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Press Release

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Oregon FFA and Les Schwab team up to collect more than meals from their Drive Away Hunger event

As the holidays approach, many are preparing to indulge in creamy mashed potatoes, savory turkey, and delectable desserts. However, for many Oregonians the holidays are difficult as numerous residents struggle to provide food for themselves and their families. It is for this reason agriculture education students across Oregon geared up throughout the month of October to help feed those in need. In the spirit of the holiday season, the Oregon FFA (formerly known as the Oregon Future Farmers of America) partnered with Les Schwab Tire Centers, Wilco Coop, Grange Coop, Capital Press, and the East Oregonian to help fight hunger.

The first year of our Hunger Initiative in 2015, our goal to raise 250,000 pounds of food seemed daunting. However, the many Oregon FFA members, advisors, and our partnering stores and newspapers across Oregon have made great strides to surpass that number each year. This year the #DriveAwayHunger Initiative raised 456,546 pounds of food; almost double our original goal. The food raised this year is enough to provide more than 342,420 meals to those in need this Holiday season.

The efforts to collect food were as diverse as the communities themselves. In Vale, students gleaned onion fields after harvest where they were able to gather 900 pounds of onions to give to those in need. In North Powder, students hosted a corn and potato gleaning project with Elementary students. Their creativity did not stop there, their chapter also raised funds for those in need by coordinating a day at their school where students could pay \$1 for a stamp on their hand that gave them permission to wear their hat throughout the school for the day. Multiple chapters such as Nyssa FFA, Sutherlin FFA, and Mt. Angel FFA (John F. Kennedy High School), went “trick or treating” for food donations. Some chapters grew their own food in their school garden, such as the North Clackamas chapter who grew 800 pounds of food. “In choosing crops to grow in our garden, we strive to grow crops we know will best keep until they are given to a family in need.” said Kathy Mayfield, North Clackmas FFA advisor.

In addition to local chapter efforts, community members were encouraged to drop food off at any local Les Schwab, Wilco Coop, or Grange Coop store, and collection bags were distributed by the Capital Press, the East Oregonian, Hermiston Herald, Blue Mountain Eagle,



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and the Wallowa Chieftain. “The Oregon FFA would like to extend many thanks to our participating store employees, agriculture students and FFA advisors, farmers, and all community members who donated food or time to help make this year’s initiative a great success. This is a wonderful opportunity to bring together our students and our communities to help those in need.” Said Christa Towery, Stewardship Officer for the Oregon FFA. Much of the food raised through this initiative will be distributed by the Oregon Food Bank Network and will remain in the communities in which it was raised. “Les Schwab employees serve as role models to our members by serving their communities and neighbors daily. This initiative allows our students the opportunity to partner with them in that effort and to put the FFA motto into action which is, “...learning to do, doing to learn, earning to live and living to serve.” said Towery.

The Oregon FFA is part of the National FFA Organization, formerly known as the Future Farmers of America, and is a national youth organization of 653,359 student members — all preparing for leadership and careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture. There are 8,568 local FFA chapters in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Oregon FFA has more than 6,500 members in 107 chapters throughout the state. The FFA mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

To learn more please visit the Oregon FFA Facebook page or #DriveAwayHunger. To learn more about FFA visit www.oregonffa.com or www.ffa.org.

