



News Release

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST

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Federal employees support summer-long local food drive

SITKA, Alaska — This summer, employees from three federal agencies will team up to help feed hungry families in Sitka. Employees from the Forest Service, Rural Development, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will participate in the “Feds Feed Families” food drive June through August. Donations by the public, either at the federal offices at 204 Siginaka Way or directly to the Salvation Army in Sitka, are welcomed!

This is the third year employees of the Sitka Forest Service office have participated in this federal food drive. They dropped off over 200 pounds of food at the Sitka Salvation Army’s food bank in 2010 and 2011, with some of last year’s fresh produce coming out of employees’ gardens.

Michelle Putz, writer/editor at the Sitka office of the Tongass National Forest and local organizer of the agency’s food drive said that this year’s drive is more important than ever in Sitka. “Every year that we have participated, the Salvation Army has been glad to get our donations,” said Putz. “But this summer, their cupboards are so bare they have had to close the food bank for a month. There is a real need in Sitka for donations of food this summer.”

Each year of the food drive, USDA employees have excelled: in 2011, USDA employees organized over 2,000 food drives across the country and collected 1.79 million pounds of fresh and shelf-stable food. This summer, USDA employees have been challenged to donate more than 1.8 million pounds of food.

The Tongass National Forest is rising to that challenge, staging food drives across Southeast, from Juneau to Prince of Wales Island. “The nice thing about the national drive is that all of the donated food stays where it’s donated,” said Forest Service Alaska Region drive coordinator Ray Massey. “The goal of the drive is not to just assist local families with a food supply, but to provide healthy food choices as well.” USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack recently gave certificates of appreciation to Alaska Forest Service units for their participation in the 2011 Fed Feed Families effort.

The food drive officially ends on August 31. A special fund-raiser/food-raiser is in the works for July in Sitka. Those interested in donating food or getting involved in the food drive are encouraged to contact Michelle Putz (907-747-4278 or 907-747-2708) with questions.

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