

TRENDS

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County residents, child activist tackle holiday hunger

By Glen Tadych
Trends Reporter

With Halloween over and Thanksgiving around the corner, the Hays County Food Bank is preparing for the turkey season with its annual Turkeys Tackling Hunger campaign.

The Turkeys Tackling Hunger campaign provides thousands of low-income families and individuals in Hays County, Hays CISD and San Marcos with food. The campaign runs from Oct. 1 to Nov. 30 each year. The food bank has already received requests from more than 3,000 families this year. The figure is 500 more families than 2011 and is the organization's largest Turkeys Tackling Hunger recipient base to date.

"This is our biggest fundraiser of the year," said Jane Moore, food bank community relations coordinator. "It's a countywide effort where we're able to provide food on a daily basis."

The primary feature of Turkeys Tackling Hunger is the fundraiser's Turkey Box. The feature includes a 10-12 pound turkey with all the trimmings for a complete Thanksgiving dinner. One Turkey Box can be provided for every \$20 donation.

"It's a blessing that I have enough food for Thanksgiving," said Joshlyn Bullock, a San Marcos resident, client and volunteer for the food bank and Turkeys Tackling Hunger. "As long as my health holds up, I'll continue to help out because I like everybody there, and I love the distribution of the food."

The heart and soul of inspiration to local folks like Bullock is 8-year-old Zach Collins.

Collins, a third-grade student at Negley Elementary School, began his quest for generosity two years ago after donating a \$20 bill he received as a birthday present to Turkeys Tackling Hunger.

"I wanted everyone to have a Thanksgiving dinner," Collins said.

Collins' passion pushed him to donate more in 2011, and with the help of an internet campaign via Facebook and YouTube he raised \$3,000 in two weeks for the fundraiser.

"It just kind of spiraled," said Laurie Collins, Zach Collins' mother and Public Education Information Management Systems clerk for Negley Elementary. "I didn't really think he'd make past \$500."

Zach Collins received donations up to \$1,000 from contributors across the country, including New York and Illinois. Because of his success with the organization, Zach Collins has since become the spokesperson for Turkeys Tackling Hunger. He spoke at the San Marcos Commissioners Court proclamation for Turkeys Tackling Hunger Sept. 25 requesting city support for the fundraiser.

"Don't make me give you my puppy dog eyes," he told court members.

Zach Collins' words won over court members without objection. He has since spoken at the Commissioners Court proclamations in Kyle and Buda in an effort to spread aware-

ness and gain further support for Turkeys Tackling Hunger.

"He's not only a great motivator for us, but for the community as well," said Lisa Henggeler, Texas State public relations graduate and donor development coordinator for the food bank. "It's about the mission and being able to help people and feel good about it."

Zach Collins continues to volunteer at least two Wednesdays out of the month, passing out food to clients at La Roca Fellowship in Kyle when he isn't partaking in public speaking. His goal this year is to raise \$5,000 for Turkeys Tackling Hunger. He currently only sits on \$125 in donations, and Zach Collins and his mother hope the approaching holiday season will liven up the community's generosity as before.

Anyone interested in making a donation and other inquiries can visit the fundraiser's website, or Zach Collins' Facebook page.