashland built it.

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